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Title page

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Short title: A shift towards understanding the organizational complexity of multidisciplinary collaboration

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From management to leadership: A shift towards understanding the organizational complexity of multidisciplinary collaboration

Multidisciplinary collaboration is central to modern social welfare organizations, yet knowledge about the organizational context of collaboration is scarce. The study objective was to establish multidisciplinary collaboration, by designing an organizational field study. The aim of this article is to explore managerial roles and perspectives during an organizational process of developing multidisciplinary collaboration. Eighteen management meetings, held during a two-year period, are analyzed. The analysis reveals that the management gradually grasps the complexity of multidisciplinary collaboration; negotiations on the concept are ongoing while their point of view changes from distant to involved. The management takes leadership towards multidisciplinary collaboration through a series of legitimacy-related negotiations, illustrating the organizational and managerial contexts of multidisciplinary collaboration as well as introducing it as a new type of managerial task.

Key words: Multidisciplinary collaboration; organizational development; management; leadership.

Introduction

Human services organizations may be characterized as complex organizations with interactions between highly skilled professionals, with a diversity of behaviour and actions designed to handle social problems surrounding, for instance, children at risk. Handling these social problems and helping children at risk may be enhanced by a collaborative effort from the different professions involved in solving these problems, aiming at collaborative advantage; i.e., the surplus value of collaboration is higher than the surplus value of working alone. However, challenges keep emerging in the collaborative efforts (Atkinson, Jones & Lamont, 2007).

The objective of the study was to establish multidisciplinary collaboration, primarily between day care and social services working with children at risk (four- to six-year-old children in a vulnerable position with regard to social and emotional development). The study was designed as an organizational field study with the purpose of organizational development.

The general aim of this article is to address a management perspective during an organizational process of developing multidisciplinary collaboration. The article centers on the developmental process that the management goes through as it tries to improve multidisciplinary collaboration within the organization. The main question being addressed is: what kind of development can be seen within a particular group of managers as they develop the practice of multidisciplinary collaboration within a human services organization?

Multidisciplinary Collaboration for Children at Risk

In this study, multidisciplinary collaboration is understood as collaboration across professional disciplines working directly with children and families. Multidisciplinary collaboration requires that professionals from different professions collaborate. Professionals, and parents, need to expand their understanding of children's well-being (Dahl, 2001), based on the different perspectives.

Therefore, understandings as well as interventions need to be discussed between adults having different knowledge about the child from different settings. The purpose is to ensure that professionals and parents have a mutual understanding of a child's needs. In this sense, collaboration is a methodological way of working. At the same time, collaboration requires organizational framing and prioritization. Therefore, the organization surrounding multidisciplinary collaboration is as interesting as the collaborative process itself.

Multidisciplinary work is an ambiguous concept (Anning et al, 2010), theoretically as well as in terms of research. Several aspects of the research on multidisciplinary collaboration are worth noticing.

First of all, the effect of collaboration is yet to be discovered. When collaboration is not established, the consequences for children at risk can be multi-faceted as they have not yet been widely documented by national or international research (Karatekin et al., 2014; Oliver et al., 2010; Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Atkinson et al., 2007).

Secondly, the voices of children and families are mostly not heard in the research field of collaboration (Ungar et al., 2013; May-Chahal & Broadhurst, 2006; Dalrymple, 2001). Therefore, we do not know whether children and families experience collaboration as useful and meaningful.

Thirdly, regarding terminology, diverse labels such as collaboration, interagency collaboration, multidisciplinary interagency working, interdisciplinary coordination and interprofessional working are commonly used. In addition, many different models of collaboration are applied worldwide towards different target groups of children and adolescents (e.g., Wong et al., 2012; Horwath & Morrison, 2011; Abram et al., 2005; Teixcera de Melo & Alarco, 2011; Darlington et al., 2005; Philippo & Strone, 2006; Haas et al., 2011; Banks et al., 2008; Kutash et al., 2014).

Fourthly, multidisciplinary collaboration is a practice that has different connotations and involves different professions. This implies that multidisciplinary collaboration is defined differently depending on which professionals are collaborating under which circumstances, in or between organizations and in which national setting (socio-political context, political strategy and legislation) (Atkinson et al., 2007; Miskard, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). There is no clear definition of multidisciplinary collaboration; it is merely a common idea having many forms and ways of practice.

Fifthly, management and organization are important factors for multidisciplinary collaboration. Organization-wise, important factors are, e.g., coherent politics, implementation and organizational incentives (McKeown, 2012; Drabble & Poole, 2011; Sedlak et al., 2006) and formalizing collaboration organizationally (Catania et al., 2011; Drabble & Poole, 2011). Management-wise, strong managerial responsibility and engagement are important factors (Atkinson et al., 2007; Sedlak et al., 2006), just to mention a few.

To sum up, there is no clear picture of whether multidisciplinary collaboration has an effect on children and families. We do not know for certain if children and families experience interventions based on collaboration as helpful. We do know that there are many ways of practicing multidisciplinary collaboration, which are labelled with many different names and proceed very differently depending on the local organizational and national context. In particular, the connection between organization and how multidisciplinary collaboration is practiced between professionals is somewhat unidentified. As one perspective on this connection, it is therefore interesting to unravel the process within a management group as they develop the practice of multidisciplinary collaboration within a human services organization.

Management and leadership; a distinction

The point of interest of the present article is placed solely upon management and the development they go through over time as they try to improve multidisciplinary collaboration. Central concepts on management and leadership will briefly be pointed out. In the literature a distinction between management and leadership is widespread. Leaders are considered superior to managers because leadership is about having far-reaching influence on values, ideals and strategy (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Management, on the other hand, is mainly about planning, implementing, organizing and controlling (Alvesson, 2002).

Method

The overall study was designed with the purpose of organizational development and improvement in multidisciplinary collaboration. Even though this article focuses solely on the development of management during this process – not the outcome of the organizational development – a framing of the overall study and methodology is relevant.

Methodologically, the study was based on a mix of developmental evaluation (Patton, 1994; 2011) as well as participatory (Whyte, 1991; Whyte, 1995; Greenwood, 2002; Elden & Levin, 1991) and pragmatic action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Greenwood et al., 1993).

Developmental evaluation is, first of all, a relationship between researcher and field of study based on a shared purpose: development. This means that developmental evaluation is not a modal or specific design per se (Patton, 1994). Developmental evaluation is a long-term, on-going focus on organizational development and improvement (Patton, 2011). The researcher's primary function is to illuminate organizational development with evaluative data to facilitate data-based decision-making (Patton, 1994). In this case, the development is carried out by applying a systematic data collection and analysis of developmental processes within the organization. The

feedback is based on data from within the organization which provides the basis for developing the organization. The intention of this methodological approach is that decisions on actions improving the organization are based on as much diverse knowledge as possible, and data collection and analysis is an on-going process throughout the study.

The participatory and pragmatic action research tradition forms the basis for using data on perspectives from both employees across disciplines and managers alike. The participation of professionals working directly with children and families *form*s the basis of the developmental process. This praxis-based knowledge from the organizational members is combined with research-based knowledge on methodology and theme, presented by the researcher. In this way, research-based knowledge functions as a horizontal axis around which the organizational knowledge is exchanged and affected by in an on-going simultaneous process. Thereby, the researcher promotes and administers the flow of knowledge between different levels within the organization as well as supports the developmental initiatives in the organization.

The researcher is not employed by the organization. Instead, they share a common goal on gaining knowledge on the process of developing multidisciplinary organization in human service organizations. The researcher's role is to collect, organize and present the outcome of data to the management. A sense-making process with regard to outcome is a co-generative process between researcher and management. Based on this process, the management decides which activities are to be implemented in order to reach the goal of developing multidisciplinary collaboration.

Participants

The study was conducted in a Danish Municipality. The participating group members are employed by the municipality. This particular constellation of group members is only established as part of the study.

The group members are: the Head of family affairs, the Head of day care, the Manager of social services, the Manager of health care, the Manager for home-based day care and a local multidisciplinary advisor. These group members are consistent over time.

The group members represent different levels of management within the organization. The Head of family affairs and the Head of day care represent the same level of management. The Manager of social services, the Manager of health care and the Manager for home-based day care all represent the same level. These managers not only hold organizational and personnel responsibilities, they are also responsible for the mono-professional competency of the respective professions. This level of management is subordinate to that of the Head of family affairs and the Head of day care. The Manager of social services and the Manager of health care are responsible to the Head of family affairs whereas the Manager for home-based day care is responsible to the Head of day care.

The multidisciplinary advisor does not represent a management position in the organization. She refers to the Head of family affairs and is a member of the group because of her knowledge about multidisciplinary collaboration.

The Deputy Head of family affairs only participated in the first five meetings; the manager left the organization, and the position was re-framed and not filled until the 14th meeting.

The Manager of health care participated from the fourth meeting.

The Manager for home-based day care participated from the 6th meeting.

The Manager of school services participated from the 10th meeting (this manager is on the same management level as the other managers and is responsible to the Head of family affairs)

Data

Data consist of eighteen meetings in the management group over a two-year period. The duration of the meetings vary between approximately one to three hours. The meetings were organized, lead process-wise and affected by the researcher.

Data were gathered in the form of digital recordings. Due to technical problems, data are somewhat incomplete concerning two meetings (14th of May 2012 and 21th of June 2012).

Data organization

As the data set is extensive, a selection process was necessary. HyperResearch as a qualitative data analysis software was applied. Eight codes were identified as a means of organizing and selecting. The codes were created on the basis of the primary research questions of the project, the agendas from all 18 meetings and a close listening to three of the meetings. A deductive approach was thereby applied to organize data semantically - as the basis for a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Initially, the first three and the last three meetings have been coded in relation to the eight different codes. The purpose was to ensure that the pre-created codes match the content. One code concerning 'multidisciplinary collaboration – in general' was selected and fully transcribed from these six meetings.

In the process of creating themes from the first transcripts, an inductive and semantic approach was applied to show patterns in semantic content of the discussions at the meetings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts from the six meetings were coded according to three more specific themes. The transcripts were re-read in order to make sure that the parts of the transcriptions not matching the codes did not hold other relevant or mis-matching information.

Finally, the last twelve meetings have been coded in HyperResearch according to the code 'multidisciplinary collaboration – in general'. This code was then fully transcribed and coded in accordance with the three themes.

Analytical strategy

The primary aim of the analytical strategy is to create an in-depth analysis of the developmental process of the management. This is done by organizing the created themes in accordance with the semantic content, and thereby applying a data-driven approach. The purpose of this is to use an analytically driven methodology in relation to the specific topic: multidisciplinary collaboration (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The focus is on a semantic level, this means that condensation of data (Kvale, 2008) is used to show patterns in semantic content.

In order to create a transparent overview of results and analysis, displays of data will be presented when relevant (Dahler-Larsen, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The purpose of displays is that of organizing, compressing and assembling data, but also to form a basis for further analysis. Two displays will be presented.

The condensated material forms the basis for discussion on the meanings of these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Chosen statements from the meetings will be used illustratively in the analysis. The researcher's speech and effect on dialogue was left out of the transcripts and analysis in order to center focus on the development of the group.

Working this closely with a particular group of managers as well as the field of research requires ethical considerations prior, during and after. First of all, it is important to notice that studies with an explicit aim of organizational development require voluntary participation. Second of all, the content of this article as well as the analysis of the meetings held within management have been approved of by everyone in the group. They have been presented with the outcome of the

empirical as well as the theoretical analysis. They have been given the opportunity to comment as well as object. No objections were put forward. Based on the close and productive relationship between researcher and field, this process can be considered as an expression of ecological validity (Brewer, 2000).

Analysis

Three themes are derived from transcripts and displays: 'resources', 'terminology' and 'understanding the elements of multidisciplinary collaboration'.

Resources: wishful thinking versus reality

The most dominant part of the theme 'resources' concerns the fear of implementing multidisciplinary collaboration without the professionals having the actual man-power to fulfill this task. On the 24th of May 2011, the following short dialogue took place:

> Head of day care: 'I also think that there's a risk we raise hopes that the social workers will be available whenever a problem occurs. In any case, we need to be aware of what we announce, because what can actually be done in relation to calling in a social worker when we say that we would like to be involved earlier?'
>
> Manager of social services: 'One way or the other we need to agree on what this will actually mean in terms of man hours'.

During one of the very last meetings (on the 20th of February 2013):

> Deputy head of family affairs; 'Well, I actually think we should ask ourselves whether we have the necessary resources at all, and whether we will use the resources at hand to give priority to interventions for all the assessed children.'

The concern over sufficient resources does not diminish over time, on the contrary. As can be seen from the comment of the deputy head of family affairs, she questions whether resources are even at hand. This is a strong issue because the comment is presented at a time when the management group has worked on organizational development for almost two years.

Another interesting aspect of the discussions on resources is the fact that the discussion proceeds over time *without* development or actions taken to meet these challenges. At the same time, it is remarkable, considering the significance and the seriousness of the concerns that the theme only appears in eight out of 18 meetings.

The theme on resources also describes a fact to which the group seems to return to every now and then: that any kind of prevention takes time before it pays off. Thereby introducing a temporal aspect to the wished outcome of early multidisciplinary collaboration: that it will prevent children from having severe problems later on. When confronted with the lack of resources, and the wish for creating a coherent multidisciplinary collaboration, the long term prospects of prevention are brought up. As if to remind each other that early multidisciplinary collaboration is a long-term investment. On the 14th of May 2012:

> Head of Family affairs: 'We all know that any kind of *prevention* will take time, and if only the effect would show tomorrow it would be a piece of cake, but unfortunately this is not so.'

The theme on resources also concerns the child target group and its grey area. Are the resources sufficient, appropriate and is the right kind of help available?

On the 27th of November, 2012:

> Multidisciplinary advisor: 'But this is in fact what we've had ... at least sometimes an early-stage discussion of … that some of the children we come across are simply not

> … do not fulfil the criteria for getting … for us to take measures. This child cannot be defined as an endangered child[1]. Nonetheless, some children and some families experience a hard time, and what are we going to do about them? Do we tell them: Sorry! You're not having a hard enough time yet!'

The focus on resources also results in a discussion on and realization of the diversity in management responsibilities. It is necessary to prioritize resources centrally in order to implement multidisciplinary collaboration realistically. The following dialogue from the 20th of February 2012 clearly shows that the managers are not only concerned with quantity of resources; they are also concerned with how resources are spent:

> Manager for home-based day care: 'That is actually why it is so important to *look into* this matter; do we use *resources* the way we want to use them? And do we use them the *best* way? Or, how many resources do we *use* for those purposes?'
>
> Manager of social services: 'We need to have a keen mind on that'
>
> Manager for home-based day care: ' … and that's rather unclear, if you ask me – how many people spend their time doing what?'

The tasks of prioritizing differ from manager to manager according to financial frame and tasks of the particular profession. Later on during the same meeting, the following dialogue takes place:

> Manager of social services: 'Well, that's what we could *hope* for and that's why we would like to *contribute* on a consultative basis – but this is indeed our *dilemma*, I believe. Our *dilemma* because our core tasks are directed towards another target group of children. It's not that we're not willing to contribute.'

[1] The Social Services Act defines 'endangered children' as the target group for legislatively based intervention.

> Manager for home-based day care: 'No, I don't hear that either, but you just need to grab something. It's no use saying: We want to do so, all of us, we just don't have the time.'
>
> Manager of social services: 'No, but the social workers want to, and that's why it's so important we set the *frame*, and that's why I tell you that *my* task – in relation to setting the frame – is *different* from *your* task.'

On the one hand, the resource theme illustrates that the management will not let resources get in the way of insisting on developing multidisciplinary collaboration. On the other hand, they keep being confronted not only with the lack of resources, but also with their own responsibility as to how resources are spent and whether or not the municipality has the right help to offer to this specific target group of children. The last part is a challenge because it is law obliged.

Terminology - what do we mean?

This theme deals with matters of how to define multidisciplinary collaboration. The baseline of the discussions shows that what works in collaboration, why and how it is practiced - depends on the local context. The discussions about the terminology are displayed in illustration # 1.

The professionals working directly with children and their families have no clear definition of multidisciplinary collaboration. Over time, the management becomes aware that they themselves have not been clear, neither with regard to terminology nor to praxis. On the 20th of February 2012:

> Head of day care: 'That's true, and from what I hear you say, I've done it *myself*. I mean, this round, or these rounds,[2] have *contributed* to focusing one's *own* attention, what have we actually been *naming* things?'

[2] Refers to developmental activities in organization

On the 25th of October 2012, this short dialogue took place; it shows how the management assumed responsibility:

> Head of family affairs:'(…) that is, we also need to *agree* on what it is. How we are going to work.'
>
> Head of day care: 'No, in my opinion (…) we need to *look closer* to home and say that we've experienced these *problems* at *all* times. We've had *multidisciplinary* teams, and then we've had *consultative* forums. And we've never really succeeded in *separating* them completely.'

The purpose of both consultative forums and multidisciplinary collaboration is not clearly defined. Over time the management gradually understands that the main issue with terminology is that there is no clear distinction between the two. On the 20th of February 2012 this dialogue took place:

> Manager of school services: 'Well, then again, this is some of the things I hear in our department. That, that there is a need for *having* a forum where the pedagogues can *discuss* their *own* doubts concerning some of the problems. And they actually don't always feel like doing that when parents are present, discussing pedagogical doubts, that is. Pedagogues actually have a strong need for a forum where they can discuss such doubts. And to me it's rather *important* to distinguish between discussions concerning specific children and families, and the relevant interventions in that connection, and discussions concerning professional doubts among pedagogues … and that's where I think that social workers could contribute. You know, to the forums where they're not always present.'

Manager of social services: ‘But this is where we need to distinguish between supervision, professional sparring and multidisciplinary collaboration, isn’t it?’

Head of day care: ‘I guess so…’

Manager of social services: ‘True, and now they (personnel from school services) have started to invite other staffers to (consultative) meetings, and then I think: *that*’s where we need to apply the brakes.’

It is interesting to note that terminology, and repercussions for the way multidisciplinary collaboration is carried out, was discussed for *more than* a year before a distinction is made between consultation and collaboration. In addition, it took at least six months before the distinction was accepted stepwise throughout the organization.

As a result of the on-going discussions, the management agrees that consultation is considered professional supervision, is carried out without parents present and has the aim of strengthening professional eligibility. More importantly, it is agreed upon that multidisciplinary collaboration has the aim of bringing about a change for the child and family in question and it cannot be carried out without the parents being present.

Another part of this theme of ‘terminology’ is the organizational and managerial responsibility concerning the degree of mainstreaming versus local solutions. During the discussions on terminology, the management states that clear decrees need to be made on how multidisciplinary collaboration is to be organized (which forums are used for what activities), thereby mainstreaming the frame for a shared model for multidisciplinary collaboration and assuming organizational responsibility for collaboration. On the 20th of February 2012:

Manager of school services: ‘Then we, *the central management*, must contribute to the discussions: Well, which social workers and health visitors should *join* which

> forums? To which *extent* is it at all possible? … and the like. So that the *individual* social worker does not have to struggle on his/her own.'

All in all, the terminology theme describes a time-wise long process of defining multidisciplinary collaboration. It is a term with different connotations for both professionals and management alike. Therefore, the main part of the developmental process has been to reach an agreement of a shared terminology and on forums eligible for multidisciplinary collaboration. This developmental process is closely linked to a temporal aspect, as the discussions on the terminology of multidisciplinary collaboration proceed for over a year.

Understanding the complexity of multidisciplinary collaboration

This theme entails the process where the management group realizes that multidisciplinary collaboration is a very diverse concept and phenomenon. It is not just a matter of whether or not multidisciplinary collaboration works. The management comes to understand and name the complexity of collaboration as well as the organization surrounding it. In illustration # 2, the different elements are shown. Selected elements are singled-out and analysed in the following. Initially, the discussions started out in the form of a linear expression and understanding of the concept of collaboration. Over time discussions became more qualitative, that is, not only a matter of what will work but also how it will work and for whom, leading to more nuanced discussions about the quality of the collaborative work. On the 14th of May 2012, focus is placed on how the professionals collaborate when they meet, what are their roles and what will the criteria for success be:

> Head of day care: 'The meeting culture - I mean, does it create a positive atmosphere at meetings, and how do the roles of the individual participants influence your preparations – before, during and after the meeting. And then I would like to point

> out the importance of discussing *criteria for success* – for multidisciplinary collaboration (…)'

On the 7th of December 2012, questions about the connection between quality, organization and framing are discussed:

> Manager of home-based day care: 'Something that still puzzles me is that, that every now and then confusion reigns… confusion reigns regarding how the different approaches are generated here, there and everywhere. How do we *obtain* the necessary quality of the approaches that... that are *generated*? And who are actually responsible for setting them up? Who has the *right* to do so? (…) *Who* does *what*? And what is the purpose of it?'

These comments illustrate a development over time where the management realize that collaboration is not just a matter of efficiency or the opposite, thereby illustrating the concept of evidence in praxis. It is more complex. It is about creating a joint direction and about very diverse and diffuse concepts such as culture, roles, quality of meetings and organizational change. It is about agreeing on criteria for success, management responsibility and quality. It is about knowing how to recognize quality, about how collaboration can make a difference and for whom. Noticeably, the challenge of evaluating the quality and outcome of collaboration is not met any further in discussions.

Naturally, the discussions on the elements of multidisciplinary collaboration result in a focus on how to organize and manage it. Questions are raised on how to organize multidisciplinary collaboration, how to support it organizationally, which parts to revise, and the importance of joint-up thinking and culture for local anchorage in decisions. The responsibility and awareness of organization and planning is shown in this comment from the 20th of February 2013:

> Manager of Social Services: '(…) Did we take all organizational matters into consideration, can we do more? I mean, I'm curious to know because... Yes, we've done some things and we also met yesterday and tried to support this organizational… umm, adjustment, and generally everyone responds sympathetically and with interest, and this is good, but can we do more? And then I'm still thinking, well there are organizational matters and there are mono-disciplinary matters, and when they've all been settled, we expect multidisciplinary matters to run smoothly. And then I think: Good grief! Once again, you know? Is that what will be happening? Of course conditions will improve, and that will make a change, but it's not really a solution (…)'

Over time, the management realizes that there is a challenge between balancing local ideas and the ideas of the central management but also across management groups. The following quote illustrates how the perspective of the management changes. Multidisciplinary collaboration is not just a question of particular activities in particular forums; it is also a question of the organization and the management surrounding it. On the 12th of October 2011:

> Manager of Social Services: 'But I do think that you are quite right, I mean, we do *view* things from *our* perspective, and therefore we might say, well did our communication or planning of multidisciplinary collaboration fail, or did our strategy, because the individual pedagogue is not to *blame*, you know, this is just the reality *they* experience. So, what can *we* change in order to organize it, make some multidisciplinary forums that they will actually participate in, so that everyone will know what to do and who to contact.'

During the process, the management group has come to understand just how important local management is in connection with multidisciplinary collaboration; they are the ones who have to implement the shared model for collaboration. The comment below entails several relevant aspects of management responsibility; it comments on an initiative to align managers across the organization in relation to multidisciplinary collaboration. It also shows how the central management has come to realize the importance of local management when it comes to implementation and trying to take their point of view when introducing something new. On the 14th of May 2012:

> Head of day care: 'To me it's a bit complicated because the administrative coordination we have decided on with regard to *multidisciplinary* matters is still a bit confusing to me as well. Because to me it's a *way* of telling our local managers: Your management is indeed an extremely decisive factor for *implementing* a well-functioning shared model for collaboration that will *make* the change we all want it to make. But then again I … I actually don't see right now how we're going to make the *connection,* because I think that some of the attached criteria for success will be really *important*. And then there's the information for managers which actually … it's been launched here and there, but it doesn't really *exist* out there (...)'

So, the group starts out by focusing on the responsibility of local management. However, they soon realize that they themselves are responsible too for the way things are, but also for the way things are going to be. They realize that when it comes to multidisciplinary collaboration, the connection between management levels is just as important. Managers are not so different from employees; proximity and knowledge across professions do not only apply to employees, as illustrated by this comment made on the 25th of October 2012:

> Manager of social services: 'No, but in my opinion, this is actually about us as managers, we must collaborate more and know each other better. That is to say, *internally* in the administration but also *externally* in the particular day care. My experience is that sometimes … that *some* day care managers will be calling me if they're in doubt about a case or are dealing with a serious case. What I'm thinking of is that the better we know each other, the easier it'll be for them both to call but also to tell their staff to contact a social worker. I mean, the more we know about each other's work, the easier it gets (…)'

All in all, it is remarkable how many details the management group discovers over time about multidisciplinary collaboration, as a concept but also which repercussions the many diverse details have on praxis and organizational framing. Especially, how a shared understanding of the concept and goals will have an impact on the organization of multidisciplinary collaboration and its praxis.

Discussion

Overall, the results and analysis show that multidisciplinary collaboration is complex both as a concept as well as a phenomenon in praxis - as is also seen in the literature. This complexity results in challenges both organizationally and management-wise. Resources are at play because multidisciplinary collaboration is an expansion of most everyday praxis, and a centrally based prioritization is necessary. Agreeing on a shared terminology and model for collaboration was one of the big challenges in the management group, especially because these two aspects have significant impact on the praxis of multidisciplinary collaboration.

The discussions in the group of managers raise one very interesting question: Who is responsible for multidisciplinary collaboration? Which management level? It is a very relevant question. It may

be an important element when multidisciplinary collaboration, probably in many human services organizations, becomes the responsibility of everyone and no one.

Finally, the analysis introduces a very interesting question: Is multidisciplinary collaboration to be seen as a new type of managerial task and competency?

From management to leadership

As described above, a main part of the development in the management group concerns their progress in understanding the complexity of multidisciplinary collaboration. They grow from a very linear and one-sided understanding to understanding the complexity of both terminology and organization, i.e., a change from a distant point of view to an involved.

On the one hand, one could argue that this developmental process is a mirror of the culture (Alvesson, 2002) for decision-making in this particular organization. Local and dialogue-based decision-making is not just an organizational habit and culture between local and central management; it is also an approach within central management. There seems to be a culture for negotiations, consensus and dialogue. The Head of day care and the Head of family affairs never dictate any decisions within this group of managers, even though they have a superior say; and the discussions on terminology drag on for more than a year.

On the other hand, one could also argue that the ongoing process in the management group mirrors a negotiation of power (Abbott, 2001) and legitimacy between professions and core tasks. Legitimacy and power are not only struggles between the individual social worker and pedagogue; it is a struggle on a managerial level as well. It becomes a struggle for power, task significance, core tasks appreciation and positioning between professions. Most importantly in the developmental process, the struggle takes place in a subtle and silent manner - maybe due to the aforementioned consensus-seeking culture. During the process of determining terminology,

resources and a shared model for collaboration, struggles for positioning and power take place. Consequently, this also becomes a struggle for territory and appreciation of the individual profession or department. In particular, the Department of school services undergoes a lot of pressure during this development because the department has been trying to implement consultative multidisciplinary forums for quite a while. The School Services would be in charge of process, content and form of such forums. As a consequence of the shared model of collaboration, the School Services no longer holds this position. Negotiations on legitimacy and power are part of a performative professional agenda, and it is one of the big organizational challenges of multidisciplinary collaboration.

The developmental process of the management may also be understood as a development from managing multidisciplinary collaboration to leading it. The distinction of management from leadership is well-known in the literature, where leaders are considered superior to managers because they have significant influence on values, ideals and strategy (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). When simplifying matters, management is about planning, organizing and controlling, and leadership is about vision and strategy (Alvesson, 2002). In this sense, multidisciplinary collaboration develops from solely being a task that requires management on a concrete level to also being a question of leading collaboration on a more abstract, visionary and strategic level. This development from management to leadership is taking the whole group of managers to another level; it becomes a process where the managers from the subsidiary level participate in a different type of decision-making and sense-making process. They go from having primarily an implementing role to participating on a more abstract level, where vision and strategy for collaboration are created. At the same time, the managers hold the very important role of always looking at decisions from a more practical and pragmatic point of view: What is actually possible

within the given context? On the one hand, the managers on the subsidiary level are asked to perform on a level to which they are not accustomed. On the other hand, it brings new insights and concrete knowledge about everyday praxis into the developmental process, stronger implementation potentials as well as ownership and commitment to vision and decision-making because it is a co-created process.

Both management and leadership can be seen as necessary in the process of developing multidisciplinary collaboration – but sometimes difficult to unite because the road from vision to implementation is not a simple one. It is a development of making vision, strategy and leadership blend and melt with professional competency, core tasks, concrete everyday work praxis and resources. In this sense, management and leadership becomes much more fluent as a concept depending on time and context. As put forward by Alvesson & Spicer (2012): "(...) a critical performative approach will lead us to recognize how leadership in many context, is better seen as an infrequent, temporal, situation-specific dynamic than a permanent state in the relationship.' (p.381)

Then again, maybe the development in this particular management group is also a result of a social-integrative process between levels of management and thereby also between diverse professional praxis. Social-integrative leadership can be defined as a process of creating a common direction and path to different operational parts of an organization. It is a matter of transferring meanings, ideas and direction that work against the disintegrative tendencies (Alvesson, 2002). The diverse process of reaching an agreement on the use of resources, terminology and the shared model for collaboration can easily be understood as a process of eliminating the disintegrative tendencies in the organization, precisely because the organization of multidisciplinary collaboration has been carried out in such a disintegrative manner.

All in all, this discussion introduces the idea that due to the complexity in managing the phenomenon of multidisciplinary collaboration it could be seen as a new type of managerial task and competency.

Conclusion

One of the main issues regarding multidisciplinary collaboration is that it cannot be understood detached from the organizational and managerial context where it is practiced. Multidisciplinary collaboration is just as much a development in management and organizational framing as it is a question of developing methodology and relations across professions. This article is an illustration of a development from not only managing multidisciplinary collaboration to taking leadership. It is a development from a distant point of view to an involved one; thereby introducing multidisciplinary collaboration as a new type of managerial task and competency.

In research and praxis, a more focused view on the role of management and organization is needed. In particular, there is a need for applied research that can have implications for change in praxis. Due to the complexity of the concept of multidisciplinary collaboration, it is a valuable consideration if multidisciplinary collaboration will ever be more than a romantic endeavour based on a pragmatic conclusion of 'the more the merrier' when it comes to preventive interventions for children at risk.

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Illustration # 1: Terminology

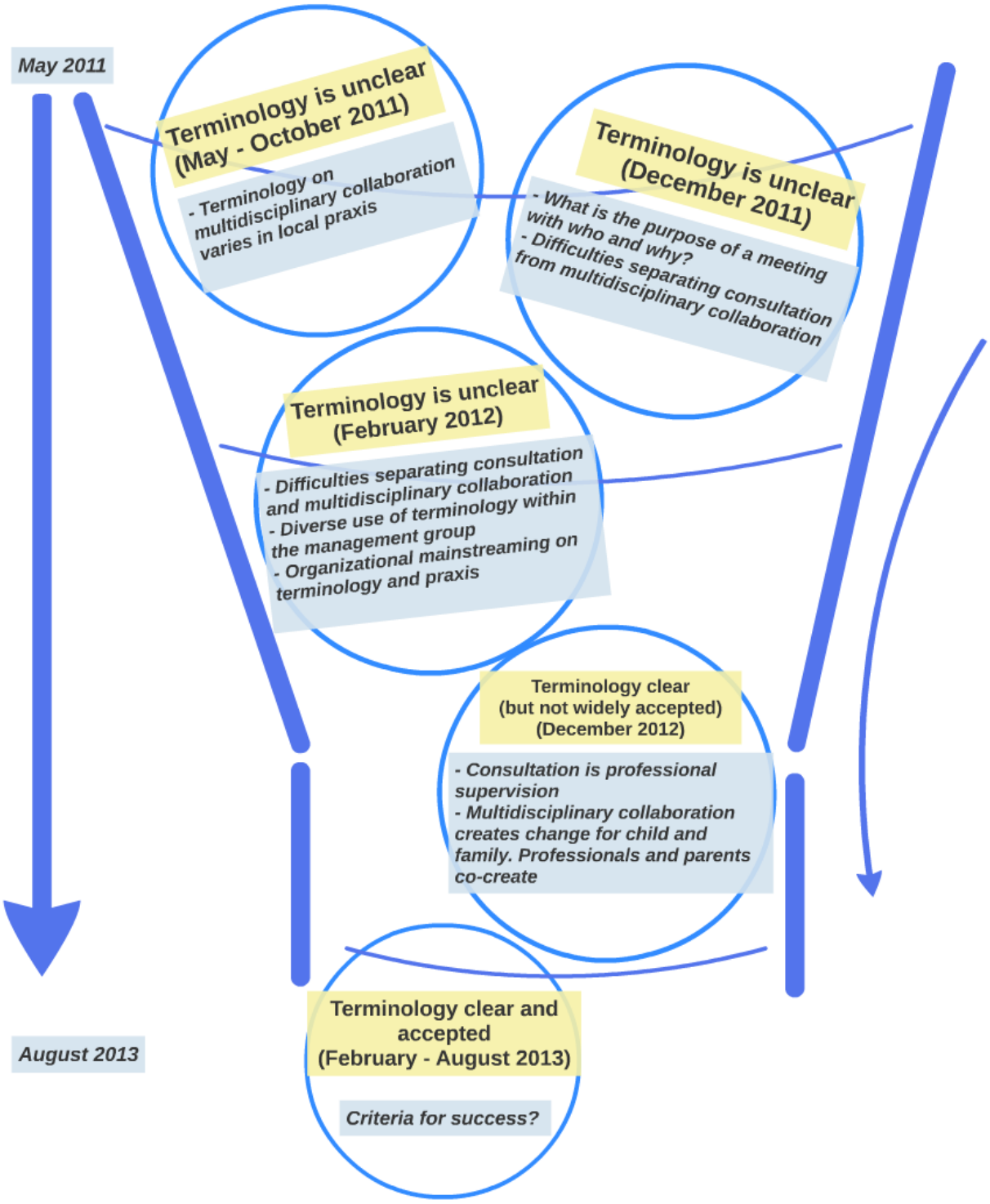
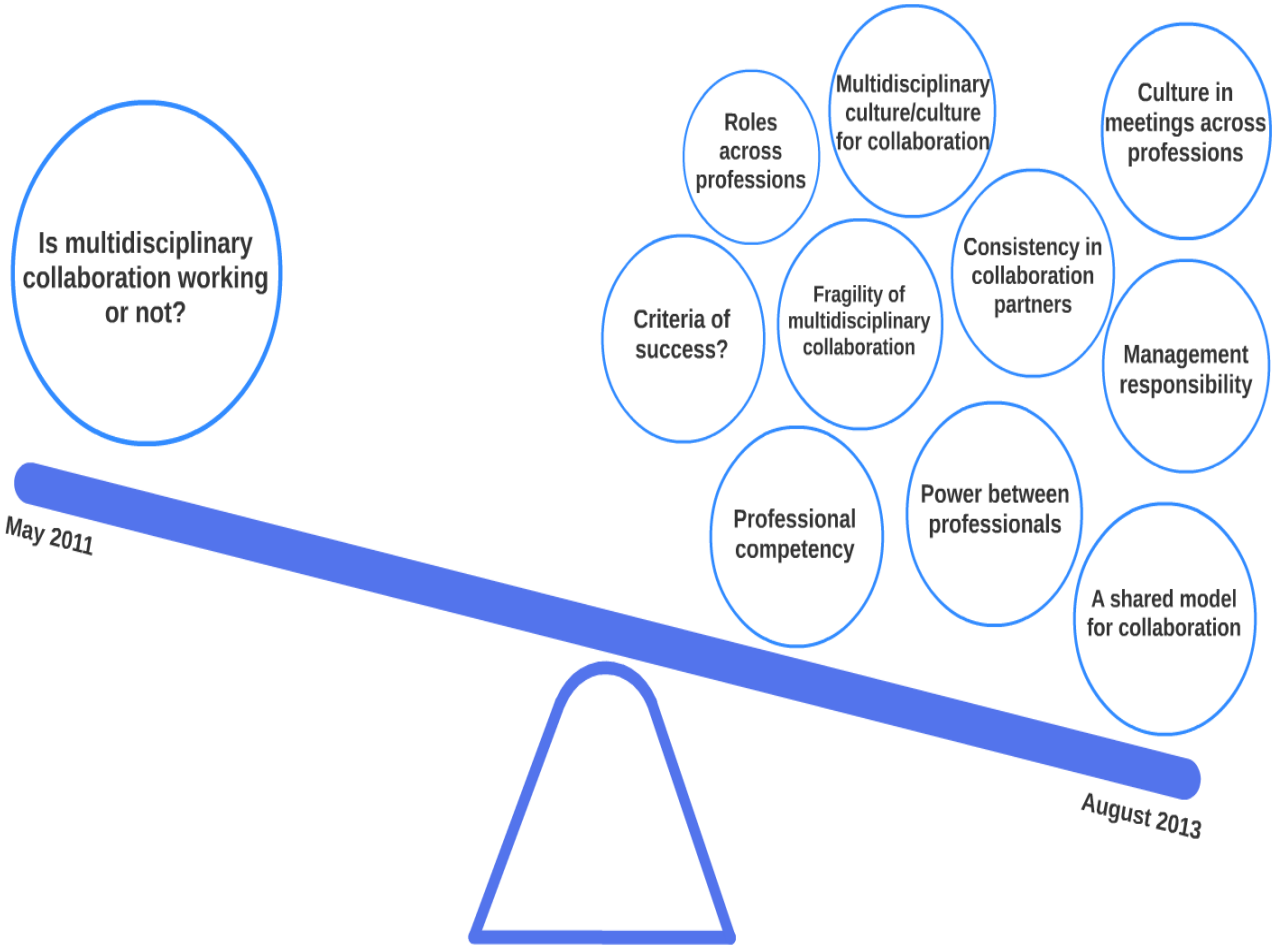
Illustration # 2:
From a linear to a complex understanding of multidisciplinary collaboration