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The Dialogical Approach

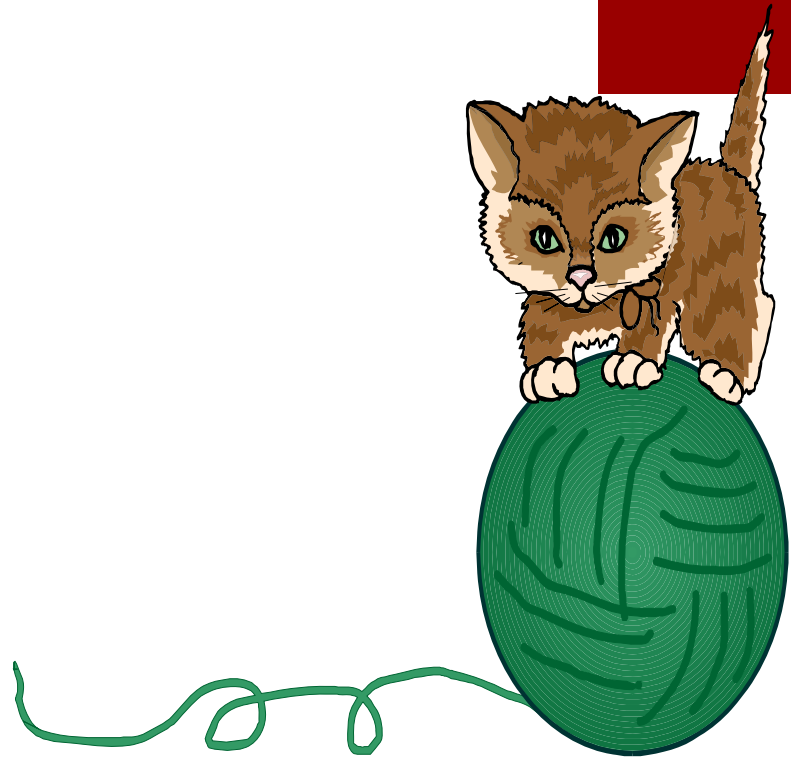
a Finnish perspective on effective
strategies for implementing good
practices

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- *You don't choose a welfare model, it is built through many creeks and compromises*

(Raija Julkunen 2006)

The outline

The Finnish context
The processes and
rationales for the
development of good
practices –the three turns
Some illustrative cases
Key components



The Finnish context



- The autonomy of local governments is strong:
- Local authorities have strong statutory responsibilities in providing basic services of the welfare state: health, education and social services. These three service functions take about $\frac{3}{4}$ of municipal budgets.
- A turbulent welfare service field:
 - Law revisions, municipality reforms, organisational reforms, welfare development structure reforms..

Citizens and clients




- Welfare services give people support in different situations, broadly using standardized services and benefits. The intention is to provide as equal treatment as possible where high quality means uniform quality. This is the underlining rationale in the Nordic welfare regime, as the basis of the model are citizens not clients.
- Nevertheless, in many cases we do not deal with standard issues, but unique cases that require dynamic responses and solutions.

Effectiveness has become a powerful organising concept



- The effectiveness discussion also prevails in the Finish Society. A recent study (Rajavaara 2007) has analyzed what kinds of rationales exist on effectiveness and their impacts on welfare state activities, using Finnish social policy and social work research as case studies

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- In the 2000's dialogical research- and evaluation forms are rather common within the welfare sector and found the evaluation practice within social work in Finland to belong to the interaction-based style of reasoning

The interaction-based evaluation approach



- An effectiveness evaluation and development project started together with practitioners at Helsinki welfare office in the beginning of the 2000s
- *We started out by trying to clarify for ourselves the realistic concepts and thinking. The process was both challenging and complicated. Starting required outside guidance and counseling as well as analyzing the evaluation mode and getting it more in touch with practical work.*

Boundary spanners I



- Basis of trust thru long relationships:
 - ✧ The close co-operation with practice through different development projects has formed a basis of trust between the national and the local level
 - ✧ Evaluation tools, but still theory is more helpful

The dialogical approach



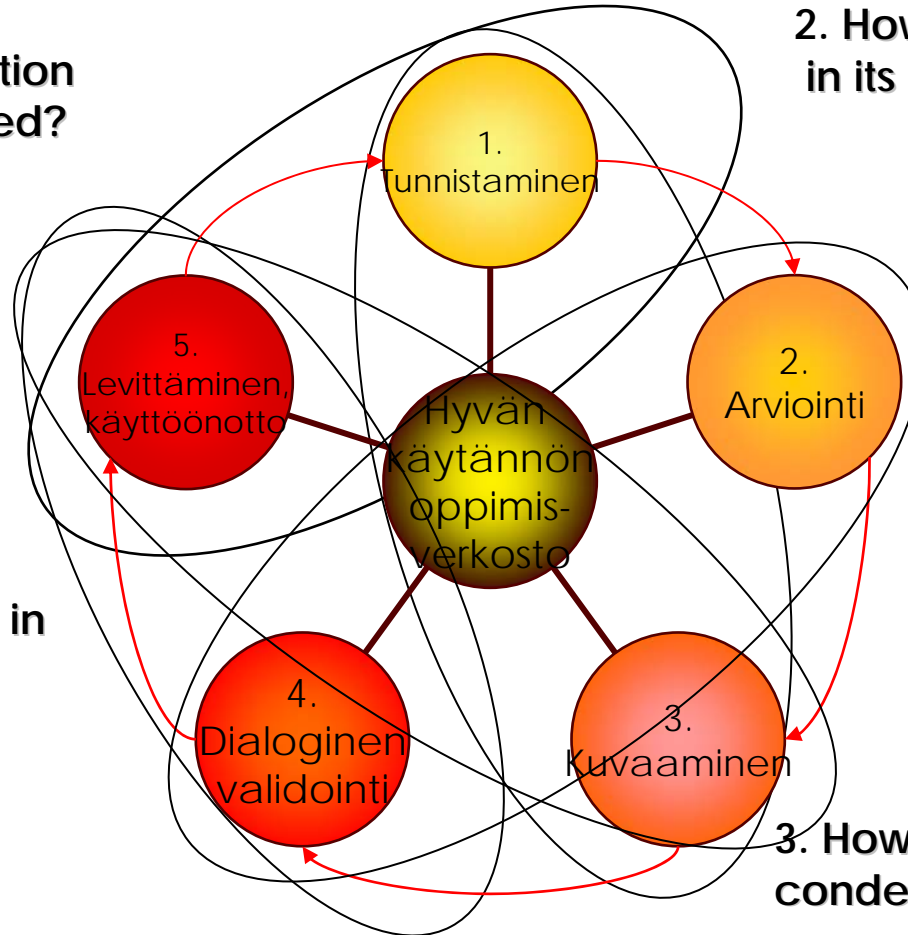
- In 2003 we started a discussion on strengthening the evidence base within the social services. Research on evidence was scarce, development was extensive but fragmental. How to go about to strengthen the evidence base? Should the EBM be taken as a reference point?

1. How is practice identified and conceptualised?



2. How is practice evaluated in its context?

5. How is the dissemination of the practice promoted?



4. How is practice tested in the learning network?

3. How is practice condensed and published?

Good practice process
www.goodpractice.fi

Commitment on many levels



- Good practices as a systemic working method requires a change in current ways of thinking and.
- A change in working methods also requires organisation-level measures in order to support interaction and learning for example by providing the necessary time and space.
- Accordingly, good practices call for commitment by the organisation's management.

The good practice process is



- identifying, evaluating and condensing good practice, analysing it critically and validating it through dialogue and promoting its implementation. This is not always a linear process. That is why the figure is a hybrid presentation.
- You can start to describe practices even before it has been assessed. Ideas of good practice can also start to spread to a wider audience from a local level.

The Mirror method -

- The Mirror method is used for analysing and evaluating client work situations involving factors which are burdening or worrying the employee.
- The purpose?
- A literature review of international research concerning working conditions in social welfare indicates that clients requiring intense work efforts may negatively influence employees' job satisfaction. On the other hand, enabling a change in a client's life has been found to be a strong individual driver of job satisfaction and motivation.



Seeking evidence on a client basis



- Instead of attempting to create a ready-made and binding method, the project set out to produce a method which could be adapted according to the operating environment's requirements and which would be open for development and to various actors' ideas.
 - Tools, mentoring, open innovation
 - They sought *evidence for themselves* on the client work's effectiveness
- Laura Yliruka 2010

Zone of worries and early support



- An anticipation method for professionals :
- Operates best in situations where the professional is uncertain about how to take up a subjective worry concerning a child or adolescent with his or her parents or guardians.
- Was later used for categorizing clients –
- Improvement of ethical guidelines
 - Tom Arnkil & Esa Eriksson

Actionable knowledge



- Handbooks for Child Protection Services, Handbook for disability issues and adult services
- Learning forums – open environment structures for knowledge – dialogical forums, a strong network in child protection in Finland
- Fast knowledge; counting, single-systems designs, indicators, standardised tests and instruments, social reports, testing thru social media, eg.
 - <http://www.yprt.eu/sip/survey/>
- Slow knowledge; mechanisms, processes, indicators, social reports
- Ethical knowledge: Ethical criterias in applying methods

Data or knowledge used in evidence-based decision making



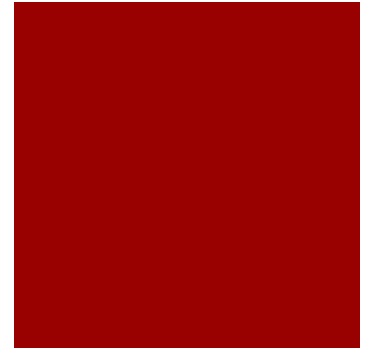
- must be collected from numerous areas to ensure that it is comprehensive. This is particularly important as the complexity of policies increases.
- By harnessing multiple evidence bases across a variety of actors, governments inform the decision-making and policy-making processes.
 - OECD (Public Governance reviews 2010 Finland

Boundary spanners II



- Collection of good practices
- The condensing tools:
 - The practices were processed dialogically where we as mentors supported the evaluations and analyses of these. At the same time we educated numerous mentors to support practitioners in producing descriptions of good practices as well as formed learning networks in disseminating the field of different themes.
- Practitioners learned to study the practice dialogically, they received tools for evaluating and condensing the practice, they formed networks.

The co-evolutive approach



- *But do not get stuck into one organization!*

A pragmatic knowledge service should :



- 1.Enable collaborative knowledge creation
- 2.Support development and application of collaborative knowledge practices
- 3.Support practical implementation of knowledge
- 4.Adapt to changing contexts, situations and purposes

Innovillage and learning



- Innovillage is an environment for the development, assimilation and evaluation of technology and services within the social and health sector.
- It promotes a multifaceted perspective to innovations where all the relevant actors should have the possibility to engage in the innovation process. This means including patients, professionals, developers, management and researchers.
- The REA tool (Juha Koivisto)



Key elements



- ✧ The foundation of the program: Creeks, Trust, Relationships, boundary spanners
- ✧ Evaluation competence must be developed and integrated
- ✧ Educational and mentoring programs
- ✧ Structures not necessary criterias
- ✧ Testing and validating
- ✧ Open innovation - all relevant parties should become involved in the processes of learning and knowledge production
- ✧ Elucidate different perspectives
- ✧ Asking questions, not necessarily finding the fast answers
- ✧ And do not forget theories and ethics

And some other hints



- ✧ Using numbers to unsettle practice: teams and different referral practices (White & Riemann 2009)
- ✧ Focus more on mechanisms and how we implement our practices – what is done, what is thought, what choices are made and what are these consequences
- ✧ Learning structures where experts and practitioners and users meet to critically review the knowledge base
- ✧ Partial knowledge is better than no knowledge (Pawson 2009)



Public health practitioners should share and exploit experiential knowledge in a much direct way through communities of practice – informal networks linking individuals and groups who share common professional interests and who benefit from frequent exchanges of knowledge.

Edward Mullen (2008) Evidence-Based Policy and social work in health and mental health