Evidence from Social Service Enhancement Projects: Selected Cases from Norway's HUSK Project

Asbjorn Johannessen[1]

and

Solveig Botnen Eide[2]

Abstract

"The University Research Program to Support Selected Municipal Social Service Offices," the Norwegian abbreviation HUSK, is the theme of this issue of the *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, and in this chapter we first describe the context of this project, i.e. the Norwegian social services, and we also give a brief description of the HUSK project. All together there were carried out about 50 sub-projects, and we have selected 10 of them which we give a brief description in this chapter. These cases are the basis for the analysis and presentation of the other articles in this issue. These cases are clustered into three with characteristic features: 1) Dialog 2) Education 3) Service innovation.

Key Words: Social Work, Social Services, Service Innovation, Collaboration

The aim of this article is to give an introduction to the HUSK project, the Norwegian abbreviation for "The University Research Program to Support Selected Municipal Social Service Offices". We want to make HUSK available for foreign readers and to provide a background for the following articles, which analyze HUSK through different theoretical lenses. In addition to a general presentation of HUSK and a brief of its context, the Norwegian welfare system, the article will present ten selected cases. The introduction will be given thematically, and the cases classified into three clusters with reference to main characteristic features of HUSK: Dialog, Education and Service innovation. These clusters are closely associated with the strategic goals of HUSK. We do not claim that the cases presented here can be fully characterized by only one of these three features, but this organization of the presentation emphasize main traits in the cases as well as in HUSK as a whole. The section *Selection of cases* will give a further explanation of the thematic base for case-presentation as well for the selections of cases.

The Context; Norwegian social services

HUSK was set in a Norwegian context, within the framework of the Norwegian welfare system. This welfare system, the institutional redistributive model of social policy is, according to Richard Titmuss (1974) comprehensive, with aims to prevent and solve social problems and to promote social justice. The organizations and efforts involved with the welfare system are complex, evaluated to be to over-complex and difficult to follow especially for the users. As an answer to this call, the reform *New Labor and Welfare*

---

[1] Oslo and Akershus University College.
[2] University of Agder.

Administration (hereafter referred to as NAV,[3] see Andreassen´s chapter), is thorough. Since the NAV reform was implemented in the HUSK period it, it will be given attention. NAV had, as we shall see, an influence on the HUSK project and its focus, namely social services. These social services have a particular responsibility for providing financial and personal help to those who cannot support themselves from wages earned in employment or from the national Social Insurance Scheme (includes disability benefits and rehabilitation benefits). The support is intended as a temporary provision for those who are attempting to be self-supporting. It is means-tested and discretionary, therefore a residual provision which we can call a safety net.

The recipients of municipal social services do not make up a homogeneous group. Recipients may be one-off, or quite long term beneficiaries. However, a great part of *long-term* aid recipients have extensive and sometimes very serious health problems, and there is a tendency for problems to build up (see amongst others, Wel et. al. 2006; Loyland 2013). Social services therefore require a complicated mix of assessment for economic benefits supported by a range of services for people with a range of different health and welfare issues.

The social service providers are not a homogeneous group, but most of them are educated in social work. The NAV reform articulates the aim to make the providers background more complex, but still with a demand of an education from a university or a university college.

What is HUSK?

HUSK was a program for collaborative elaboration of social services in Norway with an overarching goal of reinforcing knowledge and quality in municipal social services through developing and expanding new forms of working relationships between research, education, practice and users. Defined in the national government's budget in 2006 funds could be allocated for an experiments in that field (originally for five years and ultimately six -- 2006 to 2011). As stated in budget legislation for the Ministry of Health and Caring and The Ministry of Labor: "social service is the last safety net of the welfare programs, and the persons applying to this service in many cases have complex problems. It has been carried out many experiments to increase the competence in the social services, including efforts for substance abusers, homeless, people with financial and debt problems. However, it is pointed out that there is too big a gap between research, education, practice and users, a gap that HUSK is called to overcome or at least reduce. The way to overcome this gap was to involve different parties in the work, by choosing projects relevant for the main goals of HUSK.

HUSK's overarching goal is to improve social services. Even though the regional HUSK projects had a relatively wide room for choosing sub-projects, they all had to be connected to these strategic goals:

1. Promoting structures and arenas for required and equal collaboration between research, education, services and service users
2. Reinforcing practice-based research

---

[3] NAV was about merging three agencies, the Employment Service and the Social Insurance Service (both operated by the national government) and the Municipal Social Services (local government).

3. Reinforcing knowledge as the basis for practical application

Participants
The four involved parties in HUSK are researchers, educators, students, social workers and service users.

Researchers and educators
Several universities were involved as representatives of research and education. The representatives were connected to departments and programs of social work. They were engaged in both research and education, and are therefore referred to as *academics* in this article.

Students
The student participants were students on programs for social work, primarily from the universities participating in HUSK.

Service providers
Municipalities, represented by the social services they provide, were invited to take part in the project. The municipalities themselves decided in which sub project of HUSK they wanted to take part, and who from service practice would participate.

Service users
Some service users are members of organizations, such as *Mental helse*, a union for people with mental health problems, and *KREM* (Creative and manifold work life), a bridge building organization for users. Some of the users were users of social services (received social assistance or rehabilitation benefit), some were employed by an users organization, and some employed by a university participating HUSK.

On organization
There were both national and local levels in the HUSK organization. The directorate had a superior responsibility, managed by a steering group and advised by a reference group and an expert group. At the national level there were a person in charge of managing and coordinating the regional projects. The leaders of the local projects participated in regular meetings with central groups.

Four regional HUSK projects were launched, HUSK Agder, HUSK Mid-Norway, HUSK Oslo Region and HUSK Stavanger Region, all under the leadership of a university . Apart from leadership, the regional HUSK projects were free to choose their own ways of organization. However, all the regional projects established steering groups and project groups with representatives from the different parties. Each local HUSK had different numbers of sub-projects and was free to establish subprojects related to social service and the strategic goals of HUSK.

Even though the regional projects started up with different unique features, a starting point for the most of them was a kick-off seminar. At this seminar, the involved parties were

informed about HUSK, but first and foremost they were invited to get involved in working out their region's HUSK project.

As it was formulated from the directorate, the room for elaborating local profiles with regard to thematic focus and organization and was quite extensive.

A comprehensive number of sub-projects

In each of the four HUSK regions there were approximately 10-15 sub-projects for a total of approximately 50 cases across the country. In June 2009 the directorate published a catalogue with a presentation of closed and on-going sup- projects.[4] They varied in scope, duration, and number of participants ranging from one-time workshops to on-going training programs that continued after the HUSK funding. While most of the projects were implemented as planned, some were not completed. Some operated traditional research and evaluation projects while others involved service users as co-researchers. Those projects are described and analyzed in a great number of publications, approximately 150, (doctoral dissertations, journal articles, book anthologies, reports and papers) with a few exceptions, in Norwegian. In August 2011, about half a year before HUSK closed, a new catalogue was published by the directorate, a catalogue with a brief description of HUSK –publication at that time.[5]

Many of the publication are collected as articles in four books: *Brukermedvirkning. Likeverd og anerkjennelse,* (*User involment. Equality and Recognition*), (ed. Jenssen og Tronvoll). *Samarbeidsforskning i praksis (Collabortive Researcch in Practice* (ed. Johannessen, Natland and Stokken). *Minoritetsperspektivet i sosialt arbeid (Minoriy perspective in social work)*, (ed. Berg and Ask). *Kritisk refleksjon* (*Critical reflection*), (ed. Askeland). Four of the ten selected cases are described in the book about user participation, and five of the cases are described in the book of the collaboration research. The reason why there is no cases from the book of critical reflection, is that a main contribution here is about what critical reflection is and how it can be done. Collaboration between researchers/teachers, users and practitioners is not emphasized. The book of minority perspectives discussed in general what a minority perspective in social work is, and it presented several projects, the most not part of HUSK and the most more traditional research projects without collaboration between researchers / teachers, users and practitioners.[6]

From 2007 to December 2012 The Nordland Research Institute carried out an evaluation of HUSK. In the final report they gave a brief English summary[7] (Gjernes and

---

[4]http://www.google.no/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.husk-stavanger.no%2Frogaland%2Fstavanger%2FHuskStavanger.nsf%2FAttachments%2FCDC4C3F8B1E9E3C2C12576150045B8A1%2F%24FILE%2FHusk_katalog_2009.pdf&ei=K9EAUtuiKc7BtAbw34GIBg&usg=AFQjCNGl5txsrfNVANMXEPjKQtzoCVOg0Q&sig2=9kxsq2rjalgvnCA0g4b71w&bvm=bv.50310824,d.Yms

[5] http://www.nav.no/Om+NAV/For+kommunen/Samarbeid+og+prosjekter/HUSK+%28H%C3%B8gskole-+og+universitetssosialkontor%29+2006+-+2011.322977.cms

[6] One of the chapters describes a project in which researchers / teachers, users and practitioners were involved *Brukermedvirkning med virkning, eller bare som pynt? (User Involvment with effect, or Just as Garnish),* (ed. Woll, Slettebo, Bordtkorb and Ostby). This was a sub-project of HUSK Oslo Region, but to have a balance in number of projects from the four HUSK regions, this was not included as a case.

[7] http://www.nav.no/Om+NAV/For+kommunen/Samarbeid+og+prosjekter/HUSK+%28H%C3%B8gskole-+og+universitetssosialkontor%29+2006+-+2011.322977.cms

Bliksvaer 2011). They concluded that the strategic goal #1, promoting structures and arenas for required and equal collaboration, to a certain extent is achieved. "The collaboration relationship have developed progressively, and at the time of the last data collection (2009), the user representatives, practitioners and researchers all expressed that they had learned a good deal from one and other" (page 23).

Also the strategic goal #2, reinforcing practice-based research, is to some extend achieved. " Our data material indicates that 26 of 50 projects can be considered practice-based research (page 24).

According to goal #3, reinforcing knowledge at the basis for practical application, the evaluators show that "HUSK has reinforced the value of the user's experience based knowledge the users' experience is considered to constitute an important data basis for research, and a knowledge basis for practical application. However, no new models that can be applied in practice have been developed. In our opinion, HUSK would benefit greatly if more practitioners were to participate in the research" (page 24). It is a limitation that the evaluation did not include activities and achievements the two last year of the experiment (2010 and 2011).

Selection of sub-projects

Since most of the HUSK-publications are in Norwegian, it is a challenge to make HUSK available for a English speaking audience. The list of sub-project is to comprehensive and can as a whole, not be given other attention than mentioned (see Appendix). For translated case presentation selection had to be done. We will introduce the process that led to the selection for the ten cases further described in this chapter.

In July 2012 Asbjorn Johannessen (AJ), previous project manager of HUSK Oslo Region, visited Mike Austin in San Francisco, and the idea to make the experiences from HUSK available outside Norway and Nordic countries, emerged. Back in Norway AJ presented this idea to the previous leaders of the other three HUSK regions, and they were invited to suggest cases from their region to be described and analysed in this publication. The process, which was open and had an democratic profile, resulted in involvement from Agder, in addition of Oslo. In Agder, the previous leader Anne Marie Stokken asked Solveig Botnen Eide to participate and involve cases from the Agder region. In Agder, the involved parties in the project were invited to suggest case studies. This effort resulted in three case studies. AJ selected cases from the Oslo Region as well as from Mid-Norway and Stavanger Region. This process resulted in ten cases. This was seen as a manageable number of cases, which at the same time in our opinions was sufficient to represent the main activities in HUSK as a whole. Based on publications, AJ made a summary of all the cases outside Agder and translated them to English. The Agder cases, apart from *The Conceptual Project,* were presented and translated by sub project-leaders themselves. As a whole this resulted in a case description of 65 pages. The other chapters of this issue are based on this report. These cases were chosen after three criteria.

The first criterion focused on the degree of complete project description related to involvement and implementation and how thoroughly the participants were able to describe there experiences and point of view. In other words there must be a written documentation, and most of the 50 sub-projects fulfilled this criterion.

The second criterion is to attend the key purpose of HUSK and thereby to show the peculiar about HUSK: to develop *new* forms of collaboration between research, practice, education and service, and elaboration and research for better social services. In the announcement of applying for participating in HUSK, the directorate underline that "It is important that the project in particular ensure participation of the users, and establish mechanisms to ensure that users´ knowledge and experiences are taken seriously." The announcement requires at last one of the sub-projects to involve all the four parties (designated as a full scale project). We have therefore especially emphasized sub-project that involve all parties, and project that involves users.

The third criterion focused on the *variety of projects in order to reflect unique examples* and connection to the three strategic goals. Varity means that there are projects from all of the four regions and variety in the goal and type of activities. We also have emphasized the uniqueness with HUSK.

To clarify this, let us also account for the criterion for exclusion. 1) The criterion Typical academic works reports with little description of project implementation, 2) typical reflections on social work practice were the academic staff and practitioners participated, but not the users, 3) typical mapping surveys of of cooperation between educational institutions and the practice field that documented service delivery issues, and 4) doctoral dissertations that reflected the work of one individual (however, some case material was extracted in one dissertation that featured the social workers assessment of user involvement).

Based on these criteria we have selected ten subprojects as a basis for the analyses in this issue. "Relevant" and "not relevant" is not a clear cut in this connection. Other persons who were engaged in HUSK may have chosen other sub-project, but as we see it, the chose is sufficient when it comes to the sub-projects representativeness for HUSK.

On the presentation
The formulation and the content of the strategic goals are quite general, and one single project could be read as an example of several of these goals. As an example: practice-based research projects will as a consequence of the collaboration within the projects also promote arenas for equal collaboration. Within each project, we found different perspectives and activities, some characterising for the project and some more peripheral. The cases can be clustered into three with characteristic features: 1) Dialog 2) Education 3) Service innovation.

Dialog
This cluster consists of three projects with dialog between different parties as a key activity and all with a group perspective. For all of them the connection to the first strategic goal is quite obvious, as the arenas and meetings can be seen as structures and arenas for equal collaboration between the parties. The collaboration consists of practical issues and talk. When it comes to content of dialogs, users experiences were pronounced and thereby gave contributions to service elaboration. The users voices are focused.

Dialogue Seminars in Baerum (HUSK Oslo Region)
Based on experiences in the course of changing attitudes (see under Service Innovation), participants took the initiative to conduct several dialogue seminars in the social services

district of Bærum using a phased process (first for users only, then with one social worker and then with both users and social workers). The case also includes a postscript describing the experiences of service users hired as project managers for the whole HUSK project in Baerum (after the dialog seminar were implemented).

Dialog Group (HUSK Mid-Norway)
The Dialog Group is a user managed project in the Trondheim social services department designed to promote greater service user influence in the employment services program. With service users themselves responsible for this user-controlled project, two researchers followed the project to document it.

The Meeting Place (HUSK Stavanger Region)
The Meeting Place is located in a building with easy access for service users based on. a collaboration between users, practitioners, students and researchers with the users responsible for running the program. Users experiences are a central matter.

Education
This cluster consists of two sub-projects, both with structures for collaboration between the parties, but with regard to strategic goals, the third seems to be most obvious with regard to knowledge for practical applications. The main activity is education, education in service and Pre-service Social Work Education.
        The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office users perspectives are in focus as a source for both better service and better training programs for social work students. *User Involvement in Social Work Education* users experiences and perspectives are action and supervision can be mentioned as their main activity, the first concerned with are asked for in supervision of social work students.

The University Clinic in Social Work (HUSK Oslo Region)
This case describes the involvement of approximately 15 persons in the design and implementation of an agency-based education program for social work university students based on a collaboration between teachers, practitioners, users and students.

User Involvement in Social Work Education (HUSK Agder)
This case from the University of Agder focuses on user involvement in the education of social workers where users serve as mentors for students during their social work fieldwork practice internships where students acquire another perception of their professional role based on their experience of being mentored by service users.

Service innovation
This cluster consists of five sub-projects, all with elaboration and innovation of service as a main feature. As the sub-projects are closely connected to practice and contribute with practice based research and perspectives on practice, they are especially linked to strategic goal 1 and 2. In *Users Experiences with the Social Services* and *Traces of User Participation: User Perspectives on Conversations between Social workers and Users* we find the users

perspectives and contributions. *Courses for changing Attitudes* is seen from two perspectives, a social work researchers and users.

In *The Conceptual Project* several concepts are discussed by different cooperating providers perspective, but we also find users perspective. In *Professional Text: Documenting Professional Work* part of the service are seen from the providers perspectives.

Users Experiences with the Social Services. This case describes two projects that address the experiences of drug abusers with accessing and utilizing social services through the use of individual and group interviews designed, implemented and analyzed by former addicts, researchers, and students.

Traces of User Participation: User Perspectives on Conversations between Social workers and Users

The point of departure for this case is ordinary conversations between users and service providers as it took place in social services. The conversations – written out word by word were read and interpreted by the conversations parties with special regard to users involvement. Users and social workers were interviewed to explore their interpretation when it comes to users involvement. The users perspectives were highlighted and the findings were discussed by service involved.

Courses for changing attitudes (HUSK Oslo Region)

The courses designed and implemented by service users, had services providers, educators, student and service users as participants. The courses were arranged outside ordinary services with a motivation to promote the possibilities of the participants, but also to highlight feature of importance for services.

Professional Text: Documenting Professional Work (HUSK Mid-Norway)

Together with the municipal health and welfare units, social services and NAV, HUSK Mid-Norway developed a documentation structure: namely the structure of professional case record text as an alternative to the traditional journal entries.

The Conceptual Project (HUSK Agder)

The HUSK project took place in the midst of the national social service agency (NAV) reform that involved the merger of three agencies and this case focuses on the perceptions of the employees in these agencies of the central concepts that were used in the merger of the services in order to identify the degree of similarities and differences in understanding the concepts.

These feathers giving name to the clusters, are characteristic for HUSK as a whole (all the 50 cases). Since each case is complex, and presentations – and especially a short one – will not do them full justice, some feature are mentioned, but some are left. The goal of the following section is to familiarize readers with the cases, which are given further attention in other articles in issue. The writers of each article will elaborate the presentation when giving a more thorough presentation of aspects of the project being object for analysis and they have a broader source of case presentations.

Presentation of the cases

Dialogue

Dialog Seminars in Baerum **(**HUSK Oslo Region)

The background
On initiative from KREM (Creative and Diverse Worklife) which is a Norwegian bridge building organization and a partner in HUSK Oslo Region, it was held a 10 day gathering in Turkey spring 2008 for user representatives in the four HUSK regions to strengthen relations with each other and discuss common concerns.The users cheered their experience about participating in their projects. Erik Bjerke write:[8] When it came to HUSK Baerum (which is part of HUSK Oslo Region), we were quite embarrassed and perplexed. There were established a project group with representatives from users, practitioners and a teacher/researcher. The project manager for the group was a practitioner, and after the course in Turkey we had a feeling of being "hostages" in the project group and being alibi for user involvement. The experience of having little or no involvement was painful. With a burning commitment we went home to Baerum with some tools in our luggage, determined that it should be changes *now*. It was here that the vision to work equally with practitioners towards common goals began to sprout in my head. This gave hope and belief that it was possible to achieve something in Baerum.

Back home the next meeting in the project group was only a few days after we got home from Turkey. The agenda was as usual predetermined by the project manager, who represented the practitioners. This day should also change this. We talked about the courses in Turkey, how the other project in HUSK worked, and about our experience of having little or no co-determination in this HUSK project.

We were clear and unanimous agree that from now on our meetings should be user controlled, or ruled as much by users as the other parties in the collaboration. We also made it clear to the management that the manager's role was not to control the group, but to lead the equal partnership. Furthermore, all should have an equal influence on the agenda. The management responded that this with equal collaboration also was new to them and, consequently, the project was managed in the traditional way. "*Great we said, this is new for us too, so let's get started and do something else here.*" From then on, the users were involved in setting the framework for what the project group should do. The users initiated an evaluation of the work of the social services, and the evaluation should be managed and arranged by users. This became our project – we took ownership of it.

This meeting was a turning point in the project of HUSK Baerum. Among users, this was later referred to as "the coup." The users had created room and got a strong and united voice in the collaboration. We felt we had accomplished something, the balance of power were leveled. This allowed for dialogue and clarity between the parties in the collaboration. There were many, including ourselves, who were quite tousled on our hair and red in our face after the meeting. For us "Baerum Barracudas" this result was a big energy boost. This energy would I take with me on the way forward and I would never go back.

---

[8] Adapted from Bjerke 2011.

The dialog seminar as a method of evaluating practice[9]

From now on, evaluation of practice became the main focus for the project in Baerum. Prior to HUSK the evaluation of the social services was carried out once a year using a standardized questionnaire which the users were asked to fill out. User representatives in the project group had bad experiences with this form; they saw it more as a ritual than an evaluation which had consequences for the services. They felt that the questions in the questionnaire were formulated so that they had little opportunity to come up with their opinions and suggestions. They wanted instead a qualitative approach with open-ended questions focusing on how the users considered the future and goals in life.

The project group started to find alternative forms of evaluation, and decided to use *Dialogue Seminar* as a method.[10] An important premise of the dialogue seminar is that the participants are experts on their own lives and that everyone should feel that their skills are valued. The dialogue seminars can use open questions to get access to what are the participants concerns.

The method used in these dialogue seminars, is a simplified version of *Participant Learning and Action* (PLA). The emphasis is on the participants' experience and their inputs, and it is important to ensure that all are heard. (For more detailed information about how the seminars were carried out, se Hansen and Bjerke 2011).

How did we do it?

The user representatives in the project group wanted few open questions about the future and the users' goals in life, and not questions that were retrospective and about specific experiences with the services. The discussion about how questions should be formulated caused frustration in the project group, and the group spent nearly three months to agree about which questions should be asked. The practitioners believed that such an evaluation would not provide measurable and relevant data, and there was a risk that participants might feel pressured to tell about their innermost desires and goals. The user representatives realized their desires, but not without resistance and after several rounds of negotiations. Such a process is in line with the empowerment that you have to expect resistance when it comes to redistribution of power.

It started with arranging 3 seminars, 1) with users only, 2) with service providers only, and 3) for both users and staff. The seminars was arranged on neutral ground out side the NAV office.

What did we learn?

Through these dialogue seminars user representatives were able to take more and more responsibility, from being participants to have the sole responsibility for leading the third seminar. The biggest challenge for the user representatives has been recognition. They have grown with the task as they have assumed more responsibility. The users have not received approval for their input without having to fight for it; resistance is referred to something you

---

[9] Adapted from Hansen and Bjerke. 2011.
[10] We got help from the Mill Competence Centre in Bærum, who had previously conducted a dialogue seminar associated with the user evaluation of the project New Chance (Bildsten et. all. 2001).

expect when it is about the redistribution of power. Support from others in the project group and a user organization (KREM) is important in this empowerment process, which shows how important the *group* is in the process of empowerment.

An important part of the partnership between users and helpers are meeting each other on new venues, so they then can see and experienced different sides of each other. A comment from a representative of the practitioner after the joint seminar with users and staff is illustrative: "This is social work the way it is supposed to be."

The seminars have shown that users and employees have a common agenda for what is needed to get a better service. The biggest challenge was to carry out the proposed changes, and we did not get approval upward in NAV system.

Post script: Service user's experiences as project managers in Baerum
The two last year of HUSK (2010 and 2011) two users became project managers at HUSK Baerum, and here is about their experiences being in charge:[11]

From the management in NAV/social services, we experienced no curiosity, nor to our formal or informal skills or the opportunities inherent in the HUSK project itself. We were never welcomed, for example by be taken around among employees for a mutual presentation. We were not invited to any staff meeting or other forum to be presented. The only thing that was clearly stated from the social services was that they wanted a *Dialogue Seminar*, but they would not contribute with resources to arrange this.

The activities we have been involved in have been conditioned by individual's (subordinate employees) desire to take user involvement seriously and to take advantage of the complimentary expertise we had in the project.

We have often wondered that the management has not seen the possibilities that lay in the HUSK project, to conduct professional development work; for free!

As project managers with user experiences, we experienced powerlessness, rather than power and influence in the work at HUSK Baerum. At times we also felt like suspects as users, we were not ordinary "users" and therefore were not representative of the group.

Being affiliated with KREM, after a number of years staying alone outside work, was crucial for both finding the way back to our own resources, and to stay focused as project leaders, in spite of much adversity. Having colleagues in KREM to share experiences, especially user experiences, was essential to work in relation to these structures.

It has been difficult to understand that the formal and informal expertise we possess, and the financial resources we had and the opportunities this project represented, has not been seen as a resource and a gift. Some of these may be the idea that the users by definition are a homogeneous group with no education and attractive skills. There are low expectations of what a user can do, and it is equally a strange experience to see the surprise when users make visible competence and knowledge.
Many of the problems we faced were related to poor foundation in the management at NAV and social services, and general lack of knowledge about HUSK and the opportunities the project can contribute with. There was an uncertainty about how to understand user

---

[11] Adapted from Dietrichson and Ronbeck 2012.

representatives as persons who have resources, and not are in need (Andreassen 2009). It cannot be stressed enough the importance of having roots in the leadership – at all levels.

Recommendations

Already from the startup phase; it is important to clarify the party's roles, interests, mandate, intents and goals, as well as decide economic and physical framework.

The premise for the collaboration must be clarified and developed by all stakeholders together. When language, the form of the meeting, uncertainty of role makes the users (or another player) uncomfortable, it becomes difficult to contribute, and thus can no longer be called equal collaboration.

Start up with a reflection dialogue seminar with involved parties. Representatives from the managements must participate, especially in terms of mandate, intentions and goals. No matter how good work you do, it becomes more or less wasted if the management "is not in the game."

Despite the pervasive feeling of being ashamed and humiliated, begging for collaboration, we have made many important experiences. We have written a report showing the main part of this pioneering work; the *Reflective Dialogue Seminar* with users and staff, were the name of the rapport is: *Be seen and heard*.

The HUSK Dialog Group[12] (HUSK Mid-Norway)

Located in the Lademoen district of Trondheim, Norway, this case vignette describes the active involvement of service users through The Dialog Group. It is first captured through the voice of a social worker, Karin Lyso:

When I decided to study to be a social worker, I had a hope to enter into a partnership with human beings on an equal arena. I wanted to make joint projects that could lay the foundation for change and a better life for the clients I met. In the early '90s, I worked at one of the country's biggest social service office where the increasing pile of applications ruled our lives. Under such conditions I struggled to get good conversations and build relationships, where I could become familiar with the particular man or women in front of me. The power structure was evident, and those clients who needed our help were completely at the mercy of our reviews. I was the good helper who knew best, while the client was and would still be the passive recipient.

We now concluded that the social service could not be carried out effectively inside the social welfare office. Therefore, we decided to move out into the community to focus on and develop a better follow up system. Using the staff training related to Solution Focused Brief Therapy, we gradually moved in the direction of identifying the resources of service users.

Finding a Meeting Space in the Community

The objective of the project Dialog Group was to create a sustainable local community where the residents and service users gained the power to develop informal meeting places. With the help of residents and service users, we rolled up our sleeves and began to work on creating a community meeting space. A big room in the middle of a house owned by the municipality,

---

[12]Adapted from Lyso,Samuelsen and Tronvoll 2012.

and used by various nonprofit organizations, would be the place to meet for informal discussions over a cup of coffee where all facilities would be shared. The room should be used equally by users and staff.

The change was quite a contrast from communicating in a public office, and this new idea met with considerable resistance. Not all staff members at the social services office were comfortable with working side by side with service users, left alone sharing a meeting room with them. It was strange to go from conversations at the office behind a closed door, to casual and informal conversations with ordinary people. Many staff members noted that they got energy and strength when they worked closely to people who often felt powerless, and staff who did not thrive in this environment found that they needed to look for another job.

One of the first proposals was to find a way for everyone to share meals together. We discovered that many residents and service users had an unhealthy diet, and some found it difficult to sit around a table together to share a meal. By sitting very close to one another we needed to take into account the process of passing the food to one another. Some participants struggled with this sharing process and sat with their bowl of food in a corner or in another room until it became comfortable to join the rest of the group at the table.

Shared meals and proximity proved to be a success. One day a week we created a special lunch where two of participants were responsible for purchasing, decorating and cooking together with staff. A staff member noted:

> We had a pleasant time in the kitchen today. I got familiar with Brita through a casual small talk. I got to know her better in an hour than I had been able to accomplish through many meetings in the office. She was the boss in the kitchen. I was her helper. She got the opportunity to show me her cooking skills. We both experienced a good feeling of sharing and learning.

Although the long-term goal was to train service users for self-sufficient employment, this meeting space placed a new emphasis on the mastering of daily living skills based on a recognition and respect for the individual.

The Dialog Group
Here is the user representative René Michael Samuelsen's experience: The motivation for the Group was based on the perception that many service users felt ignored and not taken seriously in their meetings with the social services staff. While these staff members wanted feedback on how service users perceived the office meetings or interviews. It became increasingly clear to the users that their comments/feedback were not well received and eventually stopped sharing their experiences in fear of being badly treated or being blacklisted. During a HUSK meeting in April 2006 a proposal was made to establish a communication channel that could make it easier for service users to be heard. Three weeks later, the Dialog Group was approved and given the name "User Influence?"

The Dialog Group was user-driven and open to staff who wanted to participate. The goal was to create an easier way for service users to present their views on things they found to be a problem as well as what seemed to be working well. While staff could attend the meetings and were available if the group needed help, they had to clear their participation in

the user-led group in advance. They could also be asked to leave the meeting if any of the participants would take up issues they did not want staff to hear. Confidentiality of issues shared in the meeting was adopted by both service users and staff.

As the Dialogue Group grew, it slowly became more widely known in the community. The group got requests from the council of the social services in Trondheim. It functioned as a consultative body on a variety of organizational matters.

The group was always free to select the topics to be discussed during its weekly half-day meetings. When an issue was selected for discussion, the Dialogue Group took pride in treating the issues in a professional manner, often leading to engaged and heated discussions.

It was amazing to see how people grew with the tasks. The environment of the Dialog Group work well because we ate lunch together, had coffee breaks together and there was a close cooperation between staff and service users. Karin gave participants great confidence and gave them the freedom to develop things in a way they thought was right. While no one in the group had a social work degree, everyone had many years of experience with the "system". You can say that everyone acquired an informal education of the experiences of users. Service users gained group skills that they are able to use in many other arenas of life. Most members of the Dialogue Group are today in a job or in higher education.

The Meeting Place[13] (HUSK Stavanger Region)

The *Meeting Place* is a place with easy access for users of social services / NAV. It is a collaboration with users, practitioners, students and researchers. It is the users of social services who initiated the project, along with HUSK Stavanger Region. Good collaboration and easy accessibility has made the Meeting Place to an arena for developing collaboration and a meeting place for different people with different backgrounds. Before the opening there were many practical tasks performed, as the refurbishment of the house, which was rented from Stavanger municipality. Practical work and effort from all parties has meant that everyone has a sense of ownership of the house.

As an arena, The Meeting Place make user involvement possible in a different physical context than the public office at NAV, and can help to break up actors' perceptions and stereotypes of each other.

The hosts

The hosts are users of the social services / NAV. Here, they are hired to do a job; they are responsible for the house is open, for purchasing and serving food, cleaning and practical tasks, such as maintenance. The five hosts are responsible for organizing the day; what food to serve and how long and how often they should be open.

Users need to meet and share experiences and help each other. Such groups provide social and emotional support through interaction and discussions. That food is being served, also leads to a more relaxed assemblage and the conversation around the table is about community, to be together.

---

[13] Adapted from Bruns. 2012.

<u>The social workers</u>
Like the Dialog Group in Trondheim, the social workers meet the users in a different setting than at the office, and the social workers participate in the conversation and discussion around the table. Practitioner's expert knowledge as the norm is being challenged with the meeting with users.

<u>The Meeting place can facilitate meetings between people</u>
Seim and Slettebo (2006) shows that changing attitudes towards different groups, best can be done when meeting. When groups meet, without having a specific agenda, the discoveries and experience can take place.

It may be difficult to meet, such as users, practitioners and researchers, if there is not a reason for it. HUSK and The Meeting Place legitimize, and make it easy for the different groups to meet and make the distance between the groups smaller. The research environment is seen as distant and detached from the reality practitioners are in. At The Meeting Place, the researchers can meet practitioners and gain a better understanding of their situation, and they also are given the opportunity to communicate the results of their research. Users can share their experiences without fear of negative consequences.

Managers must have the will and take the initiative to facilitate these types of venues, so that employees are encouraged to participate at such arenas. The users have expressed a desire for a stronger control from the project manager (a practitioner), while they at the same time would be in charge and decide. This has been difficult because for both parties (users and practitioners) there have been new roles and new ways of understanding equal collaboration. The project manager's role has been challenged because it requires time, flexibility and commitment to make this happen.

The Meeting place was dismantled 17 June 2011 after many attempts of continuation. When we ask to day why this project was not sustained, the previous professional manager[14] in HUSK Stavanger Region now write:

> The project was canceled because no one wanted to take over and carry it on. The municipality would not be responsible and operate this type of service, they will buy such services. We were in talks with several NGOs. They had difficulty in accepting that the users should be as active and have co-determination. As organizations with volunteer's helpers, they could not accept that users should be paid for their work as hosts. Users also had internal conflicts and could not continue operating alone.

Education

User Involvement in Social Work Education[15] (HUSK Agder)
Mette Fløystad Kvammen

---

[14] Anne Grete Jenssen, University of Stavanger.
[15] Adapted from Kvammen 2011; 2012.

This is a case study of user involvement in the education of social workers, specifically about users who are engaged as tutors for students in social work practice. Crucial here are both the supervisor's experiences as users, and the students' experiences from the practice and from their own lives. The idea is that students, when they are guided by people with user experience, get another perception of their professional role and the possibility of sensitivity and empathy.

In the 5th semester the students at the undergraduate social work program at the University of Agder are deployed in practice the entire semester. The students receive regular supervision from a supervisor employed at the practice site, and in addition they get supervision from mentors with user experience. The mentors with user experiences work in pairs, with one new and one experienced mentors. In this way the experiences are brought forth. We chose to use the term *mentors with experiences* to bring out both the *task* of the guidance and the focus on the *experiences as a basis for knowledge*.

It was held three meetings for the mentors before they meet the student groups, with a representative of the university, with academic expertise for guidance and group work, which conducted the training. The teams for the meetings were: 1) The good meeting, 2) focus on attitudes, and 3) how to use your own experiences as a tool in social work.

It was conducted three meetings where the mentors with user experiences met the students. The evaluation after the three meetings shows that the students were well looked after by the mentors. The mentor's confrontational style was highlighted as positive. One student put it this way: "We were being confronted with our prejudices without being judged."

The work in the student groups started with the mentors told their life story. Their openness and power of their story made the students felt that they could be open about both their personal history and their practice experiences. The students were given space to reflect on their own way to treat the users and clients. The students said it was good to be looked over the shoulder and to be aware of their prejudices and attitudes / values.

It was a conscious choice that no teacher or supervisor from the practice was present in the groups – just to give students a space where they should not be evaluated, and that this is only their own practical experiences. The stories they told were their own, without others involved could interprets their understanding of the situation.

As leaders of the guidance group of students, the mentors got a leading position and authority which is different from meetings with "traditional" services users.

The fact that students are placed in a workplace makes the guidance from mentors different from the guidance provided at the university. One of the students report that she was challenged by the mentors when it came to the matters of *recognition*. The group talked about the recognition of the other as an important basis for a good meeting. The mentors challenged the students about what it is to be recognized – that the others did what they said they would do, or recognized the one for whom he or she was as a human being? According to the students, it was important that there were people with their own experience that were mentors. "They recognized us, and they showed how much we draw general conclusions." The mentors could say: "I have been the man you describe. Now we can explore this conversation here so that we can see what happens *together*." It is worth asking whether supervision with focus on own experience would have had the same effect, had it been run by teachers from the

university, or from the field. What is it about the position of an experience supervisor that makes it important that people with own experiences do such supervision? We can also ask whether the framework that is set, including the recruitment process at the university, teaching and suggested topics, as well as the round of interviews, makes us lose some of the focus on user knowledge along the way. In other words, do we change the role of the user so that it fits our own framework?

Service Innovation

Drug abusers Experiences with the Social Services[16] (HUSK Stavanger Region)

Background[17]
As a group, drug abusers are described as users with comprehensive and complex problems of long-term character. The problems include addiction, physical and mental health disabilities, and socioeconomic problems of daily living. According to the Social Services Act and the Municipal Health Services Act, the municipality has the overall responsibility for providing individualized treatment services for this user group based on the involvement of service users in the design of their services. The recipients have the right to share in the planning, designing and implementation of services (Kjellevold 2006). While user involvement has long been a primary goal of the social welfare policy in Norway, users of social services have experienced a rather small degree of involvement (Antonsen 2008).

In order to capture the user experiences, 15 service users were interviewed. The interviewer was a graduate student, and two consultants with user experiences as co-researcher, which conducted the interviews together. In analyzing the data, they found the following themes: *stigma*, *paternalism* and *discontinuity of the treatment process.*

Stigma
Stigma is when people are categorized and attributed negative characteristics used to label them (Goffman 1968). The informants reported that they felt condemned and labeled as dangerous, criminal and rubbish, and that they felt they were categorized as belonging to *one* group, namely "addicts". Several of the informants felt inferior as persons. To be a "drug addict" is to be stuck in a position that does not provide opportunities for development and change. One informant said: "To be an abuser is to be put in a permanent box. That's the way you are and that's the way it be forever."

Paternalism
Paternalism means that whoever has the most power in a relationship overrides the other (Askheim and Starrin ed. 2007). A paternalistic approach means that people are divided into a hierarchical system – some people who are superior and other subordinate, with the expert on top. It is always the expert's opinions who are most important when problems are to be solved. The subordinates' ideas and opinions are considered as insignificant and therefore do not need to be requested.

---

[16] Adapted from multiple HUSK reports, see notes below.
[17] Adapted from Aasmundsen and Sagvaag 2012.

In general, when service users met with the social service providers, they did not feel "heard" and, in some cases, felt ignored or overlooked, e.g. "Talking to the social worker is like talking to a wall. When I ask for something, I get no response. I feel that I am treated like shit." "The Wall" could be a symbol of the hierarchy that prevents dialogue.

An important prerequisite for user involvement is relevant information, and informants tell that they have not received information about their rights and alternatives for help. Lack of information can prevent the development of common understandings about the decisions that are made by social service providers.

Discontinuity of the treatment process
Many of the users have had treatment in institutions, and when discharged from the institution, it is the municipal social service office who are responsible to follow up the users, to clarify the need for further assistance, while taking the patient's needs and wishes into account. But it does not always work this way. As one respondent noted:

> When I was in treatment, no one told me what was going to happen next. I came back to the community with nothing. They were supposed to customize a plan for me, where I could start to build me up, have something to do during the day, and not doing anything. But after I came out, there have not been any meetings (interviewed approximately one year after treatment).

The transition from treatment in institutions to the community represents a critical phase for people with drug problems, especially when formal treatment ends.

Linking the three themes
These exploratory findings provide evidence of a continuing lack of user involvement (Fisher et. al. 2007; Schutle 2007). Some informants used strong words like "shit" and "garbage" and one service user said that it is like "losing my existence." As a result, service providers who have the most power also have the responsibility to set aside enough time when meeting with service users in order to develop effective relationships over time as well as sufficient time to communicate their perceptions and assistance with the service users.

What are the Actual Concerns of the Service Users? [18] (HUSK Stavanger Region)
To address this question, another 15 service users in the Stavanger area were interviewed (in another sub-project) about their abuse of drugs or alcohol. The group interviews were conducted in a retreat setting where those service users, and service providers, researcher and consultants with user experiences shared three cabins (all shared rooms across statuses and titles with one cabin for women and one for men and one mixed with both men and women), which led to an increased group bonding.

In responding to the survey, many service users said that, for the first time, they felt that they have been recognized as a worthy person and this provided an opportunity to talk about what they felt was important to them. "… I as a former user of social services I found

---

[18] Adapted from Dahlberg and Lichtwark 2011.

that I had something to contribute. Here I was seen and heard, which I really appreciate."

<u>"How can I have plans for the future when I'm not able to cope with the day to day?"</u>
This question captures the frustrations experienced by many service users in their encounters with social service providers. It also captures the internal struggles experienced by service users as they try to catch up to the requirements imposed by society as well as their own expectations for themselves.

A recurring theme in many of the interviewees was the experience of not being appreciated. Informants felt that the social workers largely viewed them as "cases" that should demonstrate "change" quickly and efficiently, without social workers trying to understand their lives. Informants felt that there was a great discrepancy between their needs for daily living and life skills and the actual services provided.

All informants were clear that they wanted a job. They want to feel useful, to be independent and achieve a meaningful life, a desire they shared with most people, but it is not easy to achieve when you have to use all the energy to learn to live again – to master the life and everyday life.

Traces of User Participation: User Perspectives on Conversations between Social workers and Users[19] (HUSK Agder)

<u>Introduction</u>
When practicing the field of social work, there are goals that the user should be helped to achieve. These goals are often concretizations of social-political aims. The work should further be carried out so that it does not make the user involuntarily or by force follow the goals. The ideal situation is that these goals are also the user's own goals, and that they are achieved through the participation of the user. User participation is seen as a core indicator of good conduct and ethical work. This project looks at user participation at an individual level, with a particular focus on the importance and strengthening of the involved parties' position in the process towards reaching goals. The empirical base is conversations between social workers and users, and the users' reflections on user participation and its facilitation, as it is expressed in these conversations. The users' reflections focus on the involvement of the social worker, how the user sees this as helpful to overcoming the barriers that limit them from commencing meaningful activity.

Traces of User Participation started after an initiative from one of the participating organizations in the HUSK Agder project about user participation and the users' perspectives in social work. The research question of this project is: *How is user participation expressed in conversations between social worker and user, as it is experienced by the user?*

<u>Methodology</u>

---

[19] Adapted from Eide 2011.

The study is qualitative, and the approach is *open* and *active*. Open means that the informants weren't asked to make up their minds about phenomena expressed in concrete expressions, but rather to read their own conversations with the social worker and vice versa from the point of view of user participation. By an *active* approach mean the nature of *ideas* and *visions*, and how these are created. The result is thus not opinions and ideas taken out of their original form, so to speak, but opinions and ideas that have taken shape through the concrete research situation. It is the involved parties' own reflections, based on conversations they have taken part in themselves, that are of interest, because the development of knowledge happens *from below* and *from within* (Eliassen & Seikkula, 2006). The method, shortly presented:

Recording of a conversation: An ordinary conversation between a user and a social worker is recorded.

Transcribing the conversation: The conversation is transcribed, word for word.

Reading and highlighting: The transcribed conversations are handed back to the respective users and social workers, who read the text individually and highlight the sequences they think dealt with user participation, or facilitated it.

Interview based on highlighted sections: The users and social workers are interviewed based on their highlighting to explain how they interpret user participation in the conversation.

Back to service; working document based on transcriptions and interviews are send and discussed with the service involved.

In hindsight, I see a weakness in that the social worker and user didn't meet to discuss their findings. That meant that this relational aspect could not be used for developing knowledge. As a consequence of this, new parts have been added to the methodology of the ongoing project, such as a point where the users and social workers meet to discuss what they have highlighted.

User Participation – some findings
The user's highlights and reflections about their participation forms the basis of a thematic sectioning of the material in three parts:

- User participation is about doing something yourself, and wanting something
- User participation is about talking to somebody
- Social workers must
    - Take the user seriously
    - Relate to more than just the case at hand

User Participation is About Doing Something Yourself, and Wanting Something
A user explains that he had found the job himself. He explained that he realized he had to take initiative. The highlighting and reflections show that they see user participation where they

themselves have been active in the changes that have taken place. This activity goes beyond their interaction with their social worker, and relates to more options than those the social worker can offer. They present themselves as acting individuals that do not settle with suggestions or activities they are dissatisfied with. They appear as autonomous individuals who take control and do not want their days filled – at least not for the long run – with what other people fill them with.

User Participation is About Talking Together
The highlighted sequences where they talked to the social worker, and emphasised the importance of talking together to clear things up. In conversations, they could exercise influence, and could be influenced. This finding points to a core aspect for the users: the influence of the social worker and their participation towards the user. The fact that conversations take place is understood as being seen as participating, and that the social work service is assuming their participation.

Taking User Seriously
Another important aspect of a participating social worker, is that he or she can put the user on track towards what is important, and not avoid it. This sequence is taken from a conversation about an application to the leisure board. The user says he highliged this because he was taken seriously; the social worker dared to remind him that there were soundings he should stay away from, and that this helped him stay away from people who do drugs.

Relating to More than Just the Case at Hand
Some topics can be understood as chitchat, and when the social worker cares about other things, it can be understood as entering zones outside of their mandate.

Several users talk about their own activity and participation in connection to being pushed, and being pushed in an appropriate way or amount. They assume that the social worker understand them so that they can push them appropriately to achieve their goals, rather than leaving them on their own or not consider which challenges they are facing.

Concluding remarks
The methodology is suitable to highlight the participant's own understanding of what has taken place in the conversations. User participation is not a phenomenon with a given content. It is a relational phenomenon which takes place in interactions between people, and must be subject to interpretation.

To read one's own conversation is something else than remembering it. The social workers say that they often think, "Did I really say that?", "Do I say "ehh" so often?" "Did I really miss what Per said on page 7?" and so on. The conversation is a relational phenomenon. The importance given to the other's viewpoint and interpretation is decisive for how the conversations are interpreted. Aspects that the social worker has not focused on in their interpretation, can be important to the user. This is reason to believe that this methodology can also develop knowledge of conversations and user participation in practice, as well as to further develop services given to users.

Courses for Changing Attitudes[20] (HUSK Oslo Region)
The gathering in Turkey spring 2008 was the start of the *Courses for Changing Attitudes*, where the central goal was personal development and competence and empowerment.

Program Population
The target group was especially service users, where 145 ha have attended 8 courses, but also social services providers (20), teachers/researchers (7) and students (4) have attended the courses. The service users who attended the courses included several long-term recipients of social assistance and others had experienced or were engaged in crime, substance abuse, mental illness and unemployment.

Program Structure
Each course lasted 14 days, and the participants should reflect on:
- Personal skills
- Communication issues and techniques
- Narrative method (personal story-writing/telling)
- Reflections on taking personal responsibility, accountability and empowerment
- Exploring values and attitudes

Course Content

Speakers Corner – Sharing Service User Perspectives
On the first day, a Speakers Corner exercise was used to surface the participants' expectations of the course, including different types of insecurity and frustrations associated with receiving social services.

Participants were asked to divide into groups of 4-5 and create a list of frustrations and concerns. This exercise had a cathartic effect and contributed to a new and positive energy in the group by reducing the intensity of the frustrations and laying the foundation for group communications and bonding.

Participants frustrations was mainly related to how they perceived their social situation and the lack of quality of life, a difficult relationship with public bodies and how it felt to be out of work and consequently dealing with the difficulties related to a bad economy.

Assessing Personal Competence
In efforts to identify the individual's personal skills, participants were handed out a list of 67 personal competencies (e.g., the ability to listen, expressing human warmth and creativity and decisiveness). Participants were divided into groups and given the following tasks: 1) identify ten strong skills, 2) identify five skills needing improvement, and 3) identify ways to strengthen skills.

This provided a counterweight to the focus on frustrations and problems by becoming aware of one's own life experience and the potential for expanding one's personal competence. By discovering their own expertise and responsibility for their own change, the

---

[20] Adapted from Slettebo et.al. 2009.

users felt that they were "in the same boat" and not alone with the problems they experienced, leading to a growing sense of empowerment and self-discovery.

Communication
A central theme was to understand how communications can open and close processes, and here one important task was to write a fictional story (see the chapter of Dalen et. al.). Fictional story-telling was the foundation of another exercise. The narrative methodology was an important part of the entire course where all participants were challenged to write a brief fairy tale about their life (Dalen and Natland, 2011).

Developing an action plan
In addition to strengthening one's own self-esteem and be aware of their own abilities, was to draw up an Action Plan. For many, it was a challenge to break out of the status quo, and some may feel that the system is working against them when it came to getting ahead in life.

Summary
The evaluation session on the last day encouraged participants to reflect on the expectations / motivation and challenges that they had identified earlier. Most had experienced a process of getting closer to what they wanted. Many indicated that they had received new energy and that they looked forward to coming home. Located in a foreign country amplifies the impact of the experience of service users, service practitioners, students and academics working together to develop a common understanding of what is needed to achieve a better relationship and cooperation, both at the individual and on the system level. Everyone has skills, personal qualities and personal experiences.

A Researcher's Experience with Service User Involvement: A summary of a self-reflective essay of participating in a Course for Changing Attitudes
Nina Skjefstad[21]

A Saturday afternoon in September 2008 I found myself at the airport and felt quite alone and rather tense. The only one I knew in advance was the course leader. There were several who felt quite alone and I quickly began to chat with others. This was the start of a trip and an experience that were completely different than anything that I have ever experienced.

The first few days I thought it was a little difficult to be a fully valued participant. I tried as best I could to participate in plenary (large group) meetings, in small group learning activities and in everyday conversations, but was unsure if the others accepted my dual role as a participant and a researcher. Could I really fully participate? It meant that I had to go through a personal process and participate with myself as a human being. I experienced a big difference between partial and full participation. When I found out I could be a full member of the group, I received a completely different response from the others and I got much more out of the interactions.

---

[21] This is a summary of a note, not published. Nina Skjefstad participated in HUSK Mid-Norway, and was a Ph.D. student NTNU-Trondheim, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Social Work and Health Science.

I believe that my full participation in the course gave me a better understanding of the processes as they unfolded. Being very close and over time, and not the least feel in my body itself, the forces that was at work. Here I really saw and felt all the active elements in social work, a practice that I have written about previously.

Why Turkey?

It was clear that the venue made a difference in terms of its remoteness, privacy, intimacy, and feeling of being in another world. Traveling to a foreign country has the beneficial effects as you get to experience something different and something new. Being together with the same people for two weeks is like being in a process 24 hours a day. The intensity of being together provided some with new skills which was part of the objective of the course. Getting distance from their normal environment provided an opportunity to see your selves from an outside or distant perspective as well as the opportunity to try something new.

Self-confidence

Can one expand the self-confidence in two weeks? For my own part, I must say an unconditional yes. To be in a process of "give and take" along other people appears to be an important element in building confidence. To contribute something jointly with others is also helpful in this process.

Trust

I shared many things about myself in the group that I would not tell to (almost) anyone because I developed a sense of full confidence in the group. The confidence was there *because everyone did the same sharing* – it was not only one part that would "confess" to another where the other is professional worker. I myself have rarely been in situations where I have had to share private things about myself to a professional and have never really been comfortable with the situation. Being close to other people and sharing emotions even if you have known those people for just a short time was completely alien to me and a very useful exercise.

Final reflections

When I am now back home, and people ask how the trip was, the first word that occurs to me is 'fantastic'. I have benefited greatly from the trip, both personally and professionally. However, occasionally I met skepticism when I tell others about the trip (perceived to be too good to be true). It's about changing basic human attitudes and about the people who have the courage and vision to implement such a program.

Through participatory observation I have seen, heard and felt, that the course means a lot for each individual and many make great strides during the time that they are in Turkey. The course is very interesting when seen from a user involvement perspective; here we *practiced* involvement and self-determination, not just talked about it. The trip has strengthened my belief that social work must include elements of the personal and give-and-take; using a process founded on reciprocity and trust. Emotional support belongs here, along with a physical support (I have never in my life received so many GOOD hugs in such a short time!) And what an impact they had! People thrived and changed both the appearance and attitude in a very short time. I can say that neither as a social worker nor as a researcher have I

ever seen so many big changes in so many people in such a short time.For me this experience was a journey of self-development. I can also say that it's rare that I've felt so strong mentally since I got home from Turkey. This has slightly decreased over time, which is not surprising taking into consideration that you come home to your usual arena, where you do not work with the issues raised in the course all the time. The feeling of renewed confidence, courage, energy and gratitude is in my heart for having met so many great people.

The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office in Oslo[22] (HUSK Oslo Region)

NAV, included the social services, employees 19,000 employees and represents an important employer of social work students graduating from Norwegian universities. As a result, it is important for students to become acquainted with NAV. Since 2006, NAV Sagene and the undergraduate social work program at the Oslo and Akershus University College (OAUC) and KREM, have developed a comprehensive teaching and practice partnership that involves students in all three years of their social work program. It is called the University Clinic, and the term "clinic" is taken from the medical teaching hospital where "teaching takes place at the bedside" in a collaboration between medical school faculty and hospital staff. Arrangements for student involvement in the clinic over a three year social work course of study

- During the 1st semester/term the students visit NAV Sagene.
- During the 2nd semester in the first year of study, a small group of 5-6 students engage in a practice internship.
- During the 3rd semester, a group of students choose topics that can be explored at NAV Sagene under the supervision of a NAV staff member.
- During the 4th semester it is a two day teaching program related to the social work perspectives on the economy, administrative procedures, counseling, and the use of professional judgment/discretion. This joint seminar includes the students along with OAUC faculty, NAV Sagene staff and service users.

During the 5th semester, students engage in group work practice.During the first 2-3 weeks of study students are introduced to social work theory and practice, where they also receive a 3-hour introductory lecture by staff and service users as well as a guided tour at the NAV office. The connection between the theoretical teaching and the social work practice experiences are made explicit and anchored in a reality that students will be experiencing in the future.

A key part of the program is to present NAV cases in order to challenge the students to think about what they would do in particular situations. They are challenged to reflect upon what they would do in the situation. What the students do not know is that the case was about the service user who was a part of the teaching team in the discussion of the case. The user shares the experience showing up at the NAV for the first time and the follow-up work. Then students are free to ask questions about the user's motivations to participate in employment training, the subjective experience of the meeting with NAV staff, the service plans developed, and future plans.

---

[22] Adapted from Fehn; Johansson; Rytter et.al., Torstensen and Dalen; Vennesland and Nordhagen, in press.

The Clinic contributes to a closer collaboration between the university and the NAV Sagene staff in both the design of the content and the evaluation of student performance. The NAV practitioners teach about the provision of economic/employment advice, enforcement office regulations, and drug abuse in the form of teaching cases designed to integrate knowledge about law (social policies) and social work. At the end of the academic year, there is also a mandatory joint seminar where students, OAUC faculty, NAV staff and users reflect together. When students meet with users, practitioners and managers as their teachers, they get a vivid picture of what is possible to achieve in social work at NAV.

When the NAV office is converted into a "classroom", this is neither the traditional internship (praxis) nor the traditional university classroom but, instead, something in between. It reflects "situated learning" that is integrated into the social context of practice where students get to experience a "community of practice" in the form of "legitimate peripheral participation".

The Clinic provides the NAV staff with an opportunity to expand their own learning and professional development (e.g. presentation skills) in which they develop a structure for communicating their own practice knowledge (e.g. defining, describing, and evaluating the importance of the tasks they perform).

While the everyday life of NAV Sagene staff is hectic, the students contribute to the increased professionalism of the staff member who must stay up-to-date on the current literature in order to effectively manage the continuous flow of questions coming from the students about their way of working and their methods. This means that staff must reflect further of what they do and why they do it, especially since staff often work alone with a service user. To get feedback on what you did and why you did it, can contribute to the professional development of each employee. In addition, the continuous cooperation with the university and the service user organization (KREM) has contributed to considerable staff reflection on the nature and outcomes of practice.

Conclusion

As one student states: "*Theoretical knowledge shows itself differently in practice than in books.*"

Documenting Professional Work[23] (HUSK Mid-Norway)

Together with the municipal health and welfare units, social services and NAV, HUSK Mid-Norway have developed a documentation structure – the structure of professional text – as an alternative to the traditional journal.

The initiative for Professional Text came from both practice and research, based on the need for better documentation of the professional work. The aims of professional texts are:

- Distinguish between a "log" and a "long text"
- Clarify the professional work
- Shorten the distance between the text and them the text is about

---

[23] Adapted from Vist and Aasen 2011.

- Provide the social services with a tool for self-evaluation

Provide "numbers" in areas not related economic benefits

The structure of Professional Text
The Professional Text consists of four documents: 1) mapping, 2) a plan, 3) evaluation, and 4) a report. Professional Text is structured around eleven themes or "areas of life."

1. Family situation
2. Social relations and networks
3. Income – economy
4. Housing
5. Work and education - learning ability and experience
6. Health, physical, mental, substance abuse
7. Identity – social behavior
8. Self-help – coping in everyday life
9. Activities, interests, hobbies
10. Client's experience and expectations of the social work
11. Resources in the vicinity

The four professional text document manuals
The purpose of the *mapping* is to become familiar with the client's situation, needs, resources, and perspective. A *plan* for the work will provide employees with opportunities to get both a written text and to clarify plans for the work with the client and contribute to the quality assurance of the work for the employee. In the development of the *evaluation*, it was a point to design the template so that it clarifies what the evaluation will result in. A *report* can be used to communicate relevant information to the cooperative units, and it is a description of the work done and which goals are reached, when the case is closed in the current services.

We believe we have achieved what Greenwood and Levin (2007) calls the *workability*. When knowledge is developed, it is not sufficient to view the validity and relevance; the knowledge must also be adopted and used in practice.

The professional text documents provide easily accessible information. When changing case worker, or by absence due to illness, this can ensure continuity.

This project have contributed to that tacit knowledge is articulated, proven and systemized.

The systematic use of this structure can prevent that knowledge about clients is tacit in the sense that it remains in the heads of practitioners. When knowledge is written, it is easy to convey it to others. This knowledge will also accumulate so that it can form the basis of evaluations, and also data for research.

The Conceptual Project[24] (HUSK Ager)

---

[24] Adapted from Dyhr-Nielsen and Sagatun. 2010.

<u>Back - ground</u>
The back ground for this project is the establishment of NAV, a reform leading to new constellations of collaboration. Providers from different sectors - labor, social insurance and social service should collaborate in work with users. The providers in social service were in contact with HUSK and gave an impression of challenges when it comes to content of key concept. The different parties understood and used key concept different in their work with users, a different use with possible implications for daily work.

<u>The goal</u>
The projects goal was closely connected to the provider identity as professionals. A common platform when it comes to key concepts was seen as a condition for common professional identity between the three parties. Solveig Sagatun writes.[25]

> .. we open for å free reflection about content in key concepts used by providers that should collaborate in integrate NAV-offices. The intention is to make both resemblances and differences in understanding visible. The project wanted to promote a common and safe identity for the providers.

<u>Methodology</u>
The methodology was inspired by action research and the purpose was contributions for changes and learning processes. With point of departure in needs identified by the involved service providers this process went on. The method in concrete was focus group interview and the interview process consists of three steps. Step one: The participants from different parts of NAV identified key concepts and wrote notes on how they understood them. Based on that the researchers make a "dictionary" of 20 concepts were differences and resemblance came into view. In step two the participants met to talk about their understandings and they were challenges by the researchers to explain some concepts to one and another. Step three: New groups were conducted, groups that also involved service users (?), to elaborate the meaning of content when it comes to practice. The service providers presented stories and examples from practice to each other, stories and example that had touched them. The researchers followed the presentation and by following up question promoting different ways of understanding and acting.

<u>Result</u>
The dictionary presents the concepts related to the concrete focus for the project. It consists of 20 different concepts. It is concepts related to activities in work such as *clarification* and *discretion*. It is concepts related to tools for work such as *different plans*. It was concepts related to how to perceive users and cooperate with them such as *job seeker* and *users involvement.* The work on the concepts involved good discussions and the participants experienced the process as a foundation for elaborating good conditions for collaboration.

---

[25] Op. cit. p 10. Autors translation

Through discussions some of them heated, some of the concepts became common and a stronger "we-feeling" was reported[26].

Summing up Reidun Dyhr-Nielsen concluded that possibly the most important was not contents of concepts, but to contribute to a culture with acceptance for differences and curiosity when it comes to use of the competence across previous distinguishing marks.[27]

---

[26] HUSK, Publications 2006-2011 p. 45

[27] Op.cit p. 52.

References

Aasmundsen, H. & Sagvaag. H. (2012). "Som å snakke til en vegg." Personer med rusproblemer og deres erfaringer med brukermedvirkning. ("It´s like talking to a wall." People with drug abuse and their experiences with user involvement.) In A. G. Jenssen & I. M. Tronvoll (Eds.), *Brukermedvirkning. Likeverd og anerkjennelse. (User Involvement. Equality and Recognition*) (pp. 188-200). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Andreassen, T. A. (2009). *Brukermedvirkning i NAV*. (*User Involvement in NAV.*) Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Antonsen, E. B. (2008). Et stykke på vei, men likevel langt igjen? (On the road, but still a long way to go?) *Tidsskrift for psykisk helsearbeid* (*Journal of work with mental health*) 5(4), 345-354.

Askheim, O. P. & Starrin, B. (Eds.) (2007). *Empowerment i teori og praksis.* (*Empowerment in Theory and Practice.*) Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Bildsten, C., Abdisamad, A.S. & Hansen, C. (2007). Moellamodellen – medvirkningsbaserte metoder med fokus på lokale ressurser. (The Mill model – Participatory Based Methods with Focus on Local Resources.) In *Somaliere i Norge, noen erfaringer*. (*Somalis in Norway, some Experiences.*) Oslo: The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi).

Bjerke, E. (2011). Jeg har alltid oppfattet meg selv som…(I have Always Considered My-self as...). In T. Slettebo, E. Brodtkorb & H. Dalen (Eds.), *Bruker. Brukermedvirkning. Bruker med virkning. Tverrfaglig samarbeid. Partnerskap. En brukermedvirkningsprosess i HUSK. (User. User Involvement. User with effect. Cross-disciplinary Cooperation. Partnership. A User Involvement Process in HUSK*) (pp. 36-41). Booklet. Skien: KREM. http://www.krem-norge.no/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/HUSK_brukermedvirkning_52s.pdf

Bruns, A. K. (2012). Moeteplassen, et sted å moetes. (The Meeting place, a place to meet.) In A. G. Jenssen & I. M. Tronvoll (Eds.), *Brukermedvirkning. Likeverd og anerkjennelse*. (*User Involvement. Equality and Recognition*) (pp.76-84). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Dahlberg, I. E. & Lichtwark, W. (2011). "Hvordan kan jeg ha planer om fremtiden, når jeg ikke klarer dagen". ("How can I have plans for the future, when I'm not able to cope with the day to day?") In A. Johannessen, S. Natland. & A. M. Støkken (Eds), *Samarbeidsforskning i praksis*. (*Collaborative research in Practice*) (pp. 127-139). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Dalen, H. & Natland, S. (Eds.) (2011). Eventyr fra virkeligheten. (Fairy Tales from Reality.) Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Dietrichson, V. & Rønbeck, L.H. (2012). *Når brukere blir prosjektledere – erfaringsrapport fra et HUSK-prosjekt.* (*When Users Become Project Managers – Experiences from a HUSK Project.*) Booklet. Skien: KREM.

Dyhr-Nielsen, R. & Sagatun, S. (2010). *Bruk av begreper om praksis I NAV/sosialtjenesten.* (*Use of Concepts about practice in NAV / Social services.*) Paper, 151. Kristiansand: University of Agder.

Eide, S. B. (2011). Metode for kunnskaps- og tjenesteutvikling ved samrefleksjon. (Method for knowledge- and services development.) In A. Johannessen, S. Natland & A. M. Støkken (Eds.), *Samarbeidsforskning i praksis*. (*Collaborative research in Practice*) (pp. 184-194). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Eliassen, E. & Seikkula, J. (Eds.) (2006). *Reflekterende prosesser i praksis. Klientsamtaler, veiledning, konsultasjon og forskning.* (*Reflecting processes in practice. Client*

Converstaions, Advice, Consultation and Research.) Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Fehn, I. L. S. (In press). "Fagligheten sitter i veggene på Sagene". Fra studentenes evalueringer av praksis på NAV Sagene. ("The Professionalism is in the Walls". The Students Evaluation of Having Practice Internship at NAV Sagene.) In M. Ranger, K. Rytter & H. Dalen (Eds.), *HUSK Sagene Høgskoleklinikk i sosialt arbeid. "Teoretisk kunnskap viser seg annerledes i praksis enn i boeker." (The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office in Oslo, Norway "Theoretical Knowledge is Different in Practice than in Books.")* Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Fisher, J., Jenkins, N., Bloor, M., Neale, J. & Bernley, Lee. (2007). *Drug user involvement in treatment decision.* York: Joseph Rowntree Fundation.

Gjernes, T. & Bliksvaer, T. (2011). *Nye samarbeidsformer – nye læringsformer? (New forms of Collaboration – and New Forms of Learing.)* Sluttrapport fra evalueringen av forsøket Høgskole- og universitetssosialkontor. (Final Report from the Evaluation of HUSK). NF-report no 7. Bodo: Nordlandsforskning. (Nordland Research Institute.)

Goffman, E. (1968). *Stigma.* Harmindsworth: Penguin Books.

Greenwood, D, J. & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to Action Research.* 2nd ed. Sage.

Hansen, R. & Bjerke, E. (2011). Dialogseminar som metode i evaluering av praksis. in . (*Dialog Seminar as a Method for Evaluation of Practice.*) In A. Johannessen, S. Natland & A. M. Støkken (Eds.), *Samarbeidsforskning i praksis.* (*Collaborative research in Practice*) (pp. 140-155). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Johansson, G. (In press). Om praksisstudiet sett fra utdanningens side. (About the Practice Internship, Seen from the Educational Staff.) In M. Ranger, K. Rytter & H. Dalen (Eds.), *HUSK Sagene Høgskoleklinikk i sosialt arbeid. "Teoretisk kunnskap viser seg annerledes i praksis enn i bøker." (The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office in Oslo, Norway "Theoretical knowledge is different in practice than in Books.")* Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Kjellevold, A. (2006). Idealet om brukerorientering i helse- og sosialtjenesten. (The Ideal About User Involvement in Health- and Social Services.) *Lov og rett (Journal og Law and Justice)* 45(1-2), 3-25.

Kvammen, M. F. (2011). *Field Practice education at University of Agder, Norway.* Paper at the Conference: Field Practice Education. Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASAWEI). Gauteng South Africa. September 7th to 11th 2011.

Kvammen, M. F. (2012). *Møte mellom erfaringsveiledere og sosionomstudenter i praksis.* (*Meetings Between Mentors With User Experiences and Students of Social Work.*) Paper at the conference. Nordisk nætverk for professionsforskning (NORPRO) (Nordic forum for studies on professions.) Aarhus Sptember 25th to 26th 2012.

Loyland, B. (2013). *Chronic Pain, Psychological Distress, and Health-Related Quality of Life Among Long-Term Social Assistance Recipients in Norway.* Ph.D. thesis. Oslo: Unipub Forlag.

Lyso, K., Samuelsen, R. M. & Tronvoll, I. M. (2012). Dialoggruppa – hvordan et brukerstyrt HUK-prosjekt utviklet seg. (The Dialog Group – How a User-Controlled HUSK Project Developed.) In A. G. Jenssen & I. M. Tronvoll (Eds.), *Brukermedvirkning. Likeverd og anerkjennelse.* (*User Involvement. Equality and Recognition*) (pp. 85-97). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Rytter, K., Ranger, M. & Dalen, H. (In press). NAV Sagene, HiOA og KREM. Felles arena for kunnskapsutvikling, brukermedvirkning og undervisning. (NAV Sagene,

OAUC and KREM. A Joint Arena for Development of Knowledge, User Involvement and Teaching.) In M. Ranger, K. Rytter & H. Dalen (Eds.), *HUSK Sagene Høgskoleklinikk i sosialt arbeid. "Teoretisk kunnskap viser seg annerledes i praksis enn i bøker."* (*The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office in Oslo, Norway "Theoretical knowledge is different in practice than in Books."*) Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Schulte, S., Moring, J., Meier, P. S. & Barrowclough, C. (2007). User involvement and desired service developments in drug treatment: Service user and provider views. *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy 14*(3), 277-287.

Seim, S. & Slettebø, T. (2006). *Brukermedvirkning i barnevernet.* (*User Involvement in Child Care.*) Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Slettebo, T., Brodtkorb, E., Dietrichson, V. & Lyhne, K. (2009). *KREMs kurs i endringsmetode. Beskrivelse og evaluering.* (*KREM´s Courses for Changings Atituddes. Description and Evaluation.*) Report no 6. Diakonhjemmet University College. http://brage.bibsys.no/diakon/bitstream/URN:NBN:no-bibsys_brage_10994/1/KREMS%20kurs%20endringsmetode.pdf

Titmuss, R. (1974). *Social policy; an Introduction.* London: George Allen & Unwin

Torstensen, T. B. & Dalen, H. (In press). Sosial oppfølgning slik brukerne på NAV Sagene vil ha det. (Follow up Social Work at NAV Sagene as the Users Want it.) In M. Ranger, K. Rytter & H. Dalen (Eds.), *HUSK Sagene Høgskoleklinikk i sosialt arbeid. "Teoretisk kunnskap viser seg annerledes i praksis enn i bøker."* (*The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office in Oslo, Norway "Theoretical knowledge is different in practice than in Books."*) Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Vennesland, H. & Nordhagen,K. (In press). NAV Sagene som praksissenter. (NAV Sagene as a Center of Practice.) In M. Ranger, K. Rytter & H. Dalen (Eds.), *HUSK Sagene Høgskoleklinikk i sosialt arbeid. "Teoretisk kunnskap viser seg annerledes i praksis enn i bøker."* (*The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office in Oslo, Norway "Theoretical knowledge is different in practice than in Books."*) Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Vist, G. & Aasen, K. (2011). "Fagtekst" – et prosjekt om dokumentasjon og faglig arbeid. ("The Professional Text" – a Project About Documentation of Professional Work.) In A. Johannessen, S. Natland & A. M. Støkken (Eds), *Samarbeidsforskning i praksis.* (*Collaborative research in Practice*) (pp. 156-170). Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Wel, K. A. V. D., Dahl, E., Lodemel, I., Loyland, B., Naper, S.O. & Slagsvold, M. (2006). *Funksjonsevne blant langtidsmottakere av sosialhjelp.*(*How the Long Term Social Assistance Receivers Function with Every Day Life.*) HiO-report 29. Oslo: Oslo University College.