Developing work and services in public sector organizations through evaluation

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Abstract
The article sheds light on developing work and services in public sector organizations through evaluation use. As evaluation has become enrooted in public sector organizations as a means for renewal, there is a need for empirical knowledge of how evaluative activities lead to learning and development. This study focuses especially on the use of internal self-evaluation in the bottom-up development of work and services. The study uses a multiple case study design to look at eight separate work communities in social care organizations. The use of evaluation is explored from two perspectives. First, the article focuses on the use of evaluation results; it identifies critical components for producing development goals on the basis of evaluation results and for implementing development activities. The trialogic view of learning helps to conceptualize a mediating role for different artifacts in the process of developmental evaluation. Second, the article explores process use as well as the outcomes of developmental evaluation. The case studies suggest that the process of developmental evaluation can generate cognitive, behavioral, attitudinal and affectional effects in the work communities.

Utveckling av arbete och tjänster genom utvärdering i offentliga organisationer
Artikeln belyser självutvärderande utveckling av arbete och tjänster i organisationer inom den offentliga sektorn. I och med att utvärdering som ett verktyg för förnyelse har fått fotfäste i organisationer inom den offentliga sektorn, finns det ett behov för empirisk kunskap om hur utvärderingsaktiviteter leder till lärande och utveckling. Studien fokuserar på användningen av utvärdering speciellt från ett perspektiv av intern självutvärdering i syfte att användas för utveckling av arbete och tjänster nerifrån-upp. Studien är upplagd kring fallstudier där åtta separata arbetsgemenskaper i socialtjänstorganisationer studeras. Användningen av utvärdering undersöks ur två olika synvinklar. Dels fokuserar artikeln på användningen av utvärderingsresultat och identifierar kritiska komponenter för att producera utvecklingsmål, härledda från utvärderingsresultaten samt för att implementera utvecklingsaktiviteter. En trialogisk syn på lärande hjälper att konceptualisera en förmedlande roll av olika artefakt i processen av utvecklande utvärdering. Dels undersöker artikeln processer och resultat av utvecklande utvärdering. Studien drar slutsatsen att processen av utvecklande utvärdering kan åstadkomma kognitiva, beteendemässiga, attitydbaserade och känslomässiga effekter i arbetsgemenskaperna.

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Introduction

> […] it has been really nice and fruitful to hear those things being thought out aloud. Because some things you take for granted and assume, but then it's not like that, when someone talks and gets new perspectives on his job. (K06:EE2)

Evaluation has become enrooted in public sector organizations as a means for renewal, and as one of the key processes to enhance governance and rationality. It has been adopted as a tool for increasing accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of performance – that is, those objectives that are usually connected to the framework of New Public Management (e.g. Vedung, 2010; Forss et al., 2006). Moreover, evaluation has other developmental functions in public sector organizations, centering around issues of professionalism, work culture and work ethics.

This article is interested in how self-evaluation can be used to develop work and services in public sector organizations. A continuous process of evaluation—especially based on collaborative and participatory approaches—has been recognized as meaningful in enhancing organizational development and learning (Preskill & Torres, 1999b; Cousins et al., 2004; Torres & Preskill, 2001). Evaluation used for organizational development is seen as a tool to facilitate organizational learning through processes in which professionals reflect on their actions, analyze the effects and assess how systems and practices correspond to the clients' needs and expectations (Preskill, 1994: 292). Although the meaning of the self-evaluative model has been recognized in theories of continuous renewal and organizational learning, empirical knowledge on their use and effects has been limited. Evaluation activities have been increasingly integrated into the management and human resource development (HRD) -systems of organizations, although how the different evaluation methods really work in practice is not well known; it is not always possible to say how evaluation is integrated into learning and development, and what the effects of their implementation are for the organizations (see Cousins et al., 2004: 131; Torres & Preskill, 2001: 391; Ford & Evans, 2001: 22). The competition for resources is strong when it comes to evaluation and development initiatives in organizations. Therefore, it is necessary to empirically specify a theory of change, i.e. how evaluative activities can lead to developments.

This article explores the use of self-evaluation for organizational development in Finnish social care. The approach taken is developmental evaluation, which emphasizes that the main purpose of an evaluation is to facilitate and support development within organizations (Patton, 2011). The article aims to study the use of evaluation for developing work and services from two perspectives: First, the study explores the use of self-evaluation results for development while focusing on the critical components for producing shared development goals based on evaluation results as well as on the factors that are critical to implementing development activities; second, the article explores the process use of developmental evaluation by identifying outcomes from the evaluation process in specific case groups. The empirical data is drawn from

case groups that have implemented two kinds of evaluation methods: Empowerment evaluation and the ITE (a model developed in Finland) self-assessment method. As a starting point for this study, an observation was made that in regard to the two evaluation methods, no significant differences were observed in the developmental goals and actions of the work communities, or in how successfully they were implemented. Therefore, it was meaningful to map the critical components in addition to the methods that influenced the course and success of the developmental evaluation process.

The article is structured as follows. First, theoretical frameworks are presented concerning the ideas of developmental evaluation and evaluation use, as well as the framework of trialogical learning. Then the research process is described and the empirical results are presented. Finally, conclusions and implications for future research are proposed.

Evaluation use as the core for developmental evaluation

Looking at evaluation use (how evaluation information is put to use) helps to define and understand the role of evaluation in organizational development. Evaluation use has mostly been dealt with from the point of view of external evaluation and from the instrumental use of evaluation (e.g. Mark & Henry 2004; Forss et al. 2002, 29). The usefulness of internal evaluation, self-evaluation and peer evaluation methods is easily taken for granted. Anyhow, neither external nor internal evaluation automatically lead to improvements or better quality or better results, although they require some mediators through which change can occur in organizations and programs. A better understanding of the prerequisites for evaluation use may make it possible to avoid ritualistic evaluations and evaluations that are detached from practices and their improvement.

This article parses the concept of use in two ways: (1) use of evaluation outputs, such as results, findings and lessons learned, and (2) use of evaluation processes. The use of outputs usually refers to a direct action that occurs as a result of an evaluation. This kind of use can be instrumental, conceptual or symbolic. Instrumental use means that evaluation findings have led to a direct change in actions. Conceptual use refers to more general learning that occurs as a consequence of evaluation, with the result being changes in thoughts and feelings and in understanding. Symbolic or persuasive use of evaluation results refers to situations in which evaluation findings are used in persuasive or symbolic manners, for example, to justify and strengthen a pre-existing position or information. (Harnar & Preskill, 2007:27; Mark & Henry, 2004:36.)

Mark & Henry (2004) have captured and classified the key mechanisms through which evaluation may have its effects on attitudes and actions. Their framework includes three levels of analysis (individual, interpersonal and collective) with four kinds of processes within each level: general influence, cognitive and affective, motivational, and behavioral. The focus is on the use of findings. The process use of evaluation does not correspond to any specific mechanism in their classification because it is based on a different logic.

Process use refers to evaluation use that takes place during the evaluation process. It means that the evaluation process as such is seen as an intervention that produces development, i.e. through evaluating design, formulating evaluation questions and responding to them. Process use is indicated by individual changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process. (Patton, 2011.)

This study reviews process use in the empirical data by utilizing Patton's sensitizing categories for changes arising from process use. The categories are cognitive, attitudinal, affective and behavioral changes that can occur at individual, group or community levels, or within a program or organization (Patton, 2007:2011). Patton (2007) suggests the concept of process use should be understood as a sensitizing concept instead of operationalizing and measuring it. The sensitizing concept directs attention to—and raises consciousness of—process use within a specific context. The meaning of process use is bound within the context, and therefore it should be situationally defined and operationalized.

Developmental evaluation as collaborative learning and knowledge-creation

Learning is as a central mechanism in evaluation use. Learning is rarely the main aim of the participants in evaluations, but it is a necessary mechanism or mediator, as well as a by-product of the process of trying to solve problems, originate new thoughts and advance collective knowledge to improve work practices (see Bereiter, 2002; Hakkarainen et al., 2004: 117). The literature on evaluation has mostly reflected on evaluation from the perspectives of monologic and dialogic learning (e.g. Preskill, 1994; Preskill & Torres, 2000). Preskill et al. (2003) states that process use of evaluation should be based on social constructivist theory, which suggests that individuals construct knowledge and develop a shared reality through collaboration with others. Constructivist learning theory corresponds mainly to conceptual use of evaluation, while not really dealing with more instrumental use. Therefore, evaluation harnessed for organizational renewals can benefit from the ideas of trialogical learning. A trialogical perspective on learning helps to understand how evaluation is used in collaborative development processes, that is, to utilize evaluation knowledge for collectively creating something new.

A trialogical approach to learning is based on a metaphor that conceptualizes learning as a process of knowledge creation (Paavola et al., 2004). The knowledge-creation metaphor is one of three metaphors used to describe learning, the other two being the acquisition and participation metaphors (Paavola et al., 2004; Sfard, 1998). The knowledge-creation metaphor of learning sees learning as analogical to an innovative process of inquiry, where new ideas, tools and practices are created and the initial knowledge is either substantially enriched or significantly transformed during the process. It is characteristic of a knowledge-creation approach to examine learning in terms of the creation of processes, practices and social structures that support knowledge advancement and innovat-

ion, and to address the importance of generating new ideas and conceptual knowledge. (Paavola et al., 2004; Hakkarainen et al., 2004.)

Trialogical learning concentrates on interaction where people are collaboratively developing, transforming, or creating shared objects of activity in some systematic way. The focus is not only on individuals or on communities, but on the way people develop mediating objects to produce something new. These kinds of objects can be conceptual or material in nature, such as ideas/thoughts, texts, prototypes, products or practices. The trialogic learning perspective acknowledges that the organization of interaction takes place not just around mediating objects, but through them. The trialogic view of learning and collaborative development helps to recognize a mediating role for different kinds of human and non-human actors and artifacts in interaction. (Paavola et al., 2004; Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005.)

Developmental evaluation and an overview of self-evaluation methods

Developmental evaluation is an evaluation approach that aims to support program, project, product, personnel and/ or organizational development through evaluation processes and activities (Patton, 2011). Developmental evaluation integrates the continuous processes of evaluation and development. It can be conducted with different kinds of evaluation methods and based on different kinds of theories of change. The purpose of developmental evaluation needs to be clarified in relation to the more established formative and summative evaluations. Patton (2011) distinguishes developmental evaluation from formative and summative forms of evaluation by emphasizing the difference between developments and improvements. Formative evaluation prepares and improves a model, and summative evaluation tests the stable and fixed model to determine whether it produces the desired outcomes as well as assessing whether the observed outcomes can be attributed to the program. Developmental evaluation aims to support developments in action by creating new models and ways of working. It assumes that an action, a program or a model is never ready or somehow perfect but is constantly in a state of change. Each of these forms of evaluation is important and fulfills a specific purpose. (Patton, 2011:4, 36-39.) Developmental evaluation can involve process evaluation and implementation analysis, and process is something that it is attended to, but the ultimate focus of developmental evaluation is on results and developments that lead to desired objectives (Gamble, 2008:23).

In the case study, the work communities conducted developmental evaluation as internal evaluation employed alongside self-evaluation methods. The purpose was to foster and support practitioners in doing conscious reflection and to provide continuity in work development for the core work in social care organizations. The two methods implemented in the work communities were empowerment evaluation (EE) and the ITE-method. These chosen methods emphasize the agency of the employees in knowledge production and development. They are orientated towards evaluating and developing work practices from different points of view (see Table 1). The methods share the general features of organi-

zational assessment: understanding the current state, identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement, prioritizing opportunities and planning improvements, and communicating assessment outcomes (e.g. Immordino, 2009:11-15). This logic for integrating evaluation into developments is not totally unique; the process of conducting self-evaluation for development involves some aspects of action research, although the practitioners are not researchers. Next, an overview of the self-evaluation methods will illustrate the process and logic of how evaluation could serve development work.

Table 1. Summary of the evaluation methods

	Empowerment evaluation	**ITE-method**
General purpose of method	To improve the performance of the organization by fostering the self-determination of practitioners and capacity to see connections between work-related problems and solutions.	To assist work communities in systematic quality management.
Theoretical background	Participation and empowerment theory.	Quality management.
Focus of evaluation	Performance of the work community in its primary task.	Structures, processes and outputs of action from the viewpoint of quality management.
Main development interests	Strengthening of goal-directedness and seeing connections between goals and work tasks. Empowering work culture.	Quality management of a work community and quality of services.

Empowerment evaluation is defined as the use of evaluation concepts, techniques and findings to foster improvement and self-determination (Fetterman, 2001). It aims to increase the probability of achieving program success by providing stakeholders with tools for planning, implementing, and evaluating their program. There has been debate about whether empowerment evaluation is an ideology or a movement, and on its implementation and empowering effects (Miller & Campbell, 2006). Our case studies employed a model designed by Hanne Krogstrup (2004) to support organizational development especially in work communities in the public sector.

The EE procedure consists of four steps. First, the work community becomes familiar with the objectives set in the vision and strategy of the municipality. They put together the central aims for their work, moving from the in-

sights of individuals to the level of the work community. The purpose is to create a shared basis for the work, and to create a connection between the objectives and everyday work. Second, the work community takes stock of its performance. It proceeds from the individual to the collective level by naming the central activities of practitioners' work. Then, activities are categorized and prioritized in relation to the aims of the work community. The purpose is to find 7 to 10 key activities and to evaluate how well they perform collectively in these activities. Based on these results, the work community makes a judgment about their strengths and weaknesses. After that, a future course is charted based on the assessment. The participants define the development goals for each of the key activities they have identified and conceive strategies for achieving them. The final step consists of defining indicators and strategies for assessing the desired development outcomes. (Krogstrup, 2004; Fetterman, 2001.)

The ITE-method for self-assessment and quality management is designed to help work communities with systematic quality management. The Finnish name ITE refers to participants *themselves*. The ITE-method is not bound to any particular quality management method, but is compatible with other quality-oriented frameworks and models, such as the model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), and the Balanced Scorecard (BSC). This method has been widely applied in the health and social sector in Finland. It consists of a 25-item questionnaire with instructions and a matrix for displaying and working with results, as well as a form for planning development activities. (Holma, 2003.)

The ITE-method becomes familiar in the process of planning how the evaluation will be implemented. The self-evaluation is then carried out; using a questionnaire, participants assess on a 0–5 scale how the defined quality-related matters are taken care of in a unit. The questionnaire focuses on the unit's ability to plan, guide and demonstrate the quality of services. All the answers are collected and collated in an Excel-spreadsheet so as to create a quality profile. After that, the work community examines and considers the results through graphics and numeral key figures (percentages, averages, dispersion and distribution). Then, judgments are made about the results, and the participants plan whether improvements are necessary and if so, how they are going to be done. The final phase invites suggestions for implementing improvements. By renewing the cycle and using a spreadsheet it is possible to compare results over time. (Holma, 2003)

Research data and methods

The study explores development processes in work communities that took part in a research and development project carried out within the social welfare offices of Finnish municipalities in 2005–2007. The project aimed to initiate the development of work practices from the perspective of a work community within social care. A work community was broadly understood as a multi-professional unit with shared primary tasks and practices.

The project aimed to strengthen the capacity for development and evaluative thinking in social welfare offices. The project applied a participative and procedualistic (Moldasch & Brödner, 2002) approach to organizational develop-

ment, emphasizing a bottom-up approach and the role of practitioners as subjects of development of their own work. The project staff trained the participants in how to use the evaluation methods, with participants then deciding themselves which of the methods they would apply. The project staff did not participate in implementing the methods or in any other development work at the work sites. The author worked as a researcher in the project and was responsible for gathering and providing the work communities with knowledge of process-evaluation.

Through the following questions, this article explores how the work communities of social care used self-evaluation to develop their work and services:

1. What components were critical to producing development goals on the basis of evaluation results, and for implementing development activities in the work communities?

2. What were the outcomes of the process use of developmental evaluation in these work communities?

The study used a multiple case study design to look at 8 separate work communities (case groups), covering both the employed evaluation methods, and to identify common patterns and themes within them. The aim was to understand the implementation processes and effects as well as the meaning of the contextual and mediating factors in the process. The case groups manifested both successful and less successful development processes, enabling me to analyze the critical factors affecting the significant positive and negative turning points in the process.

Initially, four work communities were chosen for the analysis: two of them employed Empowerment Evaluation (codes E1 and E2) and two employed the ITE-method (codes ITE1 and ITE2). However, during the first year of the project, case group ITE2 split into four separate team-based work communities. Thereafter, these four case groups were analyzed separately in terms of their own processes (codes ITE3, ITE4, ITE5 and ITE6). By including first-year results for ITE2, 8 case groups in total provided data that went into the final analyses. Figure 2 presents the main characteristics of the case groups.

Data were gathered over the span of a project lasting three years. The main data consisted of reflective group conversations carried out on four occasions for each case group. The researcher gave guidelines for the discussions, but the work communities themselves conducted and recorded the discussions. At the end of the project, superiors and key informants (n=11) were interviewed. The reflective conversations focused on events and actions during the development process, on reflecting backwards on the implementation of methods, and orienting towards the next steps; the semi-structured interviews focused on organizational features and changes and the development culture during the process. Documentation produced by the work communities (e.g. evaluation reports, documentation of workshops) was utilized as supplementary data, which also enabled data triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

All the data were transcribed and analyzed by qualitative content analysis (Patton, 2002:453). Atlas.ti-software functioned as a technical aid in coding and managing the data. The analysis for each case group began by labeling concepts

and categories in the data using an iterative process of open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The categories were created for defining specific features of the evaluation and development processes in the data, as well as identifying the phases and effects of the process of self-evaluation and development.

Table 2. Characteristics of the case groups

Case	Main work area	Size	Organization of work
E1	Social services	12	Two teams: work in the area of social work with families and adult social work.
E2	Social services	8	Minor specialization in the tasks of social work, involving a family worker and office workers.
ITE1	Social services	16	Unit made up of social workers, office workers, day care workers and a unit of family work.
ITE2	Social services, (consisting of areas of cases ITE3-5)	40	Teams in the areas of adult social work, client services, substance abuse, and child welfare.
ITE3	Adult social work	9	Teams working in the areas of social work and living allowance.
ITE4	Child welfare	14	Teams working in the area of child welfare and family work; located across two worksites.
ITE5	Substance abuse care	10	Two units were in the process of being unified around the start of the project; work areas included non-institutional care and services for young people.
ITE6	Labour Service Center	8	A multi-sector unit working across 4 municipalities, in the areas of labour and social services, and services of the Social Insurance Institution. The unit was founded a little after the development process began.

The case analysis began by establishing what the process of developmental evaluation had been for each case group. The analysis involved identifying the different phases of implementing the methods in the case groups. Meaningful events and turning points were traced with the aim of understanding what factors affected the course of the process. Temporal and causal links between actions, events and artifacts were explored by tracing back and forth across the process data. Visualization of the temporal process of the case groups exposes connections between developmental activities and organizational events and other significant artifacts. From these illustrations, preliminary assumptions were

formed about the relations of events and the impacts of events on the sequence of the development process.

Next, the case groups were analyzed in detail in terms of the significant components of the development process, as well as 1) goal-formulation for development, 2) implementation of development activities, and 3) outcomes of the developmental evaluation process. The components could be sociomaterial resources, such as methods, interaction, events, actions or other artifacts. Within-case analyses were conducted by creating thematically organized write-ups and visualisations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After forming propositions on the role of the critical factors within the case groups, assumptions were verified and modified through cross-reference with other case groups. The assumptions were verified by analyzing how the component was manifested in each case and how it contributed to the process. The aim of the cross-case analyses was to discover under what circumstances the theoretical assumptions formulated on the basis of the data would be valid (Eisenhardt, 2002; Yin, 1994). In the final phase of the analysis, the results from the content analysis were reflected on and interpreted using the theoretical framework of trialogical learning and the process use of evaluation, utilizing especially Patton's sensitizing categories.

Critical components for using self-evaluation for development

The presented work communities employed Empowerment evaluation and the ITE-method, which both include the idea that through self-evaluation they could recognize by themselves the relevant goals for developing their work practices. There follow seven propositions that represent the critical components that directed and mediated the goal-formulation and the organization and implementation of the development activities.

> *Proposition 1. Self-evaluation functioned as an artifact to make tacit knowledge explicit but it did not automatically lead to a degree of consensus at the level of the work community.*

A cross-case analysis showed that both methods—ITE and Empowerment Evaluation—worked as a means to produce knowledge about aspects of the work community. The evaluation methods functioned as a kind of template for externalizing work-related knowledge within the work community. They helped to bring out issues for discussion that were not totally unknown among the practitioners before, but which needed to be explicitly and systematically handled within the community. The methods included some artifacts, such as scoring, through which the tacit knowledge became explicit. In Mark & Henry's (2004) framework on general influence processes, this could correspond to a process of elaboration (i.e. thought processing).

The methods included an implicit assumption that putting insights together would lead to some degree of community-level consensus about the development needs. However, in practice the case groups in both method-groups did not manage to formulate the shared goals directly from the evaluation results. The process seemed to be more complicated. The self-evaluation results were objects that needed to be discussed communally to see how they actually reflected the

strengths and weaknesses of the performance. Thus, the evaluation results as such did not directly provide an adequate base for formulating development goals. For example, using the ITE-method, a quality profile was created that placed numerical values on those things that were important to quality management, but it did not provide the work communities with an adequate base for developmental work. Also the results of the EE-method (the key activities and performance data) were not unambiguous. There was a lack of uniform criteria or ways to convert knowledge into development goals in the case groups.

> *Proposition 2: A shared understanding of a work community and its primary tasks provided a framework to interpret evaluation results in a meaningful way.*

In the beginning, confusion about the constitution of the work community and its development agency seemed to be the reason why most of the case groups found it challenging to identify shared development objectives using the evaluation data. The national project was an initiative that encouraged participants to consider the social welfare office as a work community and as a subject for development. However, the data revealed that a work community was not a clear entity for the participants, as expected beforehand. In light of the data, social welfare offices seemed to consist of many communities of practice (Brown & Duquid, 1991) and the process of goal-formulation made visible the boundaries between different occupational groups.

How evaluation results were produced and how meaningful they were considered to be by participants was related to how the work community and primary tasks were understood. The influence of the evaluation seemed to depend on agenda setting and motivational processes (see Mark & Henry 2004), in a sense of need and will for utilizing the results. In particular, case groups employing empowerment evaluation emphasized comprehensive discussions about vision and objectives for the work before deciding on concrete development goals. From the view of trialogic learning, envisioning functioned as a mediating practice that guided developmental work for the future by setting a general framework for work and thus strengthening a shared object among the practitioners.

> I think when thinking about the basic function, somehow the core is not yet found, or it has not been thought about enough, the very basic thing, or at least it is somehow a bit unclear to me. In my opinion more time could still be used, not to jump ahead too early - without having the basic function clear - towards some kind of development. (S05:EE1)

> *Proposition 3: A work community needed to identify adequate intersections and joint objects to which to attach development goals and activities.*

No matter which evaluation method was employed, it was essential to be able to recognize a sufficient intersection between the participants, that is, objects that

could be shared by all participants. Identifying shared objects, whether concrete or abstract, substantial or developmental, functioned as a connecting factor between people from different occupational backgrounds. They were kinds of mediating artifacts in creating a sense of community and they enabled progress towards collaborative development.

> We've already been here one and a half years and it's not until now that we somehow start to get going […] we have not yet got to the concrete developing or very far, which I think has been somehow surprising here, that it has taken so much time, making changes takes so much time. It takes a lot of discussion before you find some good point to get us all committed, and analyzing the results – I think it gave me a lot, when we had then responded to and gone through the results and somehow saw our profile. (K06:ITE1)

Work communities with and without shared objects equally acknowledged and verified their critical role. Continuing development work often depended on shared objects. The case ITE2 illustrates this well: the case consisted of a large group of professionals working within the social sector. They were brought to-gether under a loose framework, without establishing any common goals or development framework in advance. They conducted self-evaluation by using the ITE-method, but reflected on the survey questions from different points of view. Without a joint framework for reflecting on the results of the self-evaluation, the participants considered the evaluation knowledge as irrelevant in regard to their own work. As a result, the development work was carried forward in four smaller team-based groups (ITE3-6). Some of these teams quite easily identified their shared aims and objects for developing. These could be things such as the poor image of child protection in the case of ITE4. Some case groups still had difficulties in forming a common ground within the teams, due e.g. to the unit's primary task remaining unclear.

In another case (EE1) the group was also on the verge of splitting into team-based groups. The evaluation process of naming the core functions and scoring them had revealed and brought into the discussion various occupational diffe-rences between the two teams and their work tasks, causing tensions between the employees. Despite this, they managed to find shared objects, such as the guidance of clients, that were somehow critical to the client process and work practices of all the participants across team boundaries. These practices funct-ioned as joint objects, which operated as kinds of boundary objects for the practitioners (Star & Griesemer, 1989), constituting an adequate justification to continue the development work together, as a unified social welfare office.

In the process phase that followed the organization of the development acti-vities turned out differently in each of the case groups, depending on which of the joint objects the development initiatives were directed at. When development initiatives were geared to shared objectives that crossed occupational boundaries, the concrete development activities could be organized in several directions within the teams, giving them different practical contents. In other words, the members had a joint object, e.g. the documentation of client work, which was realized in different ways in their own work practices. Joint objects could be

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practices that all the practitioners of the work community were engaged in to some extent. In the present case groups, these kinds of overlapping practices related to either the substantial practices of a unit, e.g. guidance of clients, or to more interactional and communal practices, e.g. training of employees. Activities for developing joint practices were conducted as a whole work community.

> *Proposition 4: To implement development goals, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of developmental work in regard to the work of a practitioner.*

A prerequisite to the utilization of the evaluation results for developmental purposes was an understanding of how development work and the use of an evaluation method could benefit one's own basic work. In case groups where the development project faced resistance from the beginning, based mainly on experiences of previous projects, participants had difficulties in seeing how knowledge arising from self-evaluation would be useful for developing their own work. In these case groups the general purpose of the development work seemed to be unclear, with the identification of common denominators—so-called joint objects—among the employees also weak. In terms of motivation and commitment, it was important to externalize a path from the general and practical development objectives to one's own work and vice versa. As a good positive example, case EE2 formulated a connection between the general objective and practical improvements as follows:

> Although the development objects have been things such as the organization of work, meeting practices and social duty and things like that, somewhere underneath has all the time been the idea of what we are doing with the clients so that their life would somehow change for the better. (S07:EE2)

A recognized development need and a general objective of development were not only important in defining development goals; they also had an impact on how development activities were implemented in practice. This was equally visible in case groups that succeeded in the implementation of activities (ITE4, ITE6, EE1, EE2) and in case groups (ITE3, ITE5) that faced difficulties in implementation. If the participants did not see the relevance of development activities to their primary task, and if that primary task of the work community was still unclear or unshared, it was difficult to commit and to allocate sufficient resources to conducting development activities.

> *Proposition 5: Evaluation methods provided some artifacts to support the implementation of activities, but the progression of the process was more dependent on other components than methods.*

One starting point was to use evaluation instrumentally, so that evaluation findings would lead to actions in the work communities. The evaluation methods provided tools for concretizing goals into development activities and implementing them. The ITE-method provided a pro forma document for concretizing goals into development activities. In one case (ITE1) this document functioned

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as an important artifact for coordinating joint actions in the work community, bounding the practitioners and their interests explicitly together and functioning as a mediating tool for communication. Empowerment evaluation suggested creating an explicit path from goals to an implementation strategy and monitoring it. The case groups formulated these kinds of paths, but defining indicators for monitoring the progress was found to be difficult. According to the cross-case analysis, the progression of the developmental process from evaluation results to the implementation of development activities was dependent on organizational factors as well as both motivational and behavioral processes (see Mark & Henry 2004).

> *Proposition 6. For a successful development process, it was critical that the development activities based on the self-evaluation could be integrated into externally imposed initiatives.*

In almost all of the present case groups, the development processes took place in conjunction with organizational restructuring that was launched and managed top-down within the social welfare offices. The critical question was how externally imposed changes were managed in the organization and whether the planning process was participatory; in other words, it was a matter of organizational and management culture and whether there was room for bottom-up development initiatives. The preparation of large organizational changes, e.g. coalescence of the social and health sector, or the restructuring of municipalities and their services, was typically resource intensive. In the case groups this meant that upcoming organizational restructuring was an all too easy reason to neglect the implementation of some of the planned development activities at the level of the work community. However, the data did involve case groups (e.g. EE1) where the restructuring actually facilitated the implementation of the development activities of the work community. How the activities of the work community were integrated into changes taking place at the level of the whole organization, the municipality or the state was the crucial success factor. In the case groups where initiatives coming from outside were successfully merged into the development process of the work community, there was no longer a clear division by the end of the project between the process launched in the project and other development initiatives. This implied that development goals that are ultimately grounded in evaluation knowledge were nourished through initiatives, modifications and pressures coming from outside the work community.

> *Proposition 7: Developmental evaluation required a structured and coordinated process in order to generate positive effects.*

Maintaining the development process required structural elements to be present in the work community. The case groups that adopted a constant process approach demonstrated the importance of frequently organized meetings. On the other hand, opportunities, motivation and willingness to give time and space for collaborative development activities were connected to other components presented in this article that are critical to organizing and implementing the development activities.

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The development work of the case groups benefited where the turnover of personnel was relatively low. A high turnover introduced interruptions to the process, and it needed to be restarted several times so as to involve the new people. Most of all, the development process was challenging to maintain in the absence of a superior, despite the determination or work of other active persons in charge. Case ITE1 illustrated that, for instance, a constant turnover of superiors led to confusion about basic things at work and a feeling of "floating" for the personnel that undeniably affected the coordination of and the commitment to the development process. Even though the case groups emphasized that developmental evaluation was the responsibility of the whole community, they stressed the clear role of the person(s) in charge of co-ordinating those activities based on self-evaluation results.

> It should be somehow in some way under the control of someone who would be responsible, not this kind of a work community, which does - well, employees do a lot of different kinds of work - that it is not possible to continue together, automatically, with this kind of a thing, but it clearly has to have someone in charge. (K07:EE1)

Outcomes of the process of developmental evaluation

To complement previous perspectives on the use of self-evaluation, the process use of evaluation is explored by identifying some process outcomes of developmental evaluation. The participants often highlighted physical, structural and organizational factors that together had contributed to the changes. In case groups where change initiatives coming from different directions were tightly bound together, the effect of an individual developmental action was blurred. To illustrate how process outcomes were manifested in the case groups, four propositions for the process use of developmental evaluation are presented.

> *Proposition 8. The developmental evaluation process enhanced the structuring of the development work, through the use of self-evaluation methods, the project framework and engagement in the joint objects for development.*

During the development processes the case groups managed to structure and systematize development work in a new way. In this, the evaluation methods functioned as a means to launch and align the goal-setting process, providing structures for common discussion in the social welfare offices. Participation in the project's national framework provided the work communities with a legitimization to create sustainable structures for organizational development. In practice, it enabled the organization of forums for collaborative knowledge-creation involving all the members of the social welfare office. In many case groups it was the first time things had been explored from the perspective of the whole unit and, in due course, from the perspective of the shared objects of the practitioners.

The evaluation methods functioned as a means to systematize topics for adoption into the development agenda. As the development capacity of the work

communities increased in some case groups during the process, they also started to more actively use other sources for reflection and to take stock of the performance. The case groups showed that in addition to the evaluation method and project framework, the structuring of the development work required work communities to engage with joint objects, for instance with shared objectives, work objects or work practices, as well as forums for mutual engagement.

Proposition 9: Recognition of intersections and joint objects together with mutual development activities improved interaction within the work community.

The process of developmental evaluation revealed fluidity in the concept of a work community and showed that a work community needs to be actively produced and held together through definitions, common ground and the enterprise of its members. The practitioners of the social welfare offices connected the recognition of intersections and joint objects with an enhanced sense of work community. However, the sense of work community existed in the case groups to different extents: In case groups where the links between the practitioners remained weak, the meetings around the evaluation methods and development work provided an opportunity to get to know people. This can be seen as a prerequisite for collaborative development and trialogical learning, and for developing a stronger sense of togetherness.

I would say that the awareness, who does what and how, has improved during this time. And these discussions and new points of view have somehow been a help. And probably something which you could call a sense of community has kind of improved. (S07:EE2)

The increased sense of togetherness was related to mutual development work and regular meetings within the communities, irrespective of the evaluation method employed. The project framework and use of the evaluation methods directed the work communities towards identifying what was held in common between practitioners. Seeking a joint perspective for the development was felt to be quite challenging and difficult, but most of the case groups also considered it productive in the sense of common discussions and knowledge-creation. Clarifying common work objectives led to a fostering of coherence for the work communities and helped to strengthen them as an entity and as a purposeful actor. The participants perceived the increased sense of togetherness as a kind of positive counterforce to the general trend of professional specialization in the work of the social welfare offices.

Proposition 10: The process strengthened capacity for development through discussions, handling of conflicts and enhanced skills for employing methods.

The data revealed that the work communities' capacity for carrying out development work increased during the process. The development capacity refers to the ability of the work communities to perform development work in their orga-

nization by themselves (see Preskill & Torres, 1999a). In this study, this manifested as an ability to solve problems and handle difficult things as a work community. In the EE-case groups this was especially connected to tensions and conflicts directly confronted as a result of the evaluation. As the ability for discussing as a group increased and as common objectives were clarified, it became easier to make sense of the new practices and the challenges faced. As noted, most case groups needed to clarify their primary tasks and shared objectives during the development process. Consequently, the work communities were encouraged to speak up for the mission of their work, e.g. for client-centered social work. For both method-groups, enhanced confidence and knowledge created among the participants increased the feeling of responsibility and the courage to take things up in common discussions and also in external forums.

Enhanced capacity appeared in the way the methods were employed by the work communities. Case groups that employed the Empowerment Evaluation followed the model quite strictly during the first round – from goal-setting to the implementation of activities. With more experience the work communities were able to master the model, making it possible to also deviate from it. The method had a visible role in the phase of goal- and strategy-formulation, but when the implementation went further, it seemed as if it had by then merged into practice. Mackenzie (2005:392) talks about a smooth translation of technology, referring to a process in which technology seems to fall into a mundane practice and to become less obviously technological. The case groups of the EE-method in particular emphasized the method as a springboard for the development process and for capacity building.

> *Proposition 11: The process facilitated knowledge creation and learning about work and the work community through crossing boundaries and externalization of knowledge.*

Discussing the results of the evaluation within the work communities led to a collective knowledge of the different work tasks, with a sharing of insights between work colleagues. Tacit knowledge was externalized through self-evaluation and discussions, making visible the activities, views, assumptions and values within the work community. Developmental evaluation facilitated boundary crossing within the occupational groups inside the case groups: occupational boundaries needed to be crossed to view the work from the perspective of the whole work community. The data showed that the use of the EE-method helped to bring out the variety of work-related activities and revealed how practices were connected to each other. It enabled work colleagues to see their own role as part of something bigger, and in relation to the tasks of others which have been seen as results of organizational learning (Preskill, 1994) and as a result of cognitive changes. The ITE-method and its questionnaire also worked as a tool to make things visible and provide information for reflection. The themes brought out by the ITE-method facilitated a perception of the different phases and processes that are important in client work from the point of view of the community. In some case groups, the participants saw that a collaborative process of knowledge creation through discussion had, up to that point, facilitated

cognitive changes, with progress in the practitioners' way of thinking being more evident than concrete changes in practice. In those case groups, learning was more monological and dialogical than trialogical. To sum, in both method-groups it was critical that things that were related to work practices or work community were not taken for granted and assumptions were not made about what was already shared within the community. Instead, it was important to consider the insights and perspectives that arose from the evaluation as a source to create new development objects for work.

Conclusions

The article addressed evaluation use in public sector organizations. It focused on evaluation use from the point of view of developmental evaluation, which was employed by the work communities of social care in developing their work and services. Based on the case study, the article sheds light on the development process, touching on evaluation results, formulating development goals, and implementing development activities. The study brought forth the critical components necessary to utilizing evaluation for developing the work and services of the work communities. The results emphasize the importance of intersections between professionals and joint objects, from which development activities can be formulated and attached in a meaningful way. The propositions presented in the article imply that to develop work and services using self-evaluation, it is necessary to concentrate on collaborative processes and mediating artifacts through which evaluation results are produced, interpreted and given meanings. The article highlights that developmental evaluation requires learning that is not only monologic and dialogic but also trialogic in nature. To some extent, it was possible to see that the critical components resemble the underlying processes (e.g. cognitive and affective, motivational and behavioral) recognized by Mark & Henry (2004) as being important to evaluation influence.

The accountability of developmental evaluation rests on its ability to support development (Gamble, 2008: 24). The study illustrated the process outcomes of developmental evaluation and presented them mostly as conceptual changes that are important in achieving more instrumental changes in practices. When relating the process outcomes to Patton's (2007) sensitizing categories, it is clear that developmental evaluation had cognitive, behavioral, attitudinal and affectional effects. Cognitive changes occurred in the thinking of participants, in that they were strongly connected to an understanding of the work community and its shared development agency. The awareness of work traits and a work community increased within the case groups. The affectional and attitudinal changes were apparent in the increased sense of togetherness. In regards to behavioral outcomes, some changes in individual and communal capacities and practices for conducting evaluation and development were recognized. Developmental evaluation appeared to be a process constructed through interaction between practitioners and the organizational, social, cultural and technical components. In the case groups, the process of using the evaluation results as a basis for searching, groping forwards and discussing was important, though not al-

ways an uncomplicated or linear process through which to develop work and services.

The propositions presented in this article could be a basis for making developmental evaluation within organizations more conscious and effective. To better understand the use of evaluation for developing work and services, empirical knowledge and follow-up-studies are needed on the use of different kinds of evaluations, not least the user-oriented evaluations, and on the perceived effectiveness of evaluative activities for practitioners and their clients.

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