

Chapter 10

Micro–Analysis of Concepts for Developing Networking in Social Work

Laura Seppänen

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Finland

Laure Kloetzer

CNAM, France

ABSTRACT

Inter-institutional or inter-functional network collaboration at work increasingly provides new challenges for professionals. A developmental network intervention based on the approach of Developmental Work Research was conducted in the field of Social Services for Divorced Families. The objective was to examine cross-functional limitations through joint reflection of examples of clients' trajectories and to discuss possibilities for developing client-oriented network collaboration between services. With the help of interlocutory analysis, the professional concepts in use were tracked in sequences of intervention discussions. The analysis reveals how "hybrid concepts," defined as concepts in use in the professional environment and re-used as intervention tools by the researchers, could support joint reflection by the professionals on the current limits of their collaboration. It also reveals how "professional concepts" may serve as resources to mediate client-services' and service-service relations. Finally, conditions and challenges for designing activity theory-based interventions for promoting client-oriented network collaborations are sketched.

INTRODUCTION

While network collaboration is an increasing trend in work life, there is demand for developmental interventions for networking and boundary crossing purposes. The original interventionist versions based on Developmental Work Research

(DWR) (Engeström, 1987) such as the Change Laboratory (Virkkunen & Newnham 2013) were not designed to tackle the complex setting of multiple collaborating activities. Applications have later been developed for networking or boundary crossing purposes between activities (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007; Kerosuo 2006;

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-6603-0.ch010

Ruotsala 2014; Seppänen et al. 2009; Toiviainen et al., 2009). The combination of the creation of solutions and their dissemination can be enhanced if an intervention is carried out by a network of actors and organizations (Bodrožić 2008), or by establishing pluralist communities of inquiry (Lorino, Tricard & Clot, 2011).

The context of this chapter is a short two-workshop intervention carried out in order to promote client-oriented network collaboration between distinct professional functional units in social work. The empirical case comes from the field of Social Services for Divorced Families (SSDF) in Finnish social work services, which are facing pressures to change both in funding and service quality. Improving collaboration between specialized services is envisioned as a way to overcome current limitations. The case study involved three municipal functional units of social affairs, Family Counseling (FC), Family Law Issues (FLI) and Child Protection (CP), consisting of professionals with different backgrounds, goals and functions, but all supporting or dealing with the same clients.

This paper is the result of long-running collaboration between two groups working with and on developmental methodologies at work: the Finnish Developmental Work Research team (DWR) and the French Activity Clinic team. Cross discussions on theoretical and methodological frameworks and on results have been going on for ten years in different settings, including symposia in international conferences and a special issue on Dialogue and Interaction in Developmental Methodologies (Kloetzer & Seppänen, 2014).

The goal of this paper is to push this collaboration one step further by conducting a joint analysis of data collected during a Change Workshop intervention. This paper therefore joins one internal researcher (the first author) who directed and conducted the intervention process in a DWR tradition from beginning to end, and one external researcher (the second

author) from the Activity Clinic tradition, also experienced in developmental interventions and the analysis of dialogues in developmental interventions, who followed and commented on this intervention process. The two researchers engaged collaboratively in a detailed analysis of selected data, which will be presented in this paper. The investigation of the intervention data combines DWR with interlocutory analysis, as developed by the French group of the Activity Clinic (Kostulski & Kloetzer, 2014).

In the first part of this chapter, we present the need for increased networking and the case studied, i.e. the municipal organization of social work with divorced families. We then describe the developmental intervention carried out in SSDF. We particularly explain the design and use of one method, using hybrid concepts of 'worry' and 'green areas'. In the second part, entitled Mediations in cross-functional social work, we interpret and analyze in detail one episode of the intervention discussion in which the mentioned 'method of worries' was used. The findings show the professional concepts that were uncovered by this developmental method. Although the professional concepts found were efficient mediations between each service and their clients, cross-institutional mediations to support the inter-functional collaboration of professionals were lacking in the episode analyzed. We describe the critical findings concerning the difficulty of professional concepts to mediate cross-functional collaboration, as well as their potential for cross-functional mediation. In the third and last part of the paper, we sketch and discuss ideas and challenges for designing and facilitating developmental, activity theory-based interventions for promoting cross-institutional or cross-functional, client-oriented collaborations. Moreover, we reflect upon the benefits of the joint analysis which used resources of both DWR and interlocutory analysis. Questions for future research will be posed at the end.

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/micro-analysis-of-concepts-for-developing-networking-in-social-work/120825?camid=4v1

This title is available in Advances in Human and Social Aspects of Technology Book Series, InfoSci-Books, Communications, Social Science, and Healthcare, InfoSci-Social Sciences and Humanities, InfoSci-Select, InfoSci-Library and Information Science, Library Science, Information Studies, and Education, InfoSci-Select, InfoSci-Select, InfoSci-Select.

Recommend this product to your librarian:

www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=93

Related Content

The Impact of Information Visualisation on the Quality of Information in Business Decision-Making

Alenka Zabukovec and Jurij Jakli (2015). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 61-79).

www.igi-global.com/article/the-impact-of-information-visualisation-on-the-quality-of-information-in-business-decision-making/126187?camid=4v1a

The Interplay Between Human and Structure in IT Strategy

Tiko Iyamu (2014). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 83-100).

www.igi-global.com/article/the-interplay-between-human-and-structure-in-it-strategy/114593?camid=4v1a

Sentiment Analysis with Text Mining in Contexts of Big Data

Carina Sofia Andrade and Maribel Yasmina Santos (2017). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 47-67).

www.igi-global.com/article/sentiment-analysis-with-text-mining-in-contexts-of-big-data/181660?camid=4v1a

Living Lab: An Open and User-Centric Design Approach1

Birgitta Bergvall-Kåreborn and Anna Ståhlbröst (2011). *Information and Communication Technologies, Society and Human Beings: Theory and Framework (Festschrift in honor of Gunilla Bradley)* (pp. 190-208).

www.igi-global.com/chapter/living-lab-open-user-centric/45292?camid=4v1a