

Developing capacity for change in Danish public sector organisations

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Abstract

In 2007 272 Danish municipalities was merged into 98 larger units. In the 6 years since then, the municipal organisations have been through a large number of structural and organisational change processes. Besides organisational changes they also have experienced economic pressure for working more effectively and there have been an increased demand for new cross-professional services for citizens with still more complex needs.

In an action research project, we have developed a model for measuring and developing organizational capacity for change, drawing on inspiration from Relational Coordination. Organizational capacity for change is defined as an organisations ability to handle planned and unplanned changes in a competent way. The model for Organizational capacity for change is a three-dimensional model. The model is used both as a survey and a basic for dialogic analysis and interventions. The three dimensions are: Organisational cohesiveness, Strategic competence and Responsibility and ownership.

Three different organisations has participated in the project, a hospital ward, a municipal Elderly Care unit and a Special Unit for Autism with a total of 825 employees and 52 managers. The findings from surveys suggest that there is a significant correlation between the way employee's experiences their leaders level of capacity for change and the level of capacity for change among their colleges – giving middle managers a key position in change processes. Interviews with employees, middle managers and senior managers supports this conclusion.