



A Learning Organization in Practice: Service Development in Care Work

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ABSTRACT

The title is partly borrowed from David (P.G.) Herbst's 1993a: A Learning Organization in Practice. Herbst's text has an empirical basis in a matrix, ship organization, while this article stems from a project in a public care, 24–7 continuous work similar to the ship organization. An interactive research process, combining focus groups, interviews, participation in meetings and seminars supported this process. The purpose here is not to report the research process itself, but to combine concepts, some from the Industrial Democracy tradition, and use them as an analytical tool to clarify how, under certain circumstances, the introduction of a new service was implemented in a jointly developed, interdisciplinary process of employees.

KEY WORDS

A learning organization/organizational learning / everyday rehabilitation / minimal critical specification / reflection / job crafting / responsible autonomy

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Introduction

In a lecture on communication and leadership, the artistic director Iren Reppen explained how she rehearsed the outdoor production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* by the lake in Norway known as 'Gålåvatnet'. She started by talking about the text – the manuscript. From a starting point of having various understandings of the manuscript, she and the actors worked through to a common understanding. They discussed some important words, the tone of voice, certain expressions in the text, what the audience should understand, and how the play ends. With the creation of a common understanding of these points, the actors are then free to 'play', as she said, to experiment and to learn in a commonly created process. Her theory was that a further specification of how it should be played would have killed the 'essence or nerve' of the play. Philip G. Herbst (1974: 187) says the same as Reppen: We must create a room, or there must be both space and flexibility for a work organization to be learning. In this room, trial, error and play prevail in order to learn.

In the organization described by Herbst, this room or leeway can be established in several ways, for example, not only by utilizing the slack that is already in the organization, but also by deliberately avoiding too much detailed information and specifications

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of the new, as Reppen describes in the example above. The central focus of the project, which is the basis for this article, is the commitment to a new way of working, a new service called *everyday rehabilitation* in the care of the elderly in a Norwegian municipality.

In this article, the purpose is to present how some historically validated democratic values are formed under specific local conditions (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Gustavsen, 2001, 2017). That is to say how the introduction of working with '*everyday rehabilitation*' became a commonly created process between groups of employees, much like that described in Reppen's example above. This is the context, the specific conditions that govern the choice of theory and theoretical terms and concepts. The guiding or steering mechanism used in establishing the new service was the employee's experiences throughout the process. The change process supported by our research project depicts a kind of bottom-up process, in which the employees on the ward collaborate in finding solutions. *With what purpose and within which framework was the project in care of the elderly implemented? Which freedom of action did this give the staff, and how did the employees use this autonomy? Which work tools in terms of structures, arenas and policies did they use themselves, and what was the end result?*

By answering these questions, the purpose is to suggest how the organization theories of the Industrial Democracy (ID) Experiments can meet contemporary organizational realities.

The Learning Organizations and Organizational Learning

Can organizations learn? When they cannot think, they cannot learn some say (Illeris, 2004: 132). On the other hand, if people learn without thinking, act on intuition, and develop tacit knowledge, cannot organizations be said to have learned when they change practice? These are some of the discussions that pervade the field. Nevertheless, it is common today to accept organizations as learning, although it is far from clear what a learning organization looks like (Bottrup, 1999). Hence, it is possible to differentiate learning in organizations into three levels (e.g., Kira, 2006: 11):

- At the individual level as learning through mastering daily work tasks (e.g., Bandura, 1978, 1997; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Amble, 2014);
- At the collective level learning in teams and working communities (Trist & Bamforth, 1951; Trist et al., 1963; Bandura, 2000; Sørensen & Grimsmo, 2001; Amble, 2012 a, b); and
- At the organizational learning level as a change of general policies and procedures (Herbst, 1974; Senge, 1990; Argyris & Schön, 1978, 1996; Eikeland, 2012; Amble, 2016 a, b).

The point is that learning at all three of these levels must take place and mutually enrich each other if the work organization can be called a learning organization. In addition, in a desired future action based on this, learning must be sustainable in relation to a 'triple bottom line: people, profit and planet' (Docherty et al., 2012). This latter phrase represents a framework for the discussion of possible improvements.

There appears to be agreement to ascribe the origin of these concepts in the heading to Peter Senge's 1990 book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning*

Organization and Chris Argyris and Donald Schön's books from 1978, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* and the revised version from 1996, *Organizational Learning II; Theory, Method, and Practice*. Argyris and Schön (1996: xx) establish a clearer distinction between the two by saying that the concept of a learning organization revolves around the practical and concrete work being done by consultants and employees of the organizations when it uses experience as a foundation for change, whereas organizational learning subjects see them academically in a more critical, profound involvement in the same development work (p. 187). According to Argyris and Schön, a learning organization seems to operate a more superficial correction of faults, while organizational learning includes a more profound change of the cause of something undesirable. Senge (1990) uses organizational learning as the verb or process that takes place within learning organizations (p. 8), in which the third level mentioned above is the fifth discipline of a system change integrating the four others (p. 12). In this article, the awareness of this distinction is combined with the understanding of the need to look behind simple error correction and facilitate more sustainable solutions. This is based on a national tradition, in which the employees are expected to be competent, empowered, and used to undertaking critical reflection and developing their own work. This is what is referred to internationally as a *democratic dialogue* tradition (Bradbury & Reason, 2001 3; 18–19), which is based on socio-technical theory (Gustavsen et al., 2010; Gustavsen, 2014). Experience from other projects in this tradition reveals that employees can start with error correction, but that through systematic reflection a deeper understanding of how one addresses the cause of repeated failures is developed (Amble & Gjerberg, 2009; Amble, 2012 a,b). At the same time, problems in this work are not of a nature that can be solved once and for all if one only goes deep enough, as suggested by Argyris and Schön (1996). The work is human, relational work, which by its very nature is ambiguous, and constantly changing in terms of what is better or best, wrong, or good (Vabø, 2014). It requires continuous and recurring discussions.

In the preface to Argyris and Schön (1996), they emphasized that the topic of organizational learning was such a completely new field of research when they wrote the book in 1978 that the concept both confused and repelled other researchers (p. xvii). As exceptions to this, they refer to three notabilities, with Philip G. Herbst being one of them. Herbst himself used the term organizational learning in 1974, and in 1993a, he uses both. In the article from 1993a¹ – book II in the Tavistock trilogy – Philip G. Herbst introduces work organization, not only as a production system but also as a learning system. This was something new, as Herbst was concerned with change, and that change in work organizations was not easy. As mentioned above, his supreme thought was that organizations that mastered continuous learning through joint improvement – what he calls the *joint optimization* of work – were in a good position to be able to make changes on all three levels. Without specifically referring to any one in particular, he arranges and defines these concepts in relation to each other in a slightly different way than Senge (1990) and Argyris and Schön (1996).

Among others, the terms *organizational learning* and *learning organization* have received criticism for being unclear, overlooking power issues, and the impact of work conditions; still, the concepts give voice to employees, and move attention from development projects to a more continuous focus on improvements. In reality, in the workplace, the two mix (Bottrup, 1999; Enehaug, 2014). Bottrup uses them together (1999, 2001), arguing that Argyris and Schön (1996) are those who have studied the concepts most thoroughly. However, Bottrup (1999: 42) points out that in an individual's previous



experience as a starting point for new learning that the bodily side of learning and the power and control of conditions for learning are omitted in favor of a perspective where learning is perceived as something that is always positive. In line with TQM, BPR, and LEAN, it looks like a productivity promoting management tool (p. 2). In this article, the aim is to accommodate or answer some of this criticism by not only going back to Herbst's original text from (1974) but also through the experience from our project that takes the bodily, individual tacit knowledge, called job crafting, into consideration. Job crafting is the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work. Thus, job crafting is an action, and those who undertake it are job crafters (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; 179). In work with human beings, this is the individual performance of your primary work task, which is often a private, informal learning process in daily work, with the potential of being input in collective processes within a learning organization (Amble, 2012 a,b, 2013, 2014, 2016).

In 1993 (a) with reference back to 1974, Herbst describes how a traditionally hierarchical ship organization, with a strict separation between the apprentices, crew, and officers, was reorganized into a matrix system. A matrix organization is characterized by combining a hierarchy, with both space and opportunity, in what Herbst calls reorganizing, and working more as a multidisciplinary network, in which all have their own – but also common tasks corresponding to the actors on Gållå, who have both their own monologues and interactions with one or more of the other actors. Together, the staff on the ship described by Herbst was responsible for the ship's daily operation. The new way of working was developed and incorporated within the entire organization, and in doing so became what Herbst termed a learning organization in practice. Today's health care organizations, and especially municipal home-based care, can be seen as being similar to Herbst's and Reppen's matrix organizations.

Herbst (1993a) reviews his case as a 'demonstration experiment'. According to Herbst, the demonstration experiment as a method has two purposes: To show that something, which we think of as impossible, can actually be implemented in reality. At the same time, the demonstration experiment would provide data that could be summarized in more general principles. Not to confirm what *is*, but to show what *could be possible* in the future. This is also a relevant perspective in relation to the case in elderly care. Continuous work in care of the elderly is professionalized, though occasionally characterized by low staffing levels and a number of unskilled staff, in that it is actually questionable to ask whether it is possible to empower the elderly and develop their own work, not only by making small changes but also by incorporating a new innovative way of working. The employees worded it as going from being 'helping hands' to working more creatively in a coaching manner, with 'their hands on the back'.

Minimal critical specification

As previously mentioned, artistic director Iren Reppen was keen to preserve the essence – the artistic nerve – in the performance by allowing each actor to use the opportunity for trial, error, play, and mastery, both alone and in interactions with the other actors. To help achieve this, the process was to create a common understanding by specifying some necessary basic points in the show. Herbst calls this phenomenon *minimal critical specification*, the minimum, but at the same time on critical points a specification

of what is to be done or created. Klemsdal (2013) connects the concepts of sensemaking (Weick, 2001) and *minimal critical specification* in a research project in another Norwegian municipality. In the good examples, conversations among the employees about problematic situations at work are constructive cases of learning that make sense. Solutions that employees arrive at in this way become examples of how minimal critical specification supports learning within a work organization. In Klemsdal's case, it is about a new organization in social services. By removing several levels of managers, and organizing the service in a network without further specification, all the old leader tasks 'fell' through the network without anyone 'following up'. For the employees, it was a confirmation of preconceived ideas that 'when everyone is responsible, no one takes action'. Through discussion and by experience, the staff eventually finds out that they can distribute managerial tasks. And it goes well, that is to say that the experience showed that it works well when they do not give individuals management tasks, but instead assign them to small groups of employees. The attitude changes; 'everybody' can actually take responsibility and take action by using this procedure.

The establishment of leadership task groups and the procedure for the distribution of leadership tasks is therefore a demonstration of how a minimal, but critical specification, takes hold of – and carries out managerial tasks. Herbst puts forward this way of specifying work tasks as an alternative to the detailed specification, such as for example in Scientific Management. So, this is a way of describing by specifying the minimum, so as to provide flexibility and space when learning by the consequences of testing out new practices. Herbst (1993a) promotes this as a hallmark of learning organizations, namely that a minimal critical specification is both necessary and sufficient. This means that based on their own experience, employees should be able to discuss, learn, and have autonomy to try out what they consider to work well. The above example of Klemsdal (2013) shows that initially one did not go far enough in specifying when one gave the network as a whole the responsibility for the former leaders' tasks, but that eventually there developed adequate specifications.

A summary of Danish experiences with everyday rehabilitation in elderly care makes it clear that the decisive factor in incorporating everyday rehabilitation is that employees change their perceptions about what constitutes good care. This mental transition often appears after they have had specific experiences with the dividends the approach may yield. Hence, experiential learning, that is, learning through concrete practical examples, is considered to be more fruitful than theoretical learning (Socialstyrelsen, 2013: 6, 41). Minimal critical specification will therefore be an example of a necessary mentoring principle that helps management and employees to learn from experience and develop new solutions in an attitude-changing manner, and learn through practice.

A learning organization in practice

Herbst (1993a) arranges the concept of *the learning organization* as the sum of six forms of learning, all of which take place simultaneously, and in Herbst's words are: organizational learning, collegial learning on the job, instruction/guidance from senior to junior, learning through work planning and learning through change, and a discussion of the reallocation of resources. In addition, there is also vocational training, in which seniors assist apprentices in more school-characterized training (Herbst, 1993a: 5). When it comes



to experienced workers who teach new workers through fellowship, instruction, or planning meetings, Herbst's point is that being involved in such learning relationships revitalizes older and maybe intransigent workers. In the role as a 'teacher', or one who teaches, the experienced workers analyze the knowledge they have, see holes in it, and seek new solutions. Meanwhile, they observe and see the newcomers' development, which in turn provides a more positive view of colleagues who do not know as much as oneself, but who see how much or how fast they learn. As a result, being in a learning organization creates dynamics that not only draw the newcomers along but also act as a self-reinforcing mechanism in which all staff advance (Herbst, 1974: 58). This is consistent with Wenger's (2006) *community of practice*, in which employees develop a mastery and professional identity through a reliance on each other's assignments and common tasks.

But unlike Herbst's (1993a) ship organization, in which everyone is physically gathered in a geographic area, the task community becomes the crux of the matter in the home-based service, as it is organized in the municipality. Much of the ordinary service takes place in one-to-one relationships between the service provider and service recipient in an almost privatized manner (Amble, 2013; 53). With regard to this point – the lack of matrix tasks – previous experience shows that a common reflection around each of the employees' delivery of 'private' care tasks, that is, a joint reflection on the individual job crafting (Wrezniewsk & Dutton, 2001) offers an effect as a virtual task community (Amble, 2014; 61). What distinguishes Herbst's (1993) learning organization from Senge (1990) and Argyris and Schön (1978; 1996) is his emphasis on *joint* optimization, in which the six forms of learning mentioned above, where in Herbst's words the power and control of conditions (Bottrup, 1999) are the planning of operations and the allocation of resources. More concretely, this is in relation to how the staff managed to draw everyone into the learning processes by becoming the little extra that increases the capacity for a bottom-up implementation of change. This point will be exemplified through how employees in the ward developed a system of secondments, meetings, job rotation, and report writing as a way to engage everyone in the change process.

The employees, who were divided into four geographical areas, comprised the home-based care in the municipality, which is the ordinary staff responsible for the daily operations. Together with the employees of a new service rehabilitation team called 'The Team', they developed cooperation with something possible to address as being a learning organization in line with Herbst (1993a). Some principles have been operationalized through this cooperation. As mentioned above, one is a minimal critical specification (Herbst, 1993b) in a local variation. The second is the principle of broad participation through a joint optimization in which all (on three levels) are involved, and lastly how the arrangements around reflection relating to 'individual job crafting' make up for a lack of joint task learning, what Herbst calls collegial learning. This becomes a new perspective in collegial learning. How these three principles have been used illustrates the scope and cooperation in the project. But first I will provide a description of the empirical basis, including the project background and research design, before giving a presentation of the principles.

Empirical Basis

With an aging population, and an increasing number of people living longer with medical disorders, Norwegian local authorities were encouraged to do some rethinking.

Innovation in care (NOU, 2011: 11) calls for alternative work methods, as well as operational and organizational structures that encourage an active user participation, and public and network cooperation. Everyday rehabilitation represents such a new way of operating, and the process for the incorporation of this new mode of operation – bottom-up, with a high degree of autonomy, which is a process governed by the employees' experience with this way of working – is also new. This puts the spotlight on both the new service and the way it has been developed and incorporated. The care of the elderly is perceived to be a system under pressure (Kamp & Hvid, 2012; Vabø & Vabø, 2014). The care of the elderly is also characterized by challenging interpersonal work, 24-hour operation, tight finances, unpredictable workloads, and a care provision that varies from one day to another, in part because not only people are different, but also because the health of the elderly is in a state of constant flux. The majority of the workers with the elderly are employed part-time, with 25% of the man-years done by unskilled workers, thus characterizing the work force on the national level. This makes quality-giving continuity and cooperation an extra challenge, thereby reinforcing the need to rethink and think again.

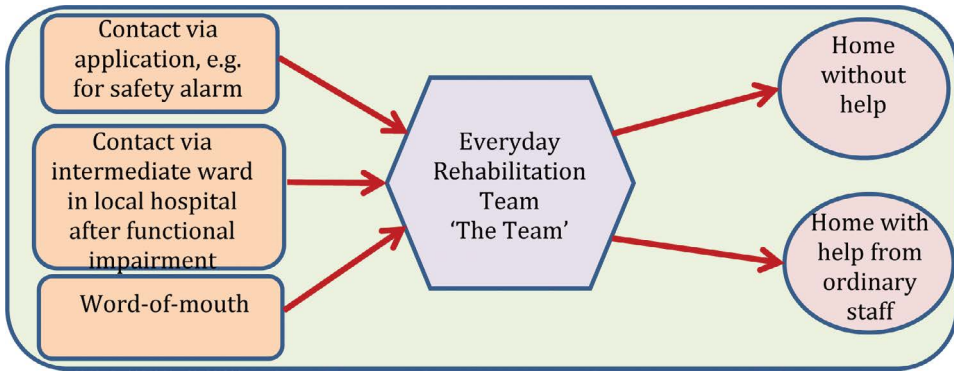
Like many others, the municipality traveled to Denmark in 2012, and became fascinated by the 'Fredericia model'. In 2010, the municipality of Fredericia in Jylland received an innovation award for its care of the elderly concept known as *everyday rehabilitation*. Within 2 years, 92 out of 98 Danish municipalities introduced this concept (Jensen, 2014). The concept is a (re-) discovery of the relationship between physical activity in everyday life and the need for help (Vabø, 2007, 2014). Everyday rehabilitation means intensification in activity and a simultaneous reduction in the need for help in the long run. But it is the *organization* of this venture that represents the new ideas. In 'our' municipality, it was a multidisciplinary team, which in 4 to 6 weeks was to intensify the care toward the selected elderly. After this period, the ordinary staff was supposed to continue the service in their daily operations. It is important to emphasize that the new service is not just individualistic and limited to physical functioning. The ultimate goal is that the recipient should be able to maintain their habits and routines of everyday life, including participation in social gatherings and activities outside their homes. Through a specially designed team, the recipients should start a more active lifestyle, and if kept in good physical and mental shape, they should be able to live longer in their own homes. At the same time, the quality of life for the elderly should be improved.

The ward decided to try out the new concept, and in May 2013, the project leader of the Team was employed. At the same time, the municipality started up a pilot project and took contact with researchers in this special area, the intention being to develop a knowledge-based or research-based strategy for a prevention and rehabilitation based in practice. The pilot project should also prepare and formulate an application with a view toward investigating what would inhibit and promote such a strategy over time (Lind, 2015). This application, '*Together for an active life*', was supported by the Research Council of Norway through the Regional Research Fund West (RFV). The research project is a collaboration between two municipalities in the region, Diakonhjemmet University College (Diakonhjemmets Høgskole Sandnes) and the Norwegian Social Research Institute (NOVA), in which the department of Vocational Teacher Education at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA) had a subcontract.

In June 2013, the municipality employed a special ‘everyday rehabilitation team’. The Team comprised the ergo therapist as a full-time project leader, a nurse, and a physiotherapist, each in a 50% position.

The Team developed three systems for taking in patients (see illustration below):

- from new users applying for services, for example, with safety alarms;
- from short-stay rehabilitation wards in hospitals, following inpatient care in the general hospital, for example, with a fracture of the hip; and
- as a small compact community using word-of-mouth (that one hears about someone who needs help).



This gives the Team five principal organizational interfaces. The interfaces represent barriers that require a strategy if learning, knowledge, and action would be able to transcend boundaries to follow-up users. The municipality had the idea that for the ordinary staff in particular, the home carers should adapt the Team’s way of working into a ‘light version’, hence maintaining the new level of functionality that the elderly person had achieved. Eventually, all users, including the ones not treated by the Team, would be part of this way of working. Therefore, it was the employees in the four home-based care units that the municipality initially decided to include in the new approach, in a partnership between the staff and researchers. It is in this interface between the Team and the care units that meetings with the researchers have taken place.

Research design

The project’s primary objective was to develop a knowledge-based strategy for everyday rehabilitation among the ordinary staff adapted to local conditions. But it was also an objective to investigate what would inhibit and promote this strategy over time. It outlined three types of measures, and this article is taken from one of these, namely to provide *continuing education and experiential learning to increase staff awareness about the principles of everyday rehabilitation*. In this training, the employees would have the

opportunity to reflect on how the work could best be performed during the times when they are confronted with ‘real’ challenges related to time pressures, elderly people with a changeable well-being and motivation, different living conditions, family relationships, etc. This means experiential learning in reflection groups, in which practical and ethical challenges of their everyday work were discussed.

The empirical basis for this article is therefore based on a so-called interactive research design, in which researchers and groups of employees work together to develop new knowledge. The concept of interactive research emphasizes a shared learning process between field and research, where new knowledge should be relevant to the field and have an academic standard (Svensson & Nielsen, 2006). In line with Greenwood and Levin (2007), interactive research is perceived as a form of action research. Action research is then an ‘umbrella term’ that covers a set of conscious cooperation and democratic-oriented strategies to help generate knowledge and designing action in cooperation between trained experts and local stakeholders (Greenwood & Levin, 2007:1). While action research has traditionally placed a greater emphasis on the design of action and acting in an organizational perspective, interactive research puts an emphasis on *developing a research-based knowledge for everyday rehabilitation that suits local conditions*.

In the period from 2013 to 2015, four rounds of reflection meetings with different groups of employees were carried out. The reflection meetings were organized as focus groups, with planned, informed themes, and the same groups of employees were invited each time. Some have been to all four meetings, while others have been to three, two, or just one. This variation is due to chance, as to who is at work, whom it suits, and who presently works in the service. On average, 25 employees were invited to these reflection meetings, and were divided into three focus groups. Each meeting lasted approximately 1.5 hours, with the meetings documented in electronic records. The researchers took individual notes during meetings, and on one occasion, questionnaires were distributed to the informants. In addition, there has been an ongoing discussion and reflection between the two researchers who have always been present together. The meetings are documented in the form of reflection proceedings, and whether in writing or orally, they have always been re-distributed to the participants and validated in new conversations. This represents the interactive loop. Group interviews with managers, union representatives, and other key personnel have been conducted. One special reflection meeting has been arranged for home help, and a 2-day kick-off arrangement has been arranged for managers and union representatives in the two municipalities participating in the main project. An experience seminar was arranged in 2015, and the project leader for the Team also collected political case presentations and media coverage about the case. This is material that the researchers received. The empirical basis is the experience of the everyday rehabilitation of 108 users (Lind, 2015).

The analysis of our data rests on a general reading and discussion of the empirical material, and is based on an empirically and theoretically informed interpretation (Malterud, 2012). Analyses are therefore not only inspired by the various discussions in the field but also by previous research in this field. This is a form of ‘ad-hoc’ analysis, an eclectic form of generating meaning in the qualitative material (Brinkman & Tanggaard, 2010; Malterud, 2012). In these various conversations, as well as in written and spoken dialogues, there has emerged an understanding of elements, principles, and results.



Results

As a demonstration experiment, the employees within the given framework have managed to create a learning organization in practice. They, both the Team and the ordinary staff, say that the leeway they were given was a big advantage in forming the service, but they have also been good at using this leeway. This combination of getting and using leeway, or what Herbst calls ‘slack’ in the organization, is a result of the municipal leaders giving the new service a minimal amount of critical specifications. The specifications given – or the framework for capacity – were the size of the Team, the professional composition of it, and the number of weeks that intensive care and training were offered. The staff in the Team and in the ordinary care said the new approach was demanding, especially mentally demanding, and required a continuous concentration and use of creativity. Concentration and creativity – to constantly be concentrated and creative – was an exploratory way of working, in which chemistry between the user and staff is particularly important. Together, the two staff groups developed an almost unlimited toolbox of methods and tricks they used to motivate users to attempt more than they would normally have thought they could. Motivation was created and maintained through progress and mastery, and was described as a ‘playful’ way of working, similar to Reppen’s actors in the rehearsals of Peer Gynt, job crafting in practice.

In our case, we heard a lot of job crafting, but less about reflection and conscious competence attached to this creative job exploration. But we did hear about informal contact via mobile phones, how they called each other and checked out what was said, and shared tips and advice in relation to their own way of working, which can be better embedded within the system. Meanwhile, we experienced a lot of expertise and energy in our focus groups – a virtual community – related to the individual’s job crafting. One must bear in mind that even though a carer may work alone with a user, everyone in the unit will usually have worked, or as they say ‘have attended to’ all the users. Therefore, at this point, and based on the character of the primary work task, working with humans supplements Herbst’s (1993) learning organization in practice, with job crafting as the basis for joint reflection and learning, as well as an alternative to the task community in the more old-fashioned physical sense of colleague learning in the primary autonomous work groups.

Minimal critical specification

The employees said themselves that they were given a free rein from the leaders in the municipality. Actually, there were a number of conditions that were provided or developed that framed the leeway given. Users of the new service would receive approximately 4 weeks of intensive care or training, and then the ordinary service would take over. The Team consisted of three employees with multidisciplinary expertise, who would visit all users every day, etc., which also guided the capacity. As Reppen also puts forward, the point was a balance sufficient to leave flexibility and opportunities for learning that preserved the essence of the process.

There were (surprisingly) many good systems and procedures developed for learning across the aforementioned organizational interfaces. Meetings were formalized

between the Team and the home-based care units to focus on the handing over of users. The fact that the Team was encouraged to acquire many users resulted in some having to be rejected, but still contributed to the discussion and learning out in the zones in ordinary service. The Team's existence has led to the short-term-rehabilitation ward being able to reduce the stay for many of its patients. Learning has developed across organizational units and teams, but to some extent, it also developed between the service and the relatives. It was put forth that in order to succeed with the everyday rehabilitation concept, one needs 'informed relatives' on board. However, this was experienced as a difficult challenge. Relatives are weary and worried, and it has been said that some need greater confidence. It is also difficult to include relatives when the patient does not want to bother them. Even so, there is a broad consensus that more can be done to establish cooperation with relatives. The existing network meeting between the user, their families, and the service was seen as a potential arena in this respect.

New tools: Meetings, secondment, and reports

The Team has developed a structure in the form of meetings for knowledge transfer between interfaces. Along with the ordinary staff, they have also developed a system for secondments before a user is returned to ordinary service. Beyond the secondments of staff from the relevant zone, the Team also invited all employees, including students and apprentices, to rotate into the team when it was convenient. This enabled a general knowledge transfer to the ordinary service. After 2 years of operation, two from the Team rotated back to ordinary care, while the project leader got two new care workers from the ordinary staff onto the Team. This rotation might have posed a challenge, but in line with Herbst's (1993a) hypothesis, when it did not this may have been a result of a learning organization being better at 'withstanding' changes. Through this, knowledge and experience are brought back and forth between sections and units. In the latest reflection meeting, it emerged that one of the previously rotated members of the Team was working on several initiatives in order to raise the competence within the ordinary staff. This is based on what she had learned and practiced when she worked on the Team. Among other things, it was explicitly mentioned that the employees of the Team had received training in a method called 'Motivational interviewing' (MI). This method would now also be taught to the employees in the ordinary service. Secondment and the rotation of staff, together with the high number of users, have therefore strengthened the development of the 'light version' of the new approach.

Summary

Through jointly organized tasks and activities, such as secondments and communication across interfaces, new procedures for the transfer of knowledge, both horizontally and vertically, have been developed within the organization. At the organizational level, analyses of the experiences in the Team have been conducted, even if there is still a small lack of embeddedness of the new knowledge at the institutional level. It was pointed out that in job advertisements, they will eventually emphasize that they use *everyday*



rehabilitation as a work method in the service concept. This in turn will affect how new staff will be inducted into the service. This means that knowledge about the new work form will not be dependent on the individuals in the Team, but instead be described to newcomers. By that, everyday rehabilitation is on the way to becoming sustainable by integrating the three levels of learning, insofar as distributing power from the leaders to the team and to the ordinary staff, using the daily work task execution as input into the collective learning system.

Discussion

In this article, the purpose has been to present how the introduction of working with a new service concept, '*everyday rehabilitation*', became a commonly created process, much like that described in Reppen's rehearsal of Peer Gynt at Gålå. The steering mechanism in establishing the new service was the employee's professional experience. The employees feel they have had few restrictions in the development of the new approach; based on their professionalism, they have experienced this as an organic process of trying and failing, that is, 'playing' as Reppen would have said, while the principles that guided the process have been the management's surrender of minimal specifications. As Reppen states, there is a crucial balance to be found between the specifications and the actor or care worker's competence. In our case, the employees have had enough resources to construct a learning organization.

A learning organization versus organizational learning

It is in the nature of the project that procedures and work tools related to everyday rehabilitation should be made more explicit. The Team – as the main actor – is actively working with the ordinary staff to develop work tools and routines for documentation. Organizational learning is all about taking collective, experiential learning seriously. It is also about documenting, analyzing, and 'converting' experience and knowledge on both individual and group levels into procedures and systems that are more favorable for the work being done. We can achieve this level of learning only when improved ways to organize and carry out work are formally embedded, and are practiced regardless of specific employees/leaders. Knowledge is sometimes lost by an organization when key enthusiasts leave their jobs. When this occurs, it is a sign of insufficient organizational learning. Herbst (1993a) places *organizational learning* as *one* of the forms of learning within a learning organization. In Herbst's understanding of organizational learning, when learning at the top level of the organization, leaders with power, and authority actually change (for everyone) on the basis of something (they have) experienced or learned further down. In our case, it was with this top level that they struggled, largely due to a lack of time. Nevertheless, there *was* an awareness that new working procedures had to be institutionalized! Job advertisements that emphasized that they used *everyday rehabilitation* as a form of work were a confirmation of this, in addition to the team going from being a project to becoming a permanent organizational unit within the municipality. In Senge's terminology, this is the fifth discipline of system change.

Job crafting, a 'new' indirect form of collective learning

Everyday rehabilitation is a method in which a special team intensifies user activity through a collaboration – both team and user – centered on the activities of daily living. Simultaneously, after the intensive period, the ordinary staff will take over and continue with the same working methods in daily care. What Herbst (1993a) explicitly does not recognize in his learning organization is the knowledge the employees themselves develop when they apply creativity, the exploratory way to solve the primary task, often in a one-to-one relationship with the user. In an article from 2010, Oldham and Hackman precisely describe this phenomenon: micro processes in work that were not picked up by the work designers and the early socio-technicians, such as Herbst himself. Today, we have a theory of the micro processes, *job crafting* (Wrzesniewsk & Dutton, 2001; Amble, 2014). It is familiar as to how the first line of modern services and the employees themselves develop different mastering strategies. The point is probably that in a work in which the work community is not as prevalent as it was 'in the olden times', in which the matrix tasks are nearly 'gliding' apart; a focus on individual job crafting as tacit knowledge in joint reflection meetings can compensate and become a virtual job task community. This is in line with Engelstad (1980: 232), who is – in another matrix work organization – specifying a cohesive task for tying the matrix together to help keep the social system social.

Minimal critical specification and 'play' room

According to the staff, the criterion for success in our case was the leeway they had when they started up the new team and the new approach. They also had the courage, competence, and willingness to use this leeway; they actually dared to go out broadly and instead taper in, for example, the number of users, as they went along. To a certain degree, they had control over work conditions, which has provided them with a lot of experience. They have achieved mastery, and broadcast positive examples. Without them being aware of it, they have acted according to the minimal critical specification, as opposed to the far safer way of working with a detailed specification. In this way, the Team and the ordinary service built themselves a large motor – an experience bank – in which they have managed to create both the structure and form of cooperation, in line with what I call a learning organization in practice (Herbst, 1993a). This (structure and working methods) also provides relief, and combines direct learning through collaboration in work and indirect learning when reflection is done within the working community. The municipality has conducted its calculations, and believes it will also benefit economically by this way of working. Still, there is much one can do, as involving relatives has been mentioned, while another part of the project involves volunteers. But in going back to Reppen, they have managed to bring forward the essence in the work, the essence, or the motivation that will drive future development. The majority of the participants in the last focus group meeting in June 2015 agreed that it was now too late to turn back, insofar as the work approach was challenging, inspiring, was here to stay and was on its way to becoming institutionalized. A confirmation of the sustainability is the measurement of the functional level of the elderly who have participated, which was maintained 6 months after the ordinary staff had 'taken over' the users.

So, it may be questioned: Is it just to give employees free rein, and then it will happen: Will they create a learning organization? Herbst (1993 a) emphasizes a matrix, network organization; in our case, the matrix occurs through new commonly created written and oral work tools, cohesive tasks that bind the different organizational interfaces together, included here in its multidisciplinary approach. The matrix becomes an organization or a framework for the minimal critical specification. This interaction does not commend the progress to individuals. For the matrix organization, the minimal critical specification(1) transformed into the use of leeway to take control of work conditions(2), and in this work working with humans; the reflection on job crafting(3) is therefore the sum and basis for joint learning: Taken together, these comprise three general principles of a learning organization in practice.

Iren Reppen creates nerve in the performance by drawing up not too detailed specifications. She preserves room and motivates the actors to what she calls *playing*. Joyful playing is a form of learning. It can be understood as a recipe for creating or preserving autonomy not only at both the individual and group level in the ensemble at Gålå, but also as staging the learning organization within our municipality. Slack is used and autonomy is created by trial, error, play, and mastery in order to learn and give a good performance. In our example, which is equivalent to the above-mentioned case described by Klemsdal (2013), the minimal critical specification and framework that were actually given have been the basis for the development of the different forms of learning. Together, they may be perceived as practical tools for creating and adopting the characteristics of the socio-technical tradition, namely the collective – or what Trist and Bamforth (1951: 6) originally established as *responsible autonomy*. This means that our example shows how responsible autonomy as a historically validated democratic value can be established and used, so that an organization becomes a learning organization in practice, in today's organizational reality.

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Notes

- ¹ He says himself that the 1993 article is based on an excerpt from another book by him from 1974, as well as a fieldwork in 1977 aboard the cargo ship M/S Balao on a voyage from Sicily in Italy to Novorossisk in the Black Sea in Russia. In the 1993 article, A Learning Organization in Practice, he presents the Balao case study. The reason I emphasize this is because it is not so easy to figure out when concepts occurred, but in 1993, the terms ‘organizational learning’ and ‘learning organization’ were both established.