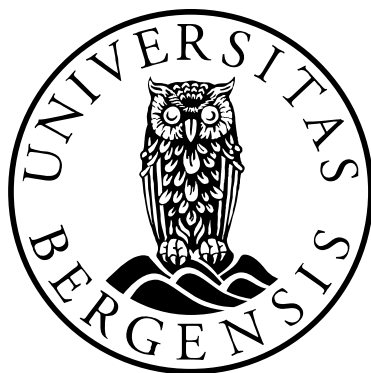


How can employee empowerment be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance?

An empirical investigation of a tailor-made approach to organisation learning in a municipal public service organisation

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Abstract

Employees are often encouraged to take more control over their work practices, so as to generate “more for less” solutions to the benefit of their employers, clients and themselves. To employees such increased control – or empowerment – generates ambiguities: Unprecedented opportunities to create fulfilling jobs are accompanied by unprecedented complexity, competence demands, and responsibilities for outcomes of work practices. The research issue highlighted in this thesis is *how employee empowerment processes can be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance*. This constructive issue is examined using data from a tailor-made approach to organisation learning, carried out in a municipal Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) in Norway. DOAS collaborated with Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) on developing this tailor-made approach. CHPS assumed that employees by improving their generalist competencies (for instance in decision making, interdisciplinary collaboration, organisation learning, and project work), in combination with conducting action research on own work practices, could increase their control over work practices in ways conducive to both employee health and organisation performance. It was also assumed that collaboration between employees at various levels and units in the work organisation was crucial for such a development, and that increased control had to transcend the level of daily work practices and include the levels of prioritising (deciding on objectives), and organising (deciding on how to divide tasks between employees).

The tailor-made approach (TMA) in DOAS combined a 15 ECTS course in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” and six “workplace development projects” (WDPs), tailored to DOAS’ vision of employee empowerment, and to DOAS’ self-defined needs for competence and workplace development. CHPS had primary responsibility for the course, whereas DOAS had primary responsibility for the WDPs. These two components were intended to support generation of knowledge in the intersections between work and education.

The employees recruited to the TMA had little or no prior knowledge of each other. They were divided between the six WDP-groups, which had wide decision making latitude. When

the TMA ended after approximately 10 months in December 2000 the WDP-groups had strengthened their capacities for organisation learning, but had not succeeded in sustaining empowerment processes or in improving both employee health and organisation performance. Three likely explanations as to why not were identified: 1) employees' previous experiences with change initiatives in the work organisation, 2) shortcomings in the TMA-framework (group compositions, supervision, feedback from managers), and 3) employees' competencies in decision making and workplace development.

However, in parallel with the WDP-groups' activities the top-management group (TMG) in DOAS took a number of initiatives facilitating increased employee control over ongoing work practices, both concerning priorities, organisation and daily work practices. These initiatives were followed up on and expanded by the TMG in the aftermath of DOAS' collaboration with CHPS. When comparing DOAS of 1999 with DOAS of 2004-05 several changes could be identified. For instance, employees were participating much more actively in deciding upon priorities, there had been a series of incremental changes in DOAS' formal organisation consistent with the objectives, there was a much higher level of trust across layers and units in the organisation, and the mandates for most middle-management positions had been altered so as to strengthen continuous workplace development. DOAS had succeeded in increasing employee control over a broad spectrum of work practices, and although the data on consequences thereof are somewhat scarce they most likely did so in ways strengthening both employee health and organisation performance. The activities initiated by DOAS itself proved to be more important to these developments than the course and other activities initiated by CHPS, but the developments in DOAS were still highly influenced by the CHPS' perspectives and suggested approaches. The dynamic between the two organisations and the interplay between work and education was characterised by "CHPS suggested, DOAS decided".

The research documented in this thesis is based on data from an action research approach. The ambition was to generate knowledge that could be useful in work organisations facing similar challenges as the Department of Adolescent Services, and useful to disciplines engaged in the intersections between health and organisation performance in general, and (employee) empowerment in particular. It is argued that action research can be particularly

relevant to develop knowledge about social change processes, and that action research can be compatible with generally accepted norms for how social science is to be carried out.

The tailor-made approach documented and analysed in this thesis is suggested as an example of a settings approach to workplace health promotion. It combines perspectives on empowerment from the disciplines of health promotion and human resources. It highlights employee health and organisation performance as intertwined dimensions in work practice. It emphasises how employees themselves can transform stressful challenges into work practice that is coherent to them, and productive to stakeholders like owners and clients. The employee empowerment process is here analysed as comprised of three sub-processes; one characterised by exploration of scope for self-determination and decision making, one characterised by trial and error in developing new work practice, and one characterised by sustaining new work practice. Data support the assumptions that such processes are strengthened by collaboration across layers and units in the organisation, and strengthened by addressing both priorities, organisation and daily work practices. A vocabulary for organisation learning centred on these three levels proved to be highly useful in this case, as did a toolbox-perspective which provided employees with various theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches they could use at own discretion.

Data allow analyses of how the relationship between employee empowerment on the one hand, and employee health and organisation performance on the other, can be strengthened depending on how power manifests, how facilitation by outside agents is carried out, how organisation learning is conducted, and how health and performance dimensions in work practices are intertwined. Tentative conclusions to these issues are suggested. The thesis is concluded with two lists of recommendations and dissuasions on facilitation of employee empowerment processes; one from a management perspective, and one from the perspective of an outside facilitator. These lists provide both practical and “theoretical” perspectives on how employee empowerment processes can be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance.

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List of abbreviations

TMA: Tailor-made approach

DOAS: Department of Adolescent Services (in Sagene-Torshov municipality)

CHPS: Centre for Health Promotion in Settings

TMG: Top-management group (in DOAS)

WDP: Workplace development projects (in DOAS)

VUC: Vestfold University College

DSNE: Department of Special Needs Education (at University of Oslo)

EEP-model: Model 1.1 on employee empowerment processes

Chapter 1.1 Can we have employee health and organisation performance concurrently?

“Could the solution to the productivity problems of work be the same as the solutions that enhance employee health? Can we get both health and productivity, and if so, how could we do it?” (Karasek and Theorell, 1990: 12)

The questions raised by Karasek and Theorell are probably even more challenging now than 20 years ago. During the past few decades changes associated with globalisation have influenced most work organisations considerably, yielding unclear consequences for opportunities to realise employee health and (in a wide sense) organisation performance concurrently. One of the most far-reaching changes concerns how employees are expected to engage in work processes. In the 1950’ies William Foote Whyte wrote a bestseller on how big corporations turned employees into “organisation men”; describing large bureaucracies making people conform to requirements of stable production, and in effect trading life-long employment for loss of individuality (Whyte, 1956). Particularly emphasised in workplace research was negative consequences of specialisation, i.e. employees having to concentrate their productive capabilities on miniscule segments of production (Gustavsen et al., 2010). Among the problems identified were physical ailments (Baker et al., 1969), psychological strain (Bronner and Levi, 1969), and lack of social support (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939).

From stability to flexibility

One of the solutions advocated by many was to increase employee control over work processes, and “autonomy” became a common denominator for this ambition across academic disciplines. The main idea was to design jobs allowing employees more scope in determining how tasks should be carried out, thereby balancing employees’ psychological

and social needs with the technical demands of work organisations (Trist et al., 1997). Autonomy was for the most part motivated by concern for health and well-being of employees, or by concern for how lack of democratic processes at the workplace could affect society as a whole (Pateman, 1970). Over time, though, autonomy was more frequently also seen as a solution to productivity challenges at work. Employees having more autonomy could be more flexible in adjusting to changes in demands from the work organisations' environments, for instance by using more of their own creative capacity for improving quality of goods and services. Over a period of merely a few decades flexibility more or less replaced stability as the dominant norm for production. Rapid technological development and dissemination of ideas, more competition over increasingly self-aware and demanding customers and clients, and possibilities of changing or moving production quickly, are all trends associated with contemporary work life. With the development of "new public management" from the early 1990'ies flexibility has become the dominant norm also in the public sector (Ramsdal and Skorstad, 2004). Even though there are still many jobs not characterised by greater flexibility – especially low-skilled employees often experience what has been called a "McDonaldisation of society" with standardisation of jobs (Ritzer, 1996) – as noted by Colbjørnsen (2003) flexibility is not an issue concerning few employees, is not restricted to production in the private sector or to fluctuations in markets, but reflect fundamental changes in social conditions for work on a global scale.

Accordingly, emphasis in research has shifted from adverse effects of stability to adverse effects of flexibility. Among such effects are less job security, unclear job demands, and less predictability in social relations at work (Allvin et al., 2006). It has been established that flexibility leads to intensification of work in a number of ways. Many employees work more hours to get the job done, blur the distinctions between work and private life, and try to accomplish more than before within the same time frame (Ellingsæter, 2009). Flexibility yields other forms of work stress than stability, and long-term consequences thereof are yet to be determined (Knardahl, 2000). Contemporary social philosophers concerned about adverse effects of flexibility argue that changes in work life are accompanied and reinforced by changes in other social settings like families and communities, making people less rooted in social relationships in general. For instance, too much flexibility can lead to loss of personal identity resulting in "corrosion of character" (Sennet, 1998), making people

“nomads” and “tourists” in their own lives (Bauman, 2000), or experiencing “ontological insecurity” meaning fundamental and existential anxieties about their social reality (Giddens, 1991). On the other hand, particularly within the more confined literature on work organisations, many contributors to theory and research argue that flexibility provides greater opportunities for both organisational and personal development, to the benefit of society in general. Especially adverse effects of stability in the form of bureaucracy have been under massive attacks by protagonists of flexibility (Gustavsen, 1991), often to highlight how flexibility generates prospects for learning and prosperity (Senge, 1990).

On juggling flexibility and stability in public services

Irrespective of overwhelmingly positive or negative assertions, it is evident that work organisations have to juggle between flexibility and stability. For instance, without some form of stability tasks will not be carried out if nobody take personal interest in them, competence and product development will not be sustained, there will be no systems to prevent hazards and costly mistakes, and no development of long-term strategies (Colbjørnsen, 2003). The challenge for work organisations is not either flexibility or stability, but how to combine these concerns proficiently.

Particularly in the public service sector there are oftentimes heated debates on how much flexibility employees should have. Some emphasise that flexibility leads to risk of inequitable distribution of services (Eriksen, 2001). Employees have access to several resources making them powerful in their relationships with clients, for instance competence and formal positions of authority, in addition to various resources provided by their work organisation. If they have too much flexibility the outcomes can be undesirable, for instance due to paternalism towards clients (Stang, 2003). In general, by allowing public service workers wide decision making latitude they become “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky, 1980), in effect determining how public policy becomes manifest in practice. The consequences could be desirable for instance in the form of efficient adaptation of services to local circumstances, but they could just as well be undesirable for instance by haphazard provision of services based on employees’ personal preferences.

There are several possible strategies to increase stability in public services, but two stand out: One alternative is to secure judicial rights for individual clients, and implement standards for how services are to be provided to uphold these rights. A second alternative is to make provision of services more democratic, for instance by involving clients in decision making on what and how services are provided. The first alternative makes public services more predictable to both politicians, employees and clients, but leaves little manoeuvrable space for adapting services to local circumstances or individual clients. The second alternative involves clients in decision making processes, and thus challenges what has been called “a black hole of democracy” (Eriksen, 2001), i.e. technocratic decision making based on professional expertise. While this alternative makes flexibility a shared challenge for clients and public service workers, it is difficult to realise in practice because it is time-consuming, requires extensive competencies in decision making, and is less accomplishable for disenfranchised than for well-functioning clients.

Standardisation and democratisation are both fairly widespread strategies for production of public services. For instance, an increasing number of clients’ needs for services are sanctioned by law, and client participation at various levels of decision making is becoming more frequent. Both these alternatives can be seen as reducing flexibility for employees, making lawmakers and citizens more powerful.

A third strategy has attracted at least as much interest as the former two, and that is to give employees *more* authority to decide on work practices. This alternative incorporates the idea of autonomy widespread from the 1950’ies onwards, but takes it considerably further. Whereas autonomy used to be fairly confined to job redesign of tasks decided upon by owners, thereby making employee autonomy mostly an issue of *how* tasks were performed, proponents of this strategy often advocate increased employee authority also over decisions on *what* tasks to take on and *how to organise work*. Concern for juggling stability and flexibility is then not a management prerogative alone, but becomes integrated in employees’ work practices.

This strategy for addressing the tensions between stability and flexibility can be termed *employee empowerment*; in its most principled sense meaning increased employee control over all aspects of work practices. As long as employees use their authority in ways compatible with the organisation's overall objectives, values and resources, they have a scope of autonomy that was unattainable for "organisation men". Whereas the main rationale for standardisation in the public sector is equitable distribution of services, and the main rationale for democratisation is challenging technocracy, the main rationale for employee empowerment is to address problematic (often bureaucratic) qualities in work organisations themselves. Employees in public services are often impeded by formal procedures with little relevance to their work practices, they often face conflicting and overwhelming expectations to what they can accomplish, they have to struggle for resources in competition with other services, they are oftentimes dependent of others to get the job done, and they have to follow instructions from superiors, as well as by-laws and professional standards. Work organisations and their environments can be seen as comprised of stakeholders and coalitions with conflicts of interests (Cyert and March, 1963, Mintzberg, 1983), and employees have to deal with conflicting expectations. Furthermore, there are multiple and complex sources of power in work organisations, not only formal position and competence, but also control over information, resources, rewards and agendas, as well as influences from various norms, informal alliances and personalities (Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 1997). Although public service employees can be regarded as powerful in their relationships with clients, they can experience having little power within their work organisations. This in turn can force them to use much time and energy on issues not relevant to their work practice with clients, with detrimental consequences both for organisation performance and – due to strain resulting from being in tensions they cannot resolve themselves – their health. With more control they can develop and utilise more of their productive capabilities. It is thus an interesting proposition that more employee control over work practices – at least in theory – can be conducive to both employee health and organisation performance, i.e. that this could be an answer to the questions raised by Karasek and Theorell.

Empowerment and employee empowerment

Throughout this thesis it will be established both theoretically and empirically that neither “empowerment” nor “employee empowerment” are self-explanatory or uniform constructs. Employee empowerment specifically is a fairly new construct which rapidly gained popularity in the 1990’ies (Røvik, 1998). Within most of the literature on the topic increased authority to employees is – somewhat paradoxically – more seen as a means for realising managerial objectives than as a means to cater for employees’ needs, health or industrial democracy. The main impetus is to achieve “more for less”, i.e. better organisation performance for less money invested, by using as little resources as possible on direct supervision of employees and on bureaucratic decision making procedures. Employees are expected to find the most cost-efficient solutions to problems they have first-hand experience with, and confront on a regular basis.

To employees more control over work practices thus comes at a price, as they also become more responsible for outcomes of their practices. Furthermore, in order to provide flexible goods and services they not only have to be specialists in performing certain tasks with stability, but also to be “generalists” capable of extensive *collaboration* across disciplines or professions, organisation units, or the organisation and its environment. This means they have to be competent in skills typically not emphasised in professional training, like decision making, interdisciplinary collaboration, organisation learning, and project work. From an employee point of view empowerment is therefore an ambiguous solution: Unprecedented opportunities to create fulfilling jobs accompanied by unprecedented complexity, competence demands, and responsibilities for outcomes of work processes.

Much in parallel with optimistic and pessimistic assertions of flexibility in general there are optimistic and pessimistic assertions of employee empowerment in particular. “Enthusiastic supporters conceive it as an acknowledgement of the individual employee as a talented, creative being... (whereas) critical commentators have interpreted empowerment initiatives as another means of exercising control over employees” (McDonald, 2004: 926). On the optimistic side employee empowerment has been seen as a “magic spell which could increase performance (...) give more time (...) improve the service (and cost) nothing at all”

(Mitchell Stewart, 1994: vi), the “magic spell” being delegation of more tasks, responsibilities and decision making authority to employees. On the pessimistic side employee empowerment has been seen as “coercive persuasion” and “comparable to political prison”, because: “To be encouraged to make choices and ‘live free’ can be experienced as being just as coercive as to be encouraged to ‘conform’ and ‘fit in’ depending on what is valued in a given cultural context” (Schein, 1999: 171). Given this polarisation it is not surprising that some see managers as irrationally holding on to authority (Field, 1997, Harley, 1999, Janssen, 2004), whereas others see employees as being duped into accepting too much authority (Argyris, 1998, Sennet, 1998, Yates et al., 2001, Stokke et al., 2003).

The fact of the matter though, is that although strongly positive or negative assertions are frequent in the literature, there are few empirical investigations of employee empowerment processes (Huq, 2010). Empirical research on how employee empowerment influences employee health and organisation performance concurrently is virtually non-existent (Arneson and Ekberg, 2006). As will be addressed in chapter 1.2 there is research outside the empowerment literature indicating that the relationship between employee empowerment on the one hand, and employee health and organisation performance on the other, is ambiguous. Employee empowerment can be either conducive or detrimental to either employee health or organisation performance. The tantalising question then becomes: What are the prerequisites for employee empowerment being conducive to both employee health and organisation performance? Although there is no guarantee for such an outcome it may nevertheless be possible to realise, and the potential benefits from succeeding are staggering as work organisations have enormous impact on the prosperity and health of populations.

Overarching research issue – “how can...”

The overarching research issue in this thesis is how employee empowerment processes can be *made* conducive to both employee health and organisation performance. This is a constructive (as opposed to descriptive or normative) research question (Kalleberg, 1992, 1995), investigated empirically by using data from a project intended to facilitate employee

empowerment, by means of a tailor-made approach to organisation learning. The activities in this approach were changed throughout a project period, based on learning from experience. As such it was an action research project, in which I participated as an employee in one of two collaborating organisations.

Concretely the attempts of facilitating employee empowerment analysed in this thesis took place in the municipal Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) in Sagene-Torhov municipality in Oslo, Norway. DOAS collaborated with the Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS), where I was and am employed. Together DOAS and CHPS developed a tailor-made approach (TMA) combining a 15 ECTS course in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” and “workplace development projects” (WDP) in the municipality. The TMA was developed as a framework intended to support organisation learning. The course component was intended to strengthen employees’ “generalist” competencies as listed above, i.e. skills in decision making, interdisciplinary collaboration, organisation learning, and project work. The workplace development project component was intended to give employees increased decision making control over (some of) their work practices. The TMA also provided a structure in which employees (both managers and service workers) could meet and discuss how the organisation made priorities and developed objectives, how they organised to get their jobs done proficiently, and how they could sustain changes in daily work practices.

Consequently, the idea was that a systematic approach to organisation learning would increase employee control over their work practices (hence empowerment). The resulting work practices could then be monitored for employee health and organisation performance consequences. By examining how a particular set of work practices could have consequences for employee health and organisation performance concurrently, it was not a case of examining for instance how “healthy behaviour” influences organisation performance, and not a case of examining how “performance behaviour” influences health. The point of departure was instead their ongoing work practices, i.e. what they actually do to get their jobs done, with the (reasonable) assumption that alterations in what they actually do have consequences both for themselves (health) and their surroundings (organisation performance). As will be detailed in chapter 2.5 this can be seen as a *settings approach* to

workplace health promotion, but more generally the thesis is intended as a contribution to the vast and multi-disciplinary field of knowledge on the intersections between employee health and organisation performance.

Three major concerns before empirical analyses

There are three major concerns that have to be addressed before the empirical analyses of the research issue can be undertaken. First, the research issue has to be made intelligible, and this is the concern highlighted in this chapter. Although “how employee empowerment processes can be *made* conducive to both employee health and organisation performance” may seem fairly self-explanatory, it is not. In chapter 1.2 it will be established that empowerment is an ambiguous construct that has to be specified in a context of use. Consequently, chapter 1.3 highlights the context where the empirical investigations this thesis is structured around took place. Chapter 1.4 takes on the challenge of specifying characteristics of “employee empowerment processes”. Three sub-processes are identified and discussed, and related to each other in a heuristic model. In chapter 1.5 it is detailed how the empirical analyses in this thesis are structured around this model (i.e. chapters 4 to 8), and multiple sets of research questions are presented.

The second major concern addressed before empirical analyses is to investigate theoretical assumptions on how employee empowerment processes can strengthen employee health and organisation performance concurrently. This thesis addresses complex and ambiguous phenomena like empowerment, organisation learning, health and work organisations, and can only be relevant to certain dimensions in each of them. In chapter 2.1 the issue of “power in empowerment” is highlighted. Depending on what dimensions in power are addressed various approaches to facilitation of empowerment can be relevant, as exemplified in chapter 2.2. In chapter 2.3 attention is directed towards organisation learning, which in this thesis is posited as an engine for employee empowerment processes. Chapter 2.4 examines what dimensions in health the research reported here can be relevant to. Finally, chapter 2.5 positions this research as a *settings approach to workplace health promotion*.

The third major concern addressed before empirical analyses is to account for the methodological approach used in this research. Chapter 3.1 provides an extensive account of data generated and gathered by means of action research in the tailor-made approach to organisation learning. Building on a fairly elaborate positioning of this research as an example of action research in chapter 1.5, chapter 3.2 asserts the quality of the data, and discusses what kind of knowledge can be developed with the chosen methodological approach. Chapter 3.3 addresses the issue of research ethics.

Taken together these three concerns; making the research issue intelligible, and clarifying theoretical and methodological assumptions and implications respectively, require considerable space to pinpoint. The reason for this is that novel or at least uncommon ideas are presented here on (particularly) employee empowerment processes and facilitation thereof, and the settings approach to workplace health promotion, as well as (to some extent) action research and health. This does not, however, mean that this thesis is primarily motivated by theoretical or methodological interest. On the contrary, the primary concern to be empirically investigated in chapters 4 to 8 is the constructive challenge of realising specific objectives in work practices. It is the complexities in the practical challenges that motivate the broad theoretical and methodological interest here, not the other way around. This notwithstanding, as will be discussed later in this thesis, “theoretical” and “practical” concerns are intertwined in action research approaches. Many of the “theoretical” issues addressed in this and the following two chapters are thus motivated by “practical” experience, and conversely many of the “practical” experiences addressed in chapters 4 to 8 were motivated by “theoretical” assumptions.

1.2 Empowerment in general and employee empowerment in particular

Etymological and more recent roots of empowerment

“Empowerment” has its etymological roots in the 17th century legalistic meaning of “to give power or authority to; authorise, to give ability to; enable and permit” (Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1987). Read literally empowerment happens when someone with power does something to increase somebody else’s powers. Thesauruses to empowerment strengthen this notion, with constructs like “allow, authorize, commission, delegate, enable, entitle, license, permit, qualify, sanction and warrant” (op. cit.).

The meaning of “empowerment” changed as it was used as a concept for social change in the 1960’ies and 1970’ies by civil rights’ movements (Solomon, 1976), by women’s liberation movements (Riger, 1981), and in social work challenging oppression (Freire, 1973). From the 1980’ies onwards empowerment rapidly gained popularity also in community psychology, health promotion and human resources. Empowerment is also frequently used in education, politics and community care (Lincoln et al., 2002). Amidst diversity between and within these disciplines a feature unifying most contemporary approaches is emphasis on *self-determination* as a defining characteristic of empowerment, the consequences of which will be examined below.

The past few decades have witnessed a further development in how “empowerment” has been used. Empowerment has become widely advocated by managers, governments and international institutions like the World Bank and the World Health Organisation (Wallerstein, 2006). Whereas empowerment in the 1960’ies and 1970’ies was associated with emancipation from oppression, it is now just as much or more associated with governments’ and employers’ advocacy of self-directed citizens and employees.

Self-determination as defining characteristic of empowerment

Throughout contemporary literature it is argued consistently that empowerment cannot be bestowed on people, and that people can only empower themselves (Stang, 1998a). The emphasis on self-determination makes empowerment a much more complicated construct than it was originally, when empowerment simply meant delegation of authority. When people can only empower themselves no act, irrespective of intentions of an agent carrying it out, can guarantee empowerment as an outcome. Empowerment thus becomes an ambiguous construct, meaning different things to different people in different situations (Rappaport, 1987, Gibson, 1991).

It is easy to become philosophical about “self-determination”, but even without going deep into the concept it is possible to identify some important features. Research has since long established that “self” is not a stable entity encapsulated in individual human beings, but an emergent phenomenon developing in the social settings an individual is part of (Mead and Morris, 1934, Blumer, 1969, Goffman, 1992). Furthermore, “determination” implies an act, and actions have direct or indirect social consequences outside a self-determining individual. As pointed out by one of the first major contributors to theories on power, use of power has to be legitimised in social settings (Weber, 1971). Taken together self-determination occurs in an intractable tension between individual freedom and dependency of others (Bauman, 2001). This does not mean that dependency of others by necessity leads to less scope for individual freedom. On the contrary, dependency often allows individuals more room for self-determination. Somewhat paradoxically collaboration with others may be just as much or more empowering than individual autonomy, for the simple reason that one can then choose to use one’s time and resources for other purposes than subsistence.

In the empowerment literature it is not uncommon to separate between individual (psychological) and community (social) empowerment (Wallerstein, 1992). This makes sense both for analytical and practical purposes, for instance in separating between interventions predominantly addressing individuals or communities respectively, but strictly speaking empowerment can hardly be exclusively psychological or sociological: Because only people can experience *self*-determination empowerment is always “psychological”. Because what

people value is developed in the social relationships they participate in, because they often have to collaborate with others to accomplish what they want, and because their self-determined actions have social consequences, empowerment is always “sociological”. There are some risks associated with highlighting either the psychological or sociological dimension of empowerment at expense of the other. As argued by Rowlands (1997) privileging psychological empowerment can be highly dangerous if people believe they can combat oppression in real-life situations where those in power are ready to use force to uphold their dominance. Conversely, privileging community empowerment often leads to stronger sense of self-determination among those who are already convinced about desirability of empowerment, inadvertently leading to further marginalisation of the weakest in the setting (Hauge, 1999). Seen like this empowerment unfolds in a dynamic relationship between individual agents and the social structures they are part of (see chapter 2.1).

Another important consequence of emphasis on self-determination is that empowerment fundamentally becomes a process, yielding various outcomes depending on circumstances. Self-determination requires efforts to understand the situation one is in, what one sees as desirable, and how that can be realised. Both understandings and practices will typically develop over time. As will be returned to below many approaches to empowerment do not separate clearly between process and outcome, but as shown already by Freire (1973) an empowerment process is typically challenging from the outset because increased consciousness about power-issues can be painful. It is to be expected that it gets worse before it (hopefully) gets better. Frustration can be detrimental but is also an important motivational factor (Gibson, 1995). It is thus reasonable to expect that how empowerment is experienced will develop over time. Fundamentally though, empowerment is probably most often an ambiguous experience, because – at least in principle and very often in practice – there is no way of knowing for sure if one’s self-determination will yield desirable processes and outcomes in the future. As such empowerment is a leap of faith, both psychologically and sociologically speaking.

Empowerment as an ambiguous construct

In the preceding paragraphs it was established that self-determination is a key feature in contemporary understandings of empowerment, and consequently that empowerment is an ambiguous phenomenon (and experience) developing over time in processes between agents and social structure. The ambiguities are reflected – but not always clarified – in definitions of empowerment across various disciplines. In fact, when taken together definitions seem to increase more than decrease ambiguities. It has been asserted that empowerment is “open to different, sometimes contradictory, meanings, and which, when applied, evokes both subjective attitudes and objective behaviour, means different things in varying contexts, and is affected fundamentally by individual differences in perception and experience” (Lincoln et al., 2002: abstract). These ambiguities are often not communicated in the literature (hence not clarified), and instead empowerment “tends to be used in a way which presupposes that the reader or listener will know what is meant” (Rowlands, 1997:7). Similar observations have been made in health promotion (e.g. Seedhouse, 1997, Andrews, 2003), organisation development (e.g. Argyris, 1998, Morrell and Wilkinson, 2002) and community psychology (e.g. Rappaport, 1987).

Although some notable contributors like Freire (1973) and Rappaport (1987) are cited across disciplines, apparently one of the reasons why ambiguities often remain unchallenged is that there is little interaction between disciplines. Fairly confined understandings of empowerment have developed within various disciplines, often linking the construct closely to issues highlighted in each of them, and not comparing own understandings with those that have developed in other disciplines. Of course, this issue can be addressed only rudimentary here, but a sample of empowerment definitions across disciplines provides several clues as to what the challenges are and how they can be approached.

- In *feminism*: “A process whereby women become able to organise themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination.” (McWhirther (1991) in Rowlands (1999: 17)).

- In *community psychology*: “(E)mpowerment is a process, a mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their affairs. Consequently, empowerment will look different in its manifest content for different people, organizations, and settings.” (Rappaport, 1987: 122).
- In *social work*: “(Empowerment is) the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take actions to improve their situations.” (Gutierrez, 1994: 201).
- In *health promotion*: “(E)mpowerment is a process through which people gain greater control over decisions and actions affecting their health.” (World Health Organization, 1998: 6).
- In *human relations*: “Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action, and control work and decision making in autonomous ways. It is the state of feeling self-empowered to take control of one's own destiny.” (Heathfield, 2009).

A detailed analysis of content and reception of these and other empowerment definitions is beyond the scope of this thesis. There is also an abundance of other definitions to choose from, and new definitions emerge every year. Still, the definitions cited here should be fairly representative, and amidst obvious diversity they have interesting commonalities. For instance, they all directly or indirectly infer that empowerment has to do with control in the sense of self-determination, conscious decision making, and change in existing understandings or practices. The image conveyed in all these definitions is one of someone being able to do more than before due to a process of some sort. What they also have in common is defining empowerment specifically related to a subject matter. This is an important point as power becomes manifest in different relationships, i.e. different power issues are relevant to different people in different settings.

Rather unfortunately the definitions also have another commonality, presenting a major obstacle to interaction between disciplines on empowerment research: The definitions integrate processes and outcomes, like “challenging and eliminating their own subordination”, “gain mastery over their affairs”, “improve their situation”, “gain greater control” and “control one’s own destiny”. Read literally the definitions disallow the

possibility of there being empowerment processes without desirable outcomes, thereby running the risk of making them tautological. Occurrences of empowerment processes are then taken as proof of empowerment outcomes and vice versa. For one, such a notion leads to lack of reflexivity, meaning ability to reflect critically on own beliefs on desirability of empowerment (Leyshon, 2002). Even more importantly, as noted by Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), a distinction between processes and outcomes is critical for the development of empowerment theory. Without such a distinction each empowerment approach becomes encapsulated and revolving around its own premises, and it becomes illogical to examine how empowerment may have multiple consequences. For instance, the possibility that employee empowerment may have desirable consequences for organisation performance, and undesirable consequences for health (or vice versa,) is not only theoretically relevant, but easy to substantiate empirically as will be shown below.

Obviously disciplines vary with regards to whom, where, how, and in relation to what they investigate empowerment. This is reasonable as empowerment is an ambiguous phenomenon, and will manifest differently for different people in different circumstances. However, there is potential for fruitful interaction between disciplines when *multiple consequences* of empowerment processes are investigated concurrently, e.g. the relationship between employee empowerment on the one hand and employee health and organisation performance on the other. As will be investigated in chapter 2 there is also potential for fruitful interaction between disciplines on basic assumptions on power in empowerment, and on facilitation of empowerment. The objective in this thesis is not to investigate such interaction in detail, but to relate the research documented in this thesis to research both on “empowerment for health” and “empowerment for organisation performance”. As will become evident in the following paragraphs contributors to these lines of inquiry do not interact much.

Empowerment for health and empowerment for organisation performance

Somewhat simplified contributions to understanding of the relationship empowerment-health will in this thesis be referred to as “health promotion”, although some contributors

are professionally positioned elsewhere in the health field. Health promotion is a discipline combining healthy public policy and health education (Tones and Green, 2004), with particular emphasis on understanding health as a resource for everyday living (Ottawa-charter, 1986). It is genuinely multi-disciplinary (Bunton and Macdonald, 1992, 2002), with contributors taking interest in a wide range of issues related to health. As will be established below empowerment is a key construct in health promotion. Similarly, somewhat simplified contributions to understanding of the relationship empowerment-organisation performance will in this thesis be referred to as “human resources”, although some contributors are professionally positioned elsewhere in the field of organisation theory. The “human resources” perspective builds on four basic assumptions on the relationship between humans and organisations, being 1) organisations exist to fulfil human needs, 2) humans and organisations are mutually dependent, 3) when there is imbalance in this relationship one or both parties will suffer, and consequently 4) mutual adaptation is beneficial for both humans and organisations (Bolman and Deal, 1991).

The rationale for these juxtapositions is that empowerment for health and organisation performance respectively is most comprehensively discussed *as practice* within health promotion and human resources, whereas critical and more philosophical than empirical contributions often come from outside these disciplines but as a comment to them. There is some risk of suppressing important distinctions between contributions by using “health promotion” and “human resources” as common denominators, but the point here is not to investigate these disciplines in detail. Instead they are more loosely used as signifiers for “contributors highlighting the relationship empowerment-health” and “contributors highlighting the relationship empowerment-organisation performance” respectively.

Arneson and Ekberg (2006) has noted that there is lack of research investigating how empowerment influences health and performance concurrently. More specifically, it can be established that contributors to health promotion and human resources do not interact in empowerment research. Contributors to either discipline make no references to perspectives, findings or even texts on empowerment in the other discipline. This is surprising because of widespread interest in (in a wide sense) health in human resources, and widespread interest in the work organisation as a setting in health promotion. There is

no evidence of antagonism between the disciplines. Instead it seems as if they are not aware of each other. For instance, in a brilliant textbook on health promotion it is argued “that an empowerment approach to workplace health promotion might well be consistent with the profit motive! However, education designed to empower the workforce is relatively rare, for obvious reasons!” (Tones and Tilford, 2001: 312, exclamation marks in original). The “obvious reasons” being that empowerment presupposes a “radical approach” challenging management authority or even capitalist economy. This assertion corresponds poorly with the fact that at the time the textbook was written “employee empowerment” was probably the most popular construct in management literature (Amundsen and Kongsvik, 2008), but there was no reference to such literature, and consequently no discussion on how empowerment can strengthen employee health and organisation performance concurrently.

The immediate consequence of lack of interaction is that those mainly interested in empowerment for health do not present or investigate theories of organisation performance much, and vice versa those mainly interested in empowerment for organisation performance do not present or investigate theories of health much. Work practices are predominantly investigated either for health or performance consequences; how employees do some things for health and other things for performance, or examining one as a bi-product of the other, e.g. work has health consequences and health initiatives have performance consequences. These lines of investigation are fruitful for many purposes, but are not well positioned to investigate how everyday work practices may have health and performance consequences *concurrently*. Health and performance will – most of the time from an employee perspective – be experienced as two dimensions originating from one and the same set of work practices.

On the other hand there may be good reasons for lack of interaction between health promotion and human resources on empowerment. For instance, they differ considerably in their outlook on importance of empowerment. In health promotion empowerment is seen as the cornerstone and unifying feature of the discipline (Raeburn and Rootman, 1998, Poland et al., 2000, Tones and Tilford, 2001). Empowerment is often regarded as an objective in itself: “As regards empowerment, it can reasonably be argued that the state of empowerment is fundamentally healthy and therefore worth pursuing in its own right”

(Tones and Tilford, 2001: 40). It is symptomatic that in an extensive review of empowerment in health promotion no instances of adverse effects of empowerment were reported (Wallerstein, 2006). Within human resources though, the importance empowerment is attributed is quite different. Instead of being regarded as a cornerstone it is often viewed as a "management tool"; a fashionable recipe on how to exhort employees to do more for less, and similar to other such recipes it can be expected to have a limited life span (Røvik, 1998). Some see empowerment as a fad already outdated (Appelbaum et al., 1999). Somewhat simplified it seems as if empowerment is either wholeheartedly embraced (health promotion) or about to be (if not already) rejected (human resources). The problem with either wholehearted embraces or rejections of empowerment though, is that they correspond poorly with the persistent ambiguities employees find themselves in when expected to take on more responsibility for juggling flexibility and stability.

Another major difference between the two disciplines' outlook on empowerment becomes evident when asking who should be empowered? Although health promotion is universal in the sense that it aims to improve population health, there is particular emphasis on people who are marginalised. "(A)n antecedent to the empowerment process is that individuals, singly or collectively, are in a situation where they experience an actual or potential loss of power" (Gibson, 1991: 358). Within the discipline of social work Kieffer (1984) goes even further and argue that only physical violation of integrity mobilises people to participate in empowerment processes. Health promotion often seeks to assist individuals or groups in emancipation from oppressive social structures and agents. Conversely, in human resources there is most interest in managers and how they can assist their subordinates in improving organisation performance. Empowerment is then not intended to combat oppression, and employees can hardly be seen as disenfranchised.

There are also apparent differences in understandings of how empowerment comes about. Again somewhat simplified in health promotion there is much emphasis on empowerment as a developmental process, whereas in human resources there is more emphasis on technologies intended to empower quick and easy, for instance concept mapping (Fraser and Novak, 1998), playful and humorous programs (Miller, 1996), changes in organisational climate and culture (Nixon, 1994, Nicholls, 1995), giving employees authority to break rules,

decorate the workplace, set and monitor production goals, decide when to work, and how to dress (Jarrar and Zairi, 2002), or information sharing, upward problem solving, task autonomy, attitudinal shaping and self-management (Morrell and Wilkinson, 2002). Especially in consultancy notes (many of which are readily available on the internet) the creativity displayed on how to facilitate employee empowerment by means of techniques and procedures is staggering. As argued earlier though, it is unlikely that any particular activity or technique can guarantee empowerment as an outcome. Empowerment is not necessarily a developmental process towards improved health either, because there are no guarantees that ambiguities will be resolved in ways conducive to health.

Combinations of employee health and organisation performance

In chapter 2 it will become evident that several of the differences between empowerment approaches in health promotion and human resources are more apparent than real. Still, the differences are substantial, and specifically relevant to this thesis is that there is no existing approach to build on when aiming to highlight the overall research issue of “how employee empowerment processes can be *made* conducive to both employee health and organisation performance” (see chapter 1.1.). There is also lack of research on what combinations of employee health and organisation performance employee empowerment can lead to. Despite the absence of research on this relationship specifically, it is possible to infer some important lessons from other approaches to research on the relationship between (in a wide sense) employee control on the one hand, and employee health and organisation performance on the other. Some examples are included in the table below.

Table 1.1 Examples of consequences of increased employee control for organisation performance and employee health

	Organisation performance -	Organisation performance +
Health +	Workers collective	Sustainable productivity
Health -	Delegated dilemmas	Honey trap

The examples provided in the table are intended to be illustrative, not conclusive. The examples also juxtapose different understandings of employee control, employee health and organisation performance. The table simply conveys the point that a positive relationship between employee control on the one hand, and both employee health and organisation performance on the other, is just one of at least four possible outcomes. This possibility is here termed “sustainable productivity”, illustrated by the assumption that “a healthy and empowering work environment leads to a profitable company” (Polanyi et al., 2000: 151).

There has been pervasive interest in identifying variables important to balance health and organisation performance (“sustainable productivity”), both from health and organisation disciplines. From the vantage point of health this interest is manifest for instance in workplace health and psychology (Karasek and Theorell, 1990) and workplace health promotion (Aarø, 2000). From the vantage point of organisation performance such interest can be found for instance in the socio-technical tradition (Trist et al., 1997), and in the human resources tradition within organisation theory (Bolman and Deal, 1991). However, theory on health in organisation disciplines is mostly limited to human needs, and as noted by Allvin (2006) these theories tend to change according to demands of production. For instance, during the era of “organisation man” in the 1950’ies and 1960’ies employees were seen as in need of stability, whereas nowadays employees are seen as in need of learning opportunities. Conversely, within health disciplines initiatives for employee health are often motivated by anticipated benefits for organisation performance, but it has proven notoriously difficult to establish how such initiatives influence organisation performance (Sockoll et al., 2009). The common problem whether one approaches health from the vantage point of organisation performance or vice versa, is that one is seen as a by-product

of the other, and not as two intertwined dimensions originating from the same work practices. It is therefore not surprising that there is scarce empirical evidence on how employee control can accomplish “sustainable productivity” in the meaning conveyed in table 1.1.

The alternative “workers collective” is a combination where employee control is good for health but bad for organisation performance. The term was coined by sociologist Sverre Lysgaard, to describe a situation where employees develop an informal organisation determining norms for production and role performance (Lysgaard, 1961). Employees use their control to shield themselves from employer demands, and reward or punish colleagues depending on whether or not they conform to these norms. Lysgaard did his research at an industrial site with little interaction between shop floor and administrative levels, but the same phenomenon has been observed in various sectors, for instance in health care institutions (Ressner, 1983).

The alternative “honey trap” is a combination where employees take on more control than can be sustained by their health, thereby draining them for resources. They do so either because they feel obliged to, or because they find work so interesting and enjoyable (hence “honey trap”) that they take on too much responsibility (Sørensen, 2002).

Finally, when increased employee control leads to “delegated dilemmas” the consequences are detrimental to both employee health and organisation performance. This combination typically occurs when employees have delegated responsibilities without having decision making authority or resources to do the job proficiently (Vike et al., 2002).

These are of course just a few examples of different combinations of employee health and organisation performance resulting from increasing employee control over work practices, but they illustrate a simple yet vital point: A positive relationship between employee control on the one hand, and employee health and organisation performance on the other, is not a foregone conclusion. When trying to realise what is here called “sustainable productivity” there is risk of realising any of the three other alternatives.

A number of issues concerning empowerment in general and employee empowerment in particular have been raised in this chapter section. Initially it was emphasised that because empowerment in its contemporary use prerequisites self-determination, it is both a psychological and sociological phenomenon. A sample of empowerment definitions were used to illustrate that it is necessary to separate between empowerment processes and outcomes in order to develop empowerment theory. It was underlined that there is potential for fruitful interaction between disciplines by investigating multiple outcomes of empowerment processes. Furthermore, it was established that there is little or no research on how employee empowerment processes may affect employee health and organisation performance concurrently. Above all it has been underlined that empowerment is an ambiguous phenomenon, manifesting differently depending on whom, where, how, and in relation to what it is studied. It is thus necessary to specify the setting in which it is examined, and this concern is addressed in the next chapter section.

1.3 A department of adolescent services and its partner

This thesis is centred on an empirical investigation of employee empowerment processes in the Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) in Sagene-Torshov municipality in Norway, in the period 1999 to 2005.¹ DOAS' top-management group (TMG) commissioned the services of Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) at Vestfold University College, thereby signalling their intent to initiate empowerment processes not only for the anticipated benefit of organisation performance, but also for employee health. DOAS and CHPS collaborated on developing a tailor-made approach (TMA) combining formal training and workplace development projects. The formal training component was a 15 ECTS course in "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice". The "workplace development projects" consisted of six groups of public service workers from various units in DOAS, and in addition the TMG participated as a seventh group. The TMA was organised as a project which ended in December 2000². Approximately 45 of 350 employees participated, many of which had managerial or coordinating positions in DOAS. In this chapter section DOAS's motivation for emphasising employee empowerment is presented, followed by a description of CHPS' contribution, and then finally a sketch of the TMA. DOAS is presented in more detail in chapter 4, and CHPS' rationale for developing the tailor-made approach is detailed in chapter 5.1.

Sagene-Torshov municipality in Oslo

Sagene-Torshov was at the time one of 25 municipalities in the Norwegian capital Oslo. It had approximately 27.000 inhabitants, with fewer adolescents than the Oslo average (10,7% compared with a mean of 17,2%) (Sagene Torshov bydelsforvaltning, 1999). Sagene-Torshov scored lowest among all Oslo's municipalities on a combined index used for allocation of resources by Oslo's parliament (Bydelsutvalget Sagene-Torshov, 1998). This index combined

¹ There are five abbreviations used repeatedly throughout this thesis: DOAS: Department of Adolescent Services; CHPS: Centre for Health Promotion in Settings; TMA: Tailor-made approach; TMG: Top-management group (in DOAS); WDP: Workplace development project (in DOAS). See also "List of abbreviations" at page 12.

² Data used in this thesis also include some events in DOAS prior to and in the aftermath of the TMA, up till 2004-05. See chapters 3.1, 4 and 8.

indicators on life expectancy, education, income, employment, disabilities, social benefits, housing and mobility (proportion of inhabitants moving into or from the municipality each year). For instance, Sagene-Torshov had a high proportion of single parents (47 percent compared with the Oslo average of 32 percent); average income was 78 percent of the Oslo average; and yearly mobility was at 20 percent.

The municipality was undergoing change though, as it was becoming a more attractive place to live for high-income groups due to its proximity to the city centre. New homes were being constructed and small flats converted into family units. Still, relative to other municipalities Sagene-Torshov had considerable challenges in providing good upbringing conditions for their adolescents.

The creation of Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) in Sagene-Torshov

The Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) was established as a result of reorganising in Sagene-Torshov municipality in 1998-99, the purpose of which was to create departments with integrated services for client groups. DOAS was a new organisation entity, comprised of services previously organised under a Department of Culture and under a Department of Health and Social Services respectively. DOAS was to provide more integrated services to adolescents and their families. DOAS had four types of services; 1) day-care centres with 185 positions in 19 units offering day-care to 615 children, 2) child care with 34 positions in one unit having 220 children under care, 3) youth relief measures with 23 positions in four units offering voluntary leisure activities to (in principle) all the municipalities' adolescents, 4) maternal and school health services with 22 positions in two units offering services to all families and children in the municipality at regular intervals. Altogether there were 26 units and 264 positions taken up by a total of approximately 350 employees, of which many worked part-time. Details on how DOAS was organised is further addressed in chapter 4, but some interesting features can be noted here. DOAS combined both social and health services, and both compulsory (child care) and voluntary services. In two types of units – child care and maternal and school health services – employees were all professionally

trained at college level, whereas in the other two types of units – day-care centres and youth relief measures – less than half of the employees had professional training.

DOAS also had a top-management group (TMG) with eight positions: Three heads of day-care centres, two heads of maternal and school health services, one head for child care, one head for youth relief measures, and DOAS' CEO. During the 1,5 years DOAS collaborated with CHPS on the tailor-made approach the CEO also held the position as head for youth relief services, and one of the head positions for day-care centres was vacant. TMG thus had six regular members. In addition administrative personnel were included in the TMG on occasion, typically in relation to budget planning.

Taken together it was evident that DOAS, despite the common denominator in adolescent services, had a relatively heterogeneous workforce in terms of education level and types of services provided, distributed over a large number of units. Most of the adolescent services provided on a daily basis were – and would continue to be – produced at unit level, yet the ambition with the reorganising was to integrate adolescent services better than it had been. Integration was to cater for two concerns in particular: 1) Fragmentation of services, experienced predominantly by clients with needs for services from more than one unit. 2) Limited interaction between units, impeding improvements in organisation performance both in terms of quality of services and budget control. Collaboration was thus seen as a means for improving services provided both between and within units. There was also a strong motivation for cutting costs, for instance by avoiding double-tasking. At the time DOAS was created the Norwegian economy was in a down-turn, and all services could not be upheld if employees were unable to do “more for less”. DOAS was in a position typical for contemporary work life, i.e. having a strong impetus to be flexible and intensify work in order to produce more.

The top-management group's vision – and an operational definition of employee empowerment

The operative responsibility for realising DOAS' objectives rested with the top-management group (TMG). The Municipal Council in Sagene-Torshov had voted through a strategic plan inspired by principles in New Public Management (see chapter 4). They wanted each department and unit to have more decision making authority over objectives, organisation and daily work tasks, accompanied with more responsibility for organisation performance. Employees were expected to be more flexible, to make better use of the organisation's resources through collaboration, and to thrive in the process. DOAS thus had to engage in the constructive challenge of how to make employee empowerment conducive both to employee health and organisation performance. This was the challenge highlighted as the overarching research issue in chapter 1.1, and DOAS provided an opportunity to examine how it could be addressed in practice.

During the first meetings with Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) the TMG presented a set of ideas on what changes they saw as desirable in their employees' work practices. Taken together the ideas could be summarised as a vision. On the premise that employees were committed to overall objectives and budgets in DOAS they wanted employees:

- In general to be more self-directed and act more frequently on opportunities to improve services, without asking managers for permission or initiate bureaucratic procedures.
- Participate in deciding on objectives for DOAS as a whole.
- Decide on when a task should be carried out by an individual employee, at unit level, or across units, i.e. identify who were best equipped to provide the necessary service, and decide on how to organise to provide that service.
- Collaborate across units so as to learn from each other (competence development), and so as to coordinate services in the best interests of clients.

- Not be afraid of acknowledging mistakes and shortcomings, and systematically learn through experience.
- Be capable of balancing their own and other stakeholders' interests, and to seize opportunities to develop themselves and the organisation concurrently.
- Emphasise opportunities and solutions for the future as opposed to problems related to the past.

Taken together, the TMG wanted employees not afraid of challenging organisational barriers, so as to provide the best possible services for their clients while simultaneously prospering themselves, albeit with loyalty to overall objectives and budgets. Such a vision – and variations thereof – has become commonplace in the past few decades, across a wide range of work organisations in countries around the globe. As previously mentioned, at the time the TMG formulated its ideas employee empowerment was perhaps the most popular construct in management literature (Amundsen and Kongsvik, 2008). It is important to note that the TMG wanted employees to have increased control over a broad spectrum of work practices, ranging from participation in overall prioritising (determining objectives), through deciding on how to organise for optimal provision of services, all the way down to deciding on daily work practices.

As discussed in chapter 1.2 empowerment has to be specified in the context it is used, and an operational definition of employee empowerment from the TMG's vision can be determined as *increased employee control over work practices*. This is of course a wide and somewhat vague definition, but it reflects the TMG's intention of increasing employee control over a wide spectrum of work practices, and not for instance specific tasks or decision making processes. It is also open, in the sense that it allows a multitude of outcomes from empowerment processes. The TMG saw it as impossible to determine precisely in advance what or how much increased control employees should have. Instead it had to be tested out in practice, and decision making control had to be retracted if the consequences were detrimental to DOAS' objectives. It is important to note that the TMG wanted to accomplish *increased employee control over work practices* by intensified collaboration between employees and units, and not by mere delegation of authority. Furthermore, they wanted employees to take initiatives and learn systematically from trial

and error. As will be addressed later the TMG in effect wanted to *facilitate employee empowerment processes by means of organisation learning in the form of action research.*

The TMG's vision was certainly built on optimistic assertions about the potential for transforming the stress of flexibility and expectations to do "more for less", into work practices conducive to both employee health and organisation performance. The challenge was to transform such (fashionable) rhetoric into practice, and the TMG was highly committed to do so. They contrasted what they wanted with a critique of how they had experienced the municipality prior to the reorganising in 1998-99. They described an organisation where employees in the various units did not participate in planning and decision making either on objectives or on how to organise so to make best use of resources, did not trust management, did not know the other units' employees and services, did not initiate new practice without expressed managerial consent, and devoted more time to problems of the past than opportunities for the future. They saw the new department of adolescent services as offering a fresh start, and were eager to make changes.

Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS)

Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) is based at Vestfold University College (VUC) approximately 100 km south-west of Oslo, Norway. VUC has approximately 300 employees, 3.000 full-time students, and 7.000 part-time students. VUC was established in 1994 through a merger between regional vocational colleges in education, nursing, engineering and maritime studies. This occurred as part of a major restructuring in higher education in Norway, in which a total of 98 regional colleges were merged into 26 university colleges (Torgersen, 1995). The restructuring was among other things intended to strengthen collaboration between colleges previously separated by institutional boundaries (Norges forskningsråd, 1999). It was argued that such collaboration would improve possibilities for developing new curricula and programs, as well as increase students' flexibility in combining courses from various disciplines in educational programs.

CHPS started as a project in 1995, and has been a centre since January 1st 1998. From the outset employees from three of VUC' five faculties contributed to CHPS, making it an interdisciplinary meeting place for academics trained in health sciences, social sciences and educational sciences. Approximately 30 of VUC' employees have contributed part- or fulltime to CHPS' activities over the years. These employees have various academic training, including sociology, nursing, education, anthropology, psychology, nutrition, and physiotherapy. Several of those contributing to CHPS – including the author of this thesis – were trained in social sciences and organisation theory. A large part of CHPS' activities has centred on opportunities to integrate concerns for health promotion in the work organisation as a setting. Many of the formative experiences at CHPS were subsequently included in a text book on health promotion (Hauge and Mittelmark, 2003), among other issues highlighting critical perspectives on professionals' power (Aanderaa, 2003, Bjørnstad, 2003, Hem, 2003, Ulvestad, 2003), opportunities and risks with facilitation of empowerment and dialog (Branstad, 2003, Hauger and Arntzen, 2003, Stang, 2003), and the potential for capacity building in workplaces by means of continuing education (Hauge and Ausland, 2003, Ausland et al., 2003). A unifying theme was that neither good intentions nor technical skills in implementing methodology are sufficient for guaranteeing success in health promotion. Instead it was advocated to develop competence relevant for critical reflection on use of perspectives and methodologies (Hauge, 2003).

CHPS was initiated bottom-up by employees at VUC. From the start CHPS received strong support from VUC's board for providing a multi-disciplinary centre across faculties, generating new educational programs, research, and collaboration with (especially) the public and voluntary sectors. CHPS was also strongly endorsed by institutions at state, county and municipal levels, who welcomed a research and practice centre for health promotion. There was strong interest in following up on ideals for health promotion, especially as described in the Ottawa-charter (1986), and in the first Norwegian green paper (NOU 1991:10) and white paper (Stortingsmelding nr. 37 (1992-93)) addressing health promotion. Such interest was manifest not only at political levels, but also among professionals in the public sector, who typically endorsed ideals of client participation and empowerment.

From the outset in 1995 CHPS administered a new 60 ECTS course in health promotion. Through this course and various collaborative projects with the public and voluntary sectors, CHPS quickly learned that there were major discrepancies between health promotion values and practice in professional practice. Professionals found it difficult to practice the values they espoused, and the simple question “why?” stimulated considerable curiosity at CHPS. Some of the many assumptions emerging were that it could have something to do with professional training, or with the institutions professionals were employed by, or with employees simply not knowing how to facilitate participation and empowerment. However, instead of digging deep into reasons why, CHPS emphasised how professional practice could be altered “in the direction of” health promotion ideals, hence a “constructive” approach opting for change *processes* more than implementing specific solutions.

CHPS’ assumed that particularly two dimensions in professional practice were necessary to address to further health promotion. One was the competencies of professionals, and the other was the work organisations they were employed by. These two dimensions were seen as intertwined, i.e. the work organisation could not accomplish more than their employees were capable of, and employees could not accomplish more than the work organisation allowed. Concerning competence development CHPS reasoned that whereas professional training fosters specialist skills, professionals also need “generalist” skills in order to collaborate proficiently with clients and colleagues. Somewhat paradoxically professionals in public service occupations have to go “outside their box” in order to realise their ideals. Among the “generalist” competencies that could be useful, but not emphasised much in professional training at the time, were as mentioned in chapter 1.1 decision making, interdisciplinary collaboration, organisation learning and project work. With training in theoretical and methodological approaches in these areas professionals would be better equipped to practice in accordance with their ideals.

The second dimension, the work organisations professionals are employed by, provide opportunities both to learn from ongoing work practices, and to make and sustain changes in such practices (for instance through changes in allocation of resources or formal organisation structure). Learning new skills takes time and practice, and work organisations are settings providing such opportunities. Changing work practices requires collaboration

across authority levels and organisation entities like departments or units, hence “generalist” competencies. To CHPS it seemed evident that how decision making authority is distributed among employees, is crucial for their ability to initiate and sustain change. As such, employee empowerment can be seen as a prerequisite for professionals’ facilitation of client empowerment. This notion was central to CHPS’ ideas on developing a tailor-made approach.

The tailor-made approach to organisation learning

CHPS had its first experiences with tailor-making education to strengthen collaboration and learning of generalist skills in public service organisations already in 1996, the outcomes of which were positively evaluated (Hareide, 1998, Hem, 1998). The rationale for developing the tailor-made approach (TMA) is further explored in chapter 5.1, and so emphasis here is confined to some of its characteristics. In general, the objective with the approach is to tailor the training of skills to specific circumstances in a work organisation. Each work organisation has different practical challenges and objectives, and what they want to accomplish serves as a “baseline” for the TMA. The work organisation decides on what challenges they want to highlight and who should participate, whereas CHPS is responsible for providing the training. Employees are encouraged to test approaches and methods highlighted in training in their work practices. They document and research their experiences, and are supervised by CHPS in so doing. Consequently, the TMA aims at generating a dynamic relationship between “learning at school” and “learning at work”, in which the two approaches to learning are intended to reinforce each other mutually.

The TMA provides a framework for organisation learning by means of action research, i.e. stimulating repeated cycles of planning, practice and evaluation of ongoing experiences. The ambition in this case was for such learning to increase employees’ control over work practices. With increased control employees could themselves address power, health and performance issues in their setting. As noted in the introduction to this chapter section the TMA consisted of two main components: 1) “Workplace development projects” in which groups of employees collaborated on changing their work practices, and 2) a 15 ECTS course

in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. These components were linked a) through a series of gatherings, in which lectures and group reflections were combined, and b) through supervision by CHPS on employees’ projects and learning processes. The employees researched and documented their experiences from workplace development projects in reports, these reports also being exam assignments in the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. Details on this approach are highlighted in chapter 5, but as should be evident from the brief presentation here the interplay between work and education was a crucial challenge.

Employee empowerment was in this chapter section given an operational definition of “increased employee control over work practices”. It was noted that collaboration between employees was seen as important to attain such control, and that work practices can relate to various levels of activity in a work organisation (like prioritising, organising and daily work practices). Implications of these points are highlighted in chapters 2.1 to 2.3. Next though, emphasis is on employee empowerment processes. If empowerment is to be *made* conducive to specific outcomes like for instance employee health and organisation performance, it is necessary to understand what characterises empowerment *processes*. It is by engaging in such processes new practice can be facilitated. The following chapter section is therefore particularly important to the rationale behind the research documented in this thesis. It also, as previously noted, provides the structure for empirical analyses in chapters 4 to 8.

1.4 Employee empowerment processes

In chapter 1.1 the overarching research issue in this thesis was determined as *how to make employee empowerment processes conducive to both employee health and organisation performance*. In chapter 1.2 some key dimensions in empowerment as a phenomenon were identified. In chapter 1.3 employee empowerment was given an operational definition of *increased employee control over work practices*, with reference to how empowerment was approached in a public service organisation. In this chapter section emphasis is on assumptions on what employee empowerment processes are like. These assumptions are here summarised in a model which, as will be detailed in chapter 1.5, provides the structure for the empirical analyses in chapters 4 to 8. The model's primary function is to attract attention to where employee empowerment processes can be influenced, and how such processes can generate outcomes like for instance employee health and organisation performance.

Why develop a model for employee empowerment processes?

The model presented in this chapter section is an explication of basic assumptions on characteristics of employee empowerment processes. These assumptions were followed up on in the tailor-made CHPS and DOAS collaborated on. The assumptions were influenced by one idea in particular, namely that organisation change initiatives – irrespective of how they are intended – tend to trigger some common reactions in employees. Organisation change initiatives are events employees have experience with, and they have learned that intentions not necessarily become manifest in practice. (As will be analysed in chapter 6 the employees in DOAS were no exception.) For instance, when employees are envisioned that they will have increased control over their work practices, they are *from the outset* able to raise several concerns about the (in this case) employee empowerment process.

Concretely, an employee at grassroots level will typically contemplate concerns like what is it the managers want with this change initiative? Will I have to take on more work and responsibility? If so, will that enable me to do a better job for myself, my clients, and my

colleagues? If so, will changed practice be sustained, or is this a “one-off” to be retracted and replaced by new change initiatives pointing in other directions, potentially making this particular change initiative a waste of time? On the other hand, a manager will typically contemplate concerns like will my subordinates understand what I intend with this change initiative? Will they be willing and able to take on more responsibility for work processes? If so, will they comply with overall objectives and be loyal to budgets? If so, will they carry out their work practices in ways enabling me to be accountable towards our owners, clients and other stakeholders? As noted previously empowerment is in a sense a “leap of faith”, and as will be returned to below mutual trust is central to this kind of faith.

By raising such concerns employees, at all levels in the work organisation, in a sense anticipate the whole process from start to finish. Based on previous experience they generate expectations to what will occur, and whether or not they expect a desirable outcome will greatly influence what they choose to do. To CHPS it was important to facilitate learning through systematic reflections on ongoing practice, hence important *not* to take desirable or undesirable outcomes for granted in advance. The “whole process” then has to be divided into parts. From the concerns quoted above it is possible to identify three overarching issues employees contemplate when embarking on employee empowerment processes:

1. What will I be able to do differently?
2. How will that affect my work practices?
3. How will changed work practices be sustained?

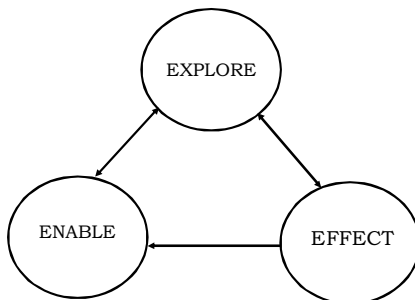
The first issue identifies a stage in which opportunities are explored, the second issue identifies a stage where new practices are tested out, and the third issue identifies a stage where new practices become integrated in daily work practices. Taken together: Employees have to understand what they can choose between before they decide (their opportunity structure or “manoeuvrable space”), then they have to test out new work practices based on their decisions, and then – based on their experiences with actually having tried to practice differently – be concerned about sustaining (desirable) changes in work practice. CHPS’ idea

was that employees should not get ahead of themselves, but engage openly in each stage of the process, so as to allow learning from experience.

A heuristic and descriptive model for employee empowerment processes

The model presented below is therefore also an attempt to explicate what occurs “naturally” in change processes where employees are expected to increase their control over work practices. As such the model is both heuristic and descriptive. It is centred on activities, and therefore places more emphasis on what employees do than what they think or feel. It is also based in assumptions on empowerment and employee empowerment processes presented in the previous chapter sections, in particular self-determination as a defining characteristic of empowerment, collaboration as a key factor in increasing employee control, and separation of process and outcome. For the sake of simplicity “managers” and “service workers” are used as signifiers of employee groups having different levels of formal authority in the following paragraphs. The same line of reasoning can be used also for other employee groups.

Model 1.1: Employee empowerment processes (EEP-model)



The model above suggests that employee empowerment processes are comprised of three sub-processes. The first sub-process between Enable and Explore is typically initiated by actions undertaken by managers. They must do “something” to make it legitimate for service workers to increase their control over work processes. Service workers assess what is offered by managers, and decide whether they will accept it, reject it or, as is often the case, interact with managers to get a clearer understanding of what is offered and intended. Such interaction can lead to modifications in what is offered, hence the feedback arrow from Explore to Enable.

The second sub-process between Explore and Effect starts when service workers have decided on what changes they want to initiate in their work practices, and how to do it. Their new work practices typically have consequences both for themselves and other stakeholders in the work organisation, for instance clients. Depending on experiences with such consequences or effects, the service workers can modify their decisions and practices, hence the feedback loop between Effect and Explore.

The third sub-process between Effect and Enable starts when effects are manifest. If the effects are deemed desirable managers will sustain enabling activities, thereby making it possible to “anchor” (see chapter 2.4) new work practice. If the effects are deemed undesirable managers can modify their enabling initiatives, leading to new exploration by service workers, yielding new effects, and so on perpetually. Alternatively they can retract decision making authority and other forms of employee control. Conversely, if service workers experience the empowerment process as not yielding desirable outcomes they will be reluctant to or refuse taking further initiatives and decisions. On the other hand, they can be expected to seek more control over work practices if they see the consequences thereof as beneficial. Such assessments by either managers or service workers do not have to be based on singular experience, but can be based on repeated attempts to *make* increased control over work practices conducive to stakeholders’ interests.

A feedback loop from Enable to Effect is disallowed in the model, as that would bypass self-determination, and thus not be acknowledged as an empowerment process in contemporary understandings of the construct (see chapter 1.2).

The model posits that employee empowerment will be sustained if outcomes are beneficial both to managers and service workers, for instance if it is conducive to both employee health and organisation performance. The model thus indicates a mechanism through which employees can *make* empowerment conducive to desirable outcomes, by adjusting their practices (decision making: Enable-Explore; practical testing: Explore-Effect; sustaining: Effect-Enable) based on learning collaboratively, hence organisation learning. In effect organisation learning of this kind was CHPS' proposition on how employee empowerment could be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance, i.e. the overarching research issue presented in chapter 1.1.

Issues the EEP-model attracts attention to

This first sub-process between Enable and Explore is critical to the employee empowerment process: If service workers decide to reject enabling initiatives then theoretically that can be seen as an "act of empowerment", but no empowerment process is initiated. If they feel coerced by managers to increase their control over work practices, then there will be a pseudo-empowerment process, i.e. talked about "as if" they are empowered but without self-determination. Even if they are not coerced they may feel pressured to go along with enabling initiatives, in order not to risk conflict with managers. It is probably impossible to determine where the scrimmage line is between being pressured into and voluntary seeking increased control. Most likely many will experience ambivalence towards having increased control; it is both tempting and hazardous as described in chapter 1.2. The first sub-process is thus especially challenging to assert conclusively.

Much of this challenge has to do with the limited "enabling repertoire" a manager has. Enabling will typically mean delegation of decision making authority. Enabling is thus an activity very much in line with the original etymological meaning of empowerment, for instance give power or authority to, authorise, give ability to, enable (sic!) or permit, as shown in chapter 1.2. As such the original meaning of empowerment is included in the EEP, but as noted on several occasions delegation is no guarantee for increased self-

determination. This is why the feedback loop from Explore to Enable is so important. If managers and service workers develop trust in each other they can discuss these concerns openly, seeking to clarify what it is managers want to enable and what service workers would like to explore.

Research has documented a strong positive association between indicators of trust and (psychological) empowerment (Shelton, 2002). Shelton used “procedural justice” (the perceived fairness of procedures and decisions for compensation, evaluation, rewards and dispute resolution) and “interactional justice” (whether supervisors implement rules fairly and treats the employee with respect and honesty) as indicators of trust, and found “procedural justice” to be the strongest predictor of the two. This finding corresponds with Snell and Shak’s (1998) research documenting that a “constitutional path” to empowerment (emphasis on securing employee rights and establishing rules for empowerment processes) had a stronger positive association with empowerment than a “developmental path” (emphasis on participating in relatively open-ended change processes). Predictability in procedures used in employee empowerment processes thus seems to be important. This issue will be further addressed in empirical analyses in later chapters in this thesis.

The third sub-process, Effect-Enable, is challenging much in the same way as the first sub-process Enable-Explore. Because managers have authority to modify enabling initiatives there is obvious risk of manipulation of service workers. This is clearly the case if managers only allow exploration conforming to their preferences while simultaneously luring service workers into believing that they determine themselves. As noted by Lukes (1974/ 2005) making people believe that choosing what is in your best interest is in their best interest is probably the most efficient form of power. Of course this logic can be applied the other way around, i.e. employees can manipulate managers by talking about what they do in ways they know conform with what managers would like to hear, while in fact practicing differently.

Another challenge arises in the loop from Effect to Enable if managers and employees encapsulate their decision making processes by not involving clients, politicians and other stakeholders. If the empowerment process reverts into manipulation or encapsulation it can be seen as streamlining interests of some at expense of others, yielding undesirable

outcomes like for instance delegation of dilemmas or workers collective, as shown in chapter 1.2. These risks should not be underestimated, but on the other hand it is not likely that such processes will be sustained, because they do not generate outcomes favourable to all stakeholders. Generally though it is reasonable to assume that risk of thwarting the empowerment process will diminish if various stakeholders are involved, hence the issue of who are participating how in decision making is identified as a concern.

The model also draws attention to how viable alternatives to employee empowerment may present themselves. For instance, service workers may have good reasons not to want increased control (Enable-Explore), the work practices they initiate based on self-determination may have undesirable consequences (Explore-Effect), or it may not be feasible to sustain changed practice (Effect-Enable). Employees are often seen as offering irrational resistance to change initiatives, but they may just as well be seen as offering oftentimes viable alternatives (Jacobsen, 1998). In the context of discussing alternative forms of authority in a utopian “good society”, political scientist Robert Dahl (1990) sees personal choice, competence and economy as oftentimes preferable to having decision making power. Similar arguments can be used in relation to employee empowerment: Sometimes employees have justifiable personal reasons for not wanting increased control over work practices; sometimes employees see it as a better solution if those who are most competent in a practice are in control; and sometimes employees see increased control as inefficient use of resources (for instance standardisation may increase productivity in instances where local adaptations are not particularly relevant).

When limitations or alternatives to employee empowerment present themselves the process can lead to clarification of mandates, i.e. who should be responsible for and carry out what work practices. This is particularly useful when tasks are not the designated responsibility of anyone in particular, for instance clients with diverse or complex needs. Employee empowerment processes can also direct attention to discrepancies between mandates and practices. Examples include both when employees do not see what they have to be accountable towards, or when they see it but do not want to act in accordance with their mandates. Either way there is tension that can be resolved either by altering a mandate or altering practice to conform to the mandate. Discrepancies between mandate and

practice typically create tensions, especially when a manager and an employee have different ideas on what the mandate should be like. Employee empowerment can thus lead to negotiations on mandates, clarifying who should be accountable for what.

Challenges with the EEP-model

In general all models allow emphasis on some aspects of reality at expense of others; they make their users not only sharp-sighted but also one-eyed (Brox, 1995). It is necessary to acknowledge what a model does not highlight, or metaphorically speaking what its blind-spots are, so as to specify what aspects of empowerment and empowerment processes should be analysed and discussed with other models.

For one, the model is based on the premise that employees through collaboration can make employee empowerment processes conducive to desired objectives, and sustain changes in work practices. The emphasis on collaboration – or more generally: interaction – means that individual variation can be suppressed. The model has little relevance for analysing (purely or predominantly) psychological mechanisms in empowerment, but also phenomena like group pressure and group thinking may be difficult to identify and analyse. Such phenomena can clearly alienate or disempower individuals with opposing views, for instance by clarifying mandates in ways contrary to individual employees' interests.

In conjunction with the previous point there are certainly risks in privileging what can be accomplished through dialog and interaction. Used prescriptively the model can induce strain on employees not willing or able to engage in interaction on equal terms with their colleagues. Even when employees are willing and able it is a well known fact that all change yields stress. As shown by Freire (1973) particularly at the start of an empowerment process frustration can be expected, and there are no guarantees that initial ambiguity or ambivalence will be resolved through dialog and interaction.

From a practical research point of view an objection to the model is that indicators of effects (like for instance employee health and organisation performance) cannot be determined in

advance, because it is impossible to know what outcomes of (self-determined) decision making processes and practices will be. Thus, it can be challenging to monitor consequences. This challenge will be further examined in chapter 2. More generally the model does not specify what employees are to attain increased control over. As described in chapter 1.2 there are marked differences between having control over daily work practices, over how work should be organised, and over decisions on what objectives the work organisation will seek to realise. This issue is also further examined in chapter 2.

Implications of the EEP-model for multi-disciplinary research

The model on employee empowerment processes above is based on the premise that groups of people with asymmetrical access to power interact and (at least to some degree) are mutually dependant of each other. There are someone enabling and others being enabled. Such asymmetry is of course common in other settings than work organisations as well, for instance in communities, and more generally in the interface between public services and civil societies. Potential relevance of the model for other settings than work organisations is not explored here though, as the data used in this thesis are exclusively from a work organisation.

More relevant in the context of this thesis is that the model allows comparisons between various contributions to empowerment. For instance, prevailing interest in health promotion is in how to facilitate empowerment, whereas outcomes are more or less taken for granted as beneficial. Contributors to health promotion will therefore tend to emphasise challenges in the relationship Enable-Explore, and do not investigate consequences of self-determined decision making (Explore-Effect) much. Conversely, in human resources prevailing interest is in investigating consequences of employee empowerment for employees and the work organisation (Explore-Effect). Increasing self-determination (Enable-Explore) is often seen as pretty straight-forward though, by delegation of decision making authority or other managerial initiatives towards employees.

Of course these are only tendencies in health promotion and human resources, and as will be returned to in chapter 2 there can be just as much or more variation within than between disciplines. The model's main virtue in this context is probably that it allows contributors to empowerment to compare and understand each others' relative contributions, i.e. similarities and differences in basic assumptions on the empowerment process, and what aspect of the empowerment process oneself and others are highlighting. As such the model can contribute to meaningful interaction on empowerment research, especially when the purpose (as is the case in this thesis) is to examine multiple consequences of empowerment.

What can a facilitator contribute with?

Given the imperative of self-determination for empowerment the model on employee empowerment processes does not (and cannot) presuppose participation of outside facilitators. The issue then becomes how and with what facilitators can contribute? In the literature on empowerment across disciplines there is discussion on whether or not empowerment can be facilitated (Gruber and Trickett, 1987, McWhirter, 1991, Birenbaum-Carmeli, 1999, Byrne, 1999, Boje and Rosile, 2001). The idea of facilitating empowerment can be seen as illogical if people can only empower themselves (Andrews, 2003).

The position taken in this thesis is that although (in principle) no approach to facilitation can guarantee empowerment as an outcome, facilitation can certainly influence the processes through which people become more or less empowered. Understanding how such processes are and may evolve is thus important to facilitators. In general, a facilitator of empowerment will try to increase peoples' scope of self-determination. Facilitators will engage in various activities based in various theories on what is important to increase such a scope, ranging from social structure and culture, via institutional norms and practices, to individual perceptions. Activities can for instance include guidance, supervision, mentoring, counselling, aiding, assisting, and supporting. These are all popular constructs widely used, some of which have become gravity centres for professional practice and research. A representative presentation of their usage, similarities and dissimilarities is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis. To the extent it is possible to make a general comment it seems

evident that many such constructs over time are given more confined meanings to address fairly specific facilitation challenges, often in particular settings or with particular target audiences.

In this thesis “facilitation” is used as an overarching construct, allowing different approaches to be used more or less concurrently when engaging in empowerment processes. As will be discussed in chapter 2.2 it can be highly useful to change between facilitation frames depending on how facilitatees (those facilitated for) define the situation, i.e. what sort of interaction they want with a facilitator. Concerning employee empowerment processes specifically, model 1.1 stimulates questions on how facilitation can influence

1. Decision making processes (Enable-Explore).
2. Attempts to develop new work practices (Explore-Effect).
3. Attempts to sustain new work practice (Effect-Enable).
4. Organisation learning by means of action research, i.e. repeated cycles of systematic reflections on the relationships between planning (Enable-Explore), practicing (Explore-Effect), and evaluating consequences thereof (Effect-Enable).

It is evident that facilitation can influence simply by increasing awareness of typical challenges in each of these sub-processes, or in the process as a whole. In order not to diminish the scope for self-determination it will typically be more relevant to point out alternatives than to provide particular solutions. However, it is also possible for facilitators to participate more directly in employee empowerment processes, as was done in the tailor-made approach documented here. The overarching research issue – of how employee empowerment processes can be *made* conducive to both employee health and organisation performance – of course prerequisites that this is what employees want to do. If not, it is not relevant to empowerment as determined in chapter 1.2. Given that improved employee health and organisation performance is what they want to accomplish, the facilitator may collaborate with the employees on developing the skills necessary to accomplish what they want. This was of course the rationale for – in this case – to develop a course aimed at strengthening employees “generalist” competencies in decision making, interdisciplinary

collaboration, organisation learning and project work, as well as their competencies in conducting research on own work practices.

As will be further examined in chapter 2.2, in principle the number of ways a facilitator can influence empowerment processes is endless. Outcomes are often difficult to determine in advance. For instance, in some people frustrations will stimulate empowerment whereas support will undermine it, whereas the opposite is true in other people. The one and the same set of facilitation practices may therefore stimulate empowerment processes in some people and undermine them in others, among other things depending on how people interact in social settings, e.g. collaborate constructively or not.

Irrespective of approach to facilitation there is no necessary correspondence between intentions and outcomes of practices in social settings (Engelstad et al., 2005). Even though it is reasonable to see facilitation as practices that can improved with experience, a facilitator will always have to be attentive to unintended consequences of his or her actions. Hence, facilitation of empowerment is ambiguous because empowerment is ambiguous.

In the next chapter section emphasis is on the use of the model in this thesis, concretely to identify research questions that will be analysed empirically in later chapters. First though, it is necessary to clarify how the constructive research issue – “how can...” – is approached, in this case by means of an action research approach.

1.5 Research questions and action research as an overall approach to them

A research question is motivated not only by its practical relevance, but also by its relevance to existing scholarly knowledge in disciplines or other fields of knowledge (Engelstad et al., 2005). The preceding chapter sections leave a number of theoretical issues that needs to be resolved, for instance assumptions on what power means in this context, how distributions of power can be altered, how organisation learning can be an engine for employee empowerment processes, what dimensions in employee health and organisation performance are relevant in this research, and how the work organisation is to be understood as a setting for empowerment processes. All these issues will be addressed in chapter 2, which is centred on making the overarching research issue intelligible from a theoretical point of view.

Clarifying all these theoretical assumptions is not necessary though for making the research questions this thesis is structured around intelligible. There is, however, one theoretical issue that needs be addressed before specific research questions are presented. This issue is indicated by the interrogative “how can”, which, as mentioned in chapter 1.1, is a constructive (as opposed to descriptive or normative) research question. A constructive question asks about how social realities can be changed, and this is predominantly a concern addressed by various approaches to *action research*. The next paragraphs aim at clarifying the approach to action research taken in this thesis.

The many different meanings of action research

Action research is an ambiguous concept attributed a great variety of meanings. It has been asserted that it “means so many things to so many people that it is methodologically useless to distinguish one strategy from another” (Reason, 1999: 208). Furthermore, that action research “has different purposes, is based in different relationships, and has different ways of conceiving knowledge and its relation to practice” (Reason, 2003b: 106). Nevertheless, action researchers converge on one critical issue: This is the idea – following the trajectory of

pragmatist John Dewey (1929) – of bridging theory and practice by repeated cycles of reflecting and acting: “Everyone (in action research) believes that the only meaningful way to theorize is through successive cycles of combined reflection and action, the action feeding back to revise the reflection in ongoing cycles.” (Greenwood, 2002: 125). Among statements attributed to action research pioneer Kurt Lewin – known also to many not engaged in action research as they are widespread both in the literature and on the internet – are “If you want to truly understand something, try to change it” and “There is nothing so practical as a good theory”. Hence, a dynamic relationship between theory and practice is a key concern, thereby transcending both deductive (“theory-testing”) and inductive (“theory-building”) approaches to social science. Action research “explicitly rejects the separation between thought and action” (Greenwood and Levin, 1998: 6).

The philosophical tradition most influential to action research is pragmatism, seeing usefulness or workability as the foundation for generation of knowledge (Greenwood and Levin, 1998, Reason, 2003b). To pragmatists scientific inquiry must base itself on practical experience with a subject matter. Emphasis in action research is therefore not only (or even primarily) on providing descriptive accounts of what social reality is like, but also (or even more) on establishing what it can and cannot be. Action research is typically concerned with what constitutes good practice, and competence and knowledge is assessed by how fruitful it is for generating desirable practical outcomes. Action research is therefore among “interactionist” perspectives in social science, and evidently not particularly useful for “macro-perspectives”, e.g. on cultures, social structures, trends, distributions, and so on.

From a descriptive point of view four elements can be seen as central to most forms of action research; namely collaboration between researcher and practitioner, solution of practical problems, change in practice, and development of theory (Holter, 1993, Holter and Schwartz-Barcott, 1993). Action research is thus most often – but not exclusively as will be returned to below – characterised by “the researcher participates in solving practical problems, in collaboration with others, this participation also constituting a learning- or research-situation for the researcher” (Gustavsen and Sørensen, 1995/ 1982: 55 my translation). Solving practical problems and generating scientific knowledge in one go is a tantalising proposition given scarce practical relevance of much social science (Hem, 2003).

It is also a provocative proposition to many, because one of the most prevalent scientific ideals is detachment of the researcher from whatever is to be researched. Whereas in most approaches to social science a researcher will try to eradicate or control own influence on an object of study (oftentimes referred to as “researcher effect” or even “contamination”), the action researcher is part of his or her subject matter, and uses own experiences as data in knowledge generating processes.

It is therefore no surprise that criticism of “positivism” is common to the point of ritual in action research. Debates within philosophy from the 1950’ies onwards resulted in little support for positivism in social sciences (Mjøset, 1991), i.e. adopting ideals of experiments, quantitative data, causality, value neutrality, non-cognitivism, prediction and control from the natural sciences (Engelstad et al., 2005). As noted by many though, the “positivist debate” was mainly won in philosophy whereas research practice in mainstream social science remained relatively unchanged (Habermas, 1999, Kalleberg, 1999). This so-called “shadow-positivism” in much contemporary social science has been the subject of harsh criticism from contributors to action research, and almost invariably used to advocate action research at expense of “positivist” approaches. To the bewilderment of many though, action research has – despite being on the “winning” side in the positivist debate – continued to be a marginal approach within academia. Some see action research as being suppressed by elites having institutionalised social science (Levin and Greenwood, 2001, Greenwood, 2002), but more fundamentally there are few systematic attempts to discuss differences and similarities between action research and more conventional approaches to social science (Eikeland and Finsrud, 1995b).

Most would agree that action research (in one way or another) contributes to generation of knowledge, but is this knowledge only “local” in the sense of being confined to whoever is participating in a particular setting, or is it “generalisable” and relevant to generation of knowledge within disciplines and fields of knowledge? The issue that has to be addressed is if, how, and in what meaning of, action research can contribute to social science in general.

Action research as separate from or integrated in social sciences

Many contributors to scholarly texts see action research as a separate activity from social science, albeit oftentimes for different reasons. One argument is that action research is application of social science. This was where Kurt Lewin started when he in the 1940'ies confronted the issue of "How to apply the theories and knowledge gained 'by scientific means' in a useful way for individuals and society, without compromising the scientific rigour in the act of application?" (Eikeland and Finsrud, 1995a: 2). Action research then becomes a methodology for applying knowledge generated through "basic" social science. An alternative view leading to the same conclusion of separation is seeing action research as "clinical practice" aimed at improving human behaviour, thereby not contributing to theoretical knowledge but to practical (prudence, phronesis) knowledge (Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996). A third option is to argue that whereas mainstream social science addresses descriptive questions on what reality is like, action research addresses constructive questions on what it should be like, hence address different dimensions in social reality (Kalleberg, 1992, 1995). Numerous other contributors argue that action research yields other types of knowledge than mainstream social science, for instance participative or spiritual, uniquely situated in people and local contexts (see Reason and Bradbury (2001) for an overview).

By far the most elaborated attempt to position action research firmly *within* social science is to be found in the texts of philosopher Olav Eikeland (for instance Eikeland, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, Eikeland and Finsrud, 1995a, Eikeland and Finsrud, 1995b, Eikeland and Fossestøl, 1998). He posits that action research is a "hidden curriculum" in all scientific endeavours (Eikeland, 2001). What all scientists do (as opposed to what they tend to say they do, hence hidden) when justifying theoretical and empirical knowledge as valid and reliable, is to build on their practical experiences, learning and improving as they go along through trial and error, acting and reflecting. This "method of methodology" operating across all disciplines and fields of inquiry determines what constitutes knowledge. Knowledge is not grounded in "data" or "theory" as given entities, but in actual researchers' ability to articulate their practical experience with a subject matter. In principle this process is the same for an astronomer and a social scientist. It is articulation by competent

researchers that *makes* knowledge empirical and theoretical. Thus, in order to make justifiable claims about validity of theoretical and empirical knowledge they *have to* engage in systematic reflections propelled by dialog (in academia institutionalised by peer review arrangements) on what they learn from trial and error with a subject matter. Seen like this all scientists have to be “action researchers”, and they all have similar experiences on how knowledge is generated. This is certainly more than a clever philosophical point, because it demonstrates that using own experiences with a subject matter when generating knowledge is integrated in all sciences, and not something that sets action research apart from other approaches.

The issue then becomes *how* own experiences with a subject matter is used in research. Evidently researchers vary with regards to how they relate to what they study, i.e. there are various relationships between knower and known. Eikeland has in a number of texts (mainly in Norwegian, but (Eikeland, 2001) offers an overview in English) elaborated on Aristotle’s distinctions between types of knowledge. The three most prominent types are 1) theoretical knowledge (object known has its principles of change or movement in itself), 2) poetical knowledge (object known has its principles of change or movement outside itself, in an artisan or manipulator, hence “craft competence”), and 3) practical knowledge (object known is located in the knower as habits, practical experience and skills). As a consequence “there are different forms of theory based in radically different relations between the knower and the known (spectator, user, manipulator, “enactor”)” (Berg and Eikeland, 2008: 11).

The third type of knowledge (practical) is fundamental for performing any practice – including theory-building – competently. It is based in habits, routines, skills and emotions as knowledge about ways of doing things. Action research is “practical in Aristotle’s sense of practical reasoning about how to act rightly and properly in a situation with which one is confronted” (Kemnis and McTaggart, 2000: 569). Articulating ones “actor knowledge” then becomes a means for developing theoretical knowledge, as the object known has its principles of change or movement *in itself*. Hence, participating in a practice can be understood as a strategy for developing theoretical knowledge about that practice. This may be just as or even more “scientific” than becoming a spectator detached from a subject

matter under investigation, depending on what is researched (i.e. the relationship between knower and known). For instance, it is possible to argue that a researcher with firsthand experience from social change processes is better positioned to articulate theoretical knowledge about such processes than someone viewing from a distance (e.g. through use of observation, retrospective interviews or surveys). Articulation of knowledge is not a straightforward task though. The challenge is to synthesise and develop practice into experience, competence, skill and (theoretical) insight on the phenomenon experienced. Developing such insight requires repeated cycles of planning, acting and reflecting; trial and error (Eikeland, 1998).

Taken together, Eikeland demonstrates 1) how action research can be seen as integrated in and not detached from other approaches to science, and 2) how action research can be particularly useful for articulating theoretical knowledge about social realities. This understanding has implications for the apparent dilemma between rigor and relevance – or real-world versus scientific relevance (Rapoport, 1970) – in research: Rigor in research is pursued through, and not instead of, systematic attempts to make it relevant. Furthermore, this understanding also has consequences for how relevant or transferable outcomes of action research processes are: Action research is not about developing particularistic knowledge about what goes on between “researcher” and “actionists” in a non-replicable setting. Instead it is about *generating process knowledge about how to practice competently and change social realities*. Such knowledge is useful across settings. These points are important for the understanding of action research this thesis is based on.

Who should do the research in action research?

Much of the confusion surrounding action research undoubtedly has to do with the issue of *who should do research in action research*. Different positions on this issue have dominated over time. As pointed out by Berg and Eikeland (2008) action research historically started out in the 1940ies as an attempt to extend and develop experimental social research by making it more practically relevant. However, over time more emphasis was put on collaboration between researchers and those researched. Action research thus came at odds with

traditional ideals on how research should be conducted. From the 1960'ies the first wave of action research was more or less absorbed by evaluation research. From the mid 1970'ies there was a second wave of action research, and whereas the first wave emanated from mainstream social science and had strong theoretical ambitions, many of the contributors in the second wave positioned themselves against mainstream social science and against theory. As a consequence action research was relegated from "cutting edge" to a marginal position in the social sciences, and – as will be discussed below – to some extent for good reason.

Somewhat simplified there are four possible answers to who should (more or less) formally do research from within an action research process; 1) the researcher(s), 2) the researcher(s) and people within a setting separately, 3) the researcher(s) and people collaboratively, or 4) people themselves. Depending on who is responsible for doing the research the very meaning of "research" changes, as reflected in a widely used typology on action research by Holter and Schwartz-Barcott's (1993), in which they separate between three typical approaches to action research:

1. A "technical collaborative approach" in which the researcher has a predetermined agenda.
2. A "mutual collaboration approach" in which researcher and practitioners identify problems and engage in action cycles together.
3. An "enhancement approach" in which collaboration leads to critical dialog for collectively raised consciousness.

Hart and Bond (1996) have noted that these approaches can be intermingled in practice, irrespective of what is intended from the outset. Still, there are obviously major differences between a predetermined research agenda and an enhancement approach, and most important in this context: Over the past few decades there has been a clear trend; the (professional) researcher's importance in action research has diminished; from being in control as experimenter (Eikeland and Finsrud, 1995b), on to becoming a co-researcher (Whyte et al., 1989, Whyte, 1991b), and finally becoming a facilitator of others' research, for

instance in education, organisation development, and community development (Eikeland, 1995).

The reasons for these changes are too complex to discuss seriously here, but two of the most important factors are clearly 1) a radicalisation of action research leading to emphasis on validating experiences of the disenfranchised, and combating oppression either through democracy or rebellion, seeing changed social practice as more important than disciplinary research (for instance Mathiesen, 1992), and 2) a widespread criticism of “positivism” in social research, leading among other things to the conclusions that there can be no objective (value-free) social science, and that knowledge is “local” (situated in settings and people) and cannot be expressed in formula or universal laws (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

These developments have certainly widened the conception of what it means to do action research. At present a variety of approaches in the spectrum from quasi-experiments initiated and controlled by researchers, through to introspection by anyone searching sources of knowledge within themselves, can be argued as a case of action research. For instance, “action research is a process that enables all people to celebrate the transformation of the infinitude of knowledge they possess at a deep level into social practices” (McNiff, 2003: 4). Irrespective of how desirable such transformations may be, it certainly becomes unclear if and how action research can contribute within existing disciplines or other fields of knowledge. It also becomes reasonable to ask “(w)here are the research objects, since everybody suddenly has become a potential co-researcher and equally a potential member of the same community of research and practice?” (Eikeland and Finsrud, 1995a: 4).

A consequence of these developments is that “(o)ne of the most unsettling features of the action research literature is the use of the term action research without attaching any serious meaning to the concept of research” (Greenwood, 2002: 130). This assertion is supported by other key contributors to action research, seeing much action research as characterised by “amateurism” (Fals Borda, 2001) and “sloppiness” (Dick, 2003, Eikeland, 2003). The action research literature is certainly prone to “anecdotalism”, in the meaning of bringing forward data supporting points the author seeks to convey (Silverman, 2000). It is

simply not common in action research to question or critique own knowledge claims. A striking example in that respect is that none of the 15 papers serving as exemplars in the “Handbook of Action Research” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001), systematically question the validity of their findings. However, “conducting research means developing habits of counterintuitive thinking, questioning definitions and premises, linking findings and process analyses to other cases, and attempting to subject favourite interpretations to harsh collaborative critiques” (Greenwood, 2002: 131). In other words, conducting research means adhering to norms on how research should be practiced.

Adhering to an ethos of social science

The position taken in this thesis is that action research – as shown by Eikeland (see above) – indeed *can* contribute to generation of knowledge within disciplines and other fields of knowledge. Action research is an appropriate strategy for developing knowledge about social processes, and how they can be changed. Such process knowledge is “generalisable” in the sense of being useful in various similar settings, for instance work organisations where employees experience demands for more flexibility in their work practices. In chapter 3.2 a landscape metaphor is used to illustrate how action research can “map a social landscape” and “suggest itineraries” to others venturing in the same landscapes.

Furthermore, the position taken in this thesis is that action research, in order to contribute to scholarly knowledge within disciplines and other fields of knowledge, must adhere to an ethos of social science. Precisely through the “method of methodology” described by Eikeland, the social sciences have developed a set of normative guidelines for how truthful, fruitful, reliable, valid, and reflexive research can be accomplished. If these guidelines are crossed then the relevance of such research will – for good reason – be questioned. As will be discussed in chapter 3.2 there are numerous methodological approaches intended to increase likelihood of research practice being in accordance with such guidelines, for instance on how to observe, interview or analyse documents. However, because action research typically combines various methodological approaches (Kemnis and McTaggart, 2000), it is most often the case that such approaches cannot be adopted. It is therefore even

more necessary with an action research approach than with most other approaches to relate transparently to prevailing norms for social science.

Following the trajectory of sociologist Robert Merton (1968) there has been considerable theoretical interest in what constitutes an “ethos of science” (for instance Kalleberg, 2007). In this thesis “ethos of *social science*” is used more loosely to mean norms that regulate social science as a practice. Such norms are often made explicit in prescriptive texts on research methods (for instance Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), albeit typically with emphasis on one or a few such norms at a time. The following list is not intended to be a complete or conclusive overview of all norms, but a list of norms that were particularly emphasised in the research documented in this thesis:

- Assess influence of researcher subjectivity and activity on the research process.
- Assess (in wide terms) reliability and validity of data.
- Assess how unique or representative examples of social practice are.
- Account for how weaknesses in data are approached.
- Use constant comparison between different instances of what can be regarded as the same phenomenon.
- Try to disprove own favourite assumptions.
- Develop habits of counterintuitive thinking, and question definitions and premises for conclusions.

The purpose of these norms is to increase the likelihood of research generating truthful and fruitful answers, to academically and practically interesting questions, using relevant data and theoretical constructs. The norms may seem self-evident in social science, but they are not self-evident in all approaches to action research. Because pre-defined analytical frameworks typically are not applicable in action research, adherence to the norms has to be shown by how the research process is documented. In that sense “the proof is in the pudding” and not in following a particular recipe.

The norms also attract attention to a point that is often under-communicated in the literature on action research: Research requires competence, time, and interest in the subject matter under investigation. Experience with the subject matter may certainly be useful, but it can also lead to bias, blind-spots and short-sightedness. It is therefore a considerable challenge to conduct action research in ways generating knowledge about social processes.

In the tailor-made approach (TMA) that CHPS and DOAS collaborated on participants were expected to engage in action research processes with repeated cycles of planning, practicing and evaluating experiences. There were altogether eight groups in the TMA (six workplace development projects, one top-management group, and a group of CHPS-employees), each having their separate work practices as part of the TMA. The seven groups of DOAS-employees had little prior knowledge of the research process in general, and of action research in particular. A fair assessment is that they were novices, and they could thus not be expected to produce research of a high quality. They were to document their learning processes though, in project reports that were to be assessed as exam assignments in the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” (see chapter 5 for details).

This thesis is not, however, a chronicle of the research conducted in each participant group. Instead data from the ongoing action research processes are used in retrospect, in effect seeing the TMA as an example of a settings approach to workplace health promotion (see chapter 2.5). Whereas emphasis in each participant group during the TMA was on improving own work practices, emphasis in this thesis is on analysing the TMA as an example of how employee empowerment processes can be facilitated. Emphasis in this thesis is thus on how the TMA functioned as a framework for supporting organisation learning based in action research principles, and how these learning experiences influenced employee empowerment processes included outcomes thereof (employee health and organisation performance). When the TMA is used as a case in this way, it also has to be related more extensively to existing bodies of knowledge than was possible during the course of the TMA.

The characteristics of the analytical approach taken in this thesis are further explored in chapter 3.2, but it is important to note that the same data that were used within the TMA

are used in this thesis. As such this research is not “on” but “from within” the TMA. It is only the context in which the experiences (data) are used that is expanded, from ongoing work practices to existing bodies of knowledge predominantly on organisation learning, power and empowerment, employee health and organisation performance. The TMA and the challenges DOAS faced are thus seen as examples of larger groups of phenomena, and not as singular or unique occurrences. In practice this means that there are two layers in the analyses of the TMA-experiences. One layer is the experiences of the eight participants groups relative to what they tried to accomplish, and the other layer is the same experiences relative to existing knowledge within disciplines and other fields of knowledge. As the first layer in effect determines the second layer, the first layer dominates this text in terms of volume.

Research questions this thesis is structured around

In order to document the employee empowerment processes and address the constructive research issue on how employee empowerment processes can be made conducive to employee health and organisation performance, it is necessary to be highly specific about what occurred at different points in time. The majority of research questions are therefore descriptive, asking about specific events or occurrences. Taken together answers to these questions allow a reconstruction of the employee empowerment processes and thereby – at the end of this thesis – also an account of consequences of various attempts to change them in ways conducive to health and performance.

In chapter 1.3 there was a brief description of the tailor-made approach (TMA) which Centre for Health Promotion (CHPS) and Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) collaborated on. The TMA consisted of two components: 1) “Workplace development projects” in which groups of employees collaborated on changing their work practices, and 2) a 15 ECTS course in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. These components were linked a) through a series of gatherings, in which lectures and group reflections were combined, and b) through supervision by CHPS on employees’ projects and learning processes. The assumption was that this approach would facilitate increased employee control over work practices, hence

employee empowerment. Furthermore, that a systematic approach by employees to planning, practicing and evaluating own practices would increase likelihood of empowerment yielding improved employee health and organisation performance. It was also assumed that the characteristics of DOAS as a setting would influence the employee empowerment processes. As a consequence, research questions on these five issues are relevant:

1. Characteristics of DOAS as a setting (chapter 4).
2. DOAS' and CHPS' collaboration on developing the TMA (chapter 5).
3. Decision making processes associated with Enable-Explore (chapter 6).
4. Attempts to develop new work practice; Explore-Effect (chapter 7).
5. Attempts to sustain changes in work practices; Effect-Enable (chapter 8).

Research questions for each of these issues are only listed here, as they are addressed in depth in chapters 4 to 8.

DOAS had been created in a reorganising in 1998-99, just prior to its collaboration with CHPS started. It was important to CHPS to understand the rationale behind the department, and how the reorganising had influenced employees' opportunities for increasing their control over work practices. *The questions highlighted in chapter 4 are:*

- What issues and objectives did the politically elected owners want to pursue by creating DOAS?
- How did they choose to reorganise the municipality's public services?
- How did political trends at the national level influence the municipality's decisions?
- How was DOAS intended to operate, and with what formal structures?
- How were employees involved in and affected by the process and outcomes of the reorganisation?
- What was it DOAS wanted to change in its existing work practices, why, and building on what experiences?

The tailor-made approach (TMA) was CHPS' idea, but the process of tailor-making it to specific circumstances in DOAS occurred in collaboration between CHPS and DOAS. *The research questions highlighted in chapter 5 are:*

- What was the rationale for developing the TMA as a framework for supporting organisation learning?
- What were the objectives the TMA was intended to contribute to?
- How were DOAS-employees involved in planning the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” and the “workplace development projects”?
- What competence challenges did DOAS-employees identify?
- How was the curriculum in the course adapted to DOAS' requests?
- How and what employees were recruited to the TMA?
- What were the opportunities and risks with the TMA?

Once the TMA started the “workplace development projects” (WDP) confronted the formidable challenge of assessing what – if anything – they wanted to do differently in their work practices. They were thus in a decision making process. *The research questions highlighted in chapter 6 are:*

- What mandates were the “workplace development projects” (WDP-groups) given?
- What did participants in the WDP-groups want to accomplish by participating in the TMA?
- What did they see as important for realising their objectives?
- How did their previous experiences with organisation change in the municipality influence their expectations?
- What were their initial project ideas?
- How were these ideas modified after feedback from the TMG and CHPS?
- What were their final project decisions?
- How did they arrive at these decisions?

- What could be learned from this sub-process with relevance for the next sub-process?

Once the WDP-groups had made their decisions they were to try out new work practices in DOAS. *The research questions highlighted in chapter 7 are:*

- What activities did the WDP-groups actually carry out after decisions were made?
- What did they accomplish relative to their own objectives and the mandates they had been given?
- How did they document and evaluate their projects?
- What did they learn from their projects?
- What did they learn from interacting in groups?
- What did they learn about their DOAS-colleagues?
- How did they use what they learned from WDPs or other elements in the TMA in their daily work practices?
- How did CHPS influence their learning processes?

In chapter 8 emphasis is on how DOAS sought to sustain changes in work practices. The top-management group (TMG) in DOAS had a particular role here. They were also engaged in several workplace development issues outside the TMA. *The research questions highlighted in chapter 8 are:*

- What activities did the top-management group in DOAS initiate outside the tailor-made approach?
- How did their collaboration with CHPS influence how they initiated and carried out such activities?
- What did the TMG-members learn from these experiences, and what would they seek to do in their future work practices?

- What activities did the TMG initiate in the aftermath of the TMA, and what was the relevance of these activities for employee empowerment processes?

Taken together answers to these five sets of descriptive questions provide an account of the employee empowerment processes initiated in this project. The data generated also allow an analysis of how such processes can be influenced, and this is critical to the overarching research issue of how employee empowerment processes can be *made* conducive to employee health and organisation performance. As shown in chapter 1.2 positive outcomes on both health and performance is just one of (at least) four possible combinations from increased employee control.

The tailor-made approach was based in several (theoretical) assumptions on what would strengthen the relationship between employee empowerment on the one hand, and both health and performance on the other. These assumptions were related to how power would manifest itself, how facilitation by outside agents could influence the empowerment processes, how organisation learning could enable control over various types of work practices, and how health and performance could become mutually reinforced in ongoing work practices. In addition CHPS assumed that the entire approach would be relevant as a settings approach to workplace health promotion. *These assumptions can be formulated as research questions:*

1. How can power manifest in ways creating win-win situations in which interests of various stakeholders are realised?
2. How can employee empowerment processes be facilitated in ways increasing likelihood of those involved in the processes realising their objectives?
3. How can organisation learning increase employees' control over own work practices?
4. How can health and performance as two dimensions in ongoing work practices mutually reinforce each other in stressful workplace settings?
5. How can a settings approach to workplace health promotion combine concerns for employee health and organisation performance?

These questions cannot be analysed empirically using any of the five sets of descriptive questions separately, but have to be based on analyses of the entire data set, as they can only be answered by identifying what proved to be important for subsequent events. Consequently, these questions are not analysed empirically until the end of this thesis, in chapter 8.3. The rationale for these questions is examined already in the next chapter though, as they provide critical information on what was attempted with the tailor-made approach. The activities analysed in chapters 5 to 8 are hardly intelligible without an understanding of why they were undertaken, i.e. how they were intended to increase employee control over work practices in ways conducive to both employee health and organisation performance.

The structure of this thesis thus follows the logic dictated by research questions: Chapter 2 investigates the theoretical assumptions on how to strengthen both employee health and organisation performance by means of employee empowerment processes. Chapter 3 addresses methodological issues, and combines a detailed account of the data used in this thesis, with a clarification of the approach taken to data analyses. Chapters 4 to 8 are centred on the research questions specified above, moving from a description of DOAS prior to its collaboration with CHPS (chapter 4), via an analysis of the process of planning the TMA (chapter 5), through to analyses of each of the three sub-processes in the model of employee empowerment processes (chapters 6-8; Enable-Explore; Explore-Effect; Effect-Enable). Chapter 8 also provides an analysis of the experiences with influencing employee empowerment processes, and conclusions to the overarching research issue.

Chapter 2 Theoretical assumptions on employee empowerment processes

In the previous chapter it was underlined that this thesis is based on data from an action research approach. One of the highlighted assertions was that “(e)veryone (in action research) believes that the only meaningful way to theorize is through successive cycles of combined reflection and action, the action feeding back to revise the reflection in ongoing cycles.” (Greenwood, 2002: 125). One implication of this is that “theory” and “data” are intertwined in ongoing practice, and only analytically separable. Building on Eikeland (2001) it was argued that theoretical knowledge can be developed through articulating experience with a subject matter, i.e. that it is articulation by competent researchers that *makes* knowledge both empirical and theoretical. An ambition with this thesis is to contribute to theory development in this sense, in ways that are explicated in chapters 3.2 and 8.3.

However, theories do not only emerge in ongoing practice. They have multiple sources, and in a sense fuel assumptions on what will occur in practice. Such assumptions certainly influence how a practice is approached and carried out. Seen like this explicating assumptions prior to a practice is a necessary first step for articulating experiences with that practice. The model of employee empowerment processes in chapter 1.4 is an example of explication in this sense, inviting modification of assumptions based on experience with “successive cycles of combined reflection and action” as Greenwood emphasises in the above citation, thereby increasing possibilities of articulating theory.

This chapter is dedicated to explicating theoretical assumptions prevalent in CHPS prior to the collaboration with DOAS, on what would increase likelihood of employee empowerment processes strengthening both employee health and organisation performance. These assumptions were not explicated as coherently at the time as they are in this chapter. As such, this chapter is a reconstruction of assumptions. Explication of assumptions often occurs in – as opposed to prior to – practice, so as to be able to communicate meaningfully. To some extent this was the case here. Nevertheless, assumptions are logically and

chronologically prior to modifications of practice based on successive cycles of combined reflection and action, and they are just as (or more) operant when they are not made explicit.

At the end of chapter 1.5 there was five research questions centred on what will strengthen the relationship between employee empowerment processes on the one hand, and both employee health and organisation performance on the other. These questions are:

1. How can power manifest in ways creating win-win situations in which interests of various stakeholders are realised?
2. How can employee empowerment processes be facilitated in ways increasing likelihood of those involved in the processes realising their objectives?
3. How can organisation learning increase employees' control over own work practices?
4. How can health and performance as two dimensions in ongoing work practices mutually reinforce each other in stressful workplace settings?
5. How can a settings approach to workplace health promotion combine concerns for employee health and organisation performance?

CHPS' assumptions on what would be adequate answers to these questions prior to the collaboration with DOAS are addressed in five separate chapter sections. In chapter 2.1 theoretical assumptions on "power in empowerment" are highlighted. It is argued that various approaches to empowerment cluster around similar assumptions on what power is, where it is located, and what it accomplishes. These clusters are here called "Problem-focused", "Solution-focused" and "Political". It is noted that there are similarities in how these clusters evolve and compete in health promotion and human resources, suggesting that there – to some extent – may be greater similarities between than within these disciplines' understanding of empowerment. Attention is then directed towards levels of decision making authority in work organisations, concretely deciding on priorities, organisation, and changes in daily work practices. These levels are connected by "meeting places" between employees. It is summarised that the ambition with the TMA was to increase employees' *power to* act on boundaries affecting their work practices, in ways

generating “power with” and a win-win situation for them and other major stakeholders (employees, clients, owners (politicians)), seeing the relationship between *agents* (employees) and *structure* (the work organisation) as dynamic and in flux (hence possible to change through a constructive organisation learning-action research approach), yielding *outcomes* manifested as changes in DOAS’ priorities, organisation and daily work practices. It was assumed that if power manifested in this way, the outcome would be increased likelihood of employee empowerment processes generating both employee health and organisation performance.

Chapter 2.2 articulates basic assumptions on facilitation of empowerment. Building on the three clusters on power identified in chapter 2.1 an ideal-type of facilitation frames is developed. It is discussed how facilitation frames may be compatible or in conflict. Furthermore, some challenges in the facilitation relationship are exemplified. A unifying theme throughout this chapter section is that facilitation of empowerment is a complex endeavour, requiring various competencies and ability to reflect on the relationship between intentions and practices. CHPS’ assumption was that if facilitators stay committed to facilitatees’ (those facilitated for) objectives (as opposed to commitment to a fixed role), the likelihood of favourable outcomes on employee health and organisation performance would increase. In practice this means that a facilitator should be prepared to modify his or her practices based on how facilitatees define the situation, to increase their scope of self-determination.

Chapter 2.3 examines the theoretical underpinnings of the approach to organisation learning taken in this thesis. It is argued that *productive* organisation learning, i.e. organisation learning conducive to an organisation’s objectives, should take the form of action research with systematic cycles of planning, acting and assessing ongoing experiences. Realising objectives are thus constructive processes based on continuous trial and error. It is also argued that it is useful to make a distinction between daily work practices on the one hand, and attempts to improve or develop such practices on the other. Organisation learning thus requires structures, particularly “meeting places” where employees interact. CHPS developed a vocabulary for organisation learning. This vocabulary consists of sensitising concepts related to the levels of decision making discussed in chapter 2.1, concretely

prioritising, organising, and daily work practices. The assumption was that organisation learning would have to be relevant at all these levels, if employee empowerment processes were to be conducive to both employee health and organisation performance.

Chapter 2.4 articulates basic assumptions on health relevant to the research documented in this thesis. There are many dimensions in health, and it was clear from the outset that only some of them could be addressed systematically here. Concretely, with DOAS' emphasis on generating solutions for the future in stressful situations, it was relevant to highlight health as a resource in dealing with such situations. Emphasis was thus on salutogenic processes, meaning processes that strengthen health (as opposed to prevent disease). Research has documented that people have different capacities to experience sense of coherence when faced with stressors. The idea in the collaboration between DOAS and CHPS was not to influence individual employees' sense of coherence, but to initiate work practices that could be experienced as coherent by all employees, irrespective of their individual capacities. The assumption was that employees would use increased control over work practices (priorities, organising, daily work practices) to strengthen health and performance concurrently. This assumption is consistent with a settings approach to health promotion.

Precisely basic assumptions on a settings approach to health promotion are highlighted in chapter 2.5. More specifically, the research documented in this thesis is presented as an example of a settings approach to workplace health promotion. The point of departure is the reasonable assumption that *how* people carry out their work practices has health consequences. Changing work practices will therefore not only influence organisation performance, but also employee health. Characteristics of the settings approach documented here are highlighting 1) everyday work practices, 2) employee empowerment, and 3) salutogenic processes. This is a novel approach, which could be a valuable addition to the field of workplace health promotion.

Taken together, the basic assumptions articulated here explicate the rationale for the tailor-made approach documented in this thesis. This approach was developed to be one possible answer to how employee empowerment processes can be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance. It was assumed it would be so by providing

a framework supporting organisation learning, through which employees themselves would address power, health and performance issues in the setting they interact. Articulation of basic assumptions on the tailor-made approach itself is not conducted until chapter 5.1, because these assumptions were closely related to the planning process CHPS and DOAS collaborated on.

2.1 Power in empowerment in health promotion and human resources

Power is an elusive phenomenon. As noted by Bierstedt (1950) we all know what it is until someone asks us. Most would agree that power can be both enabling and constraining, but not necessarily agree on when it is either of the two. Power is often seen as an essentially contested construct (Lukes, 1974/ 2005), taking on different meanings and values relative to whomever is analysing it. Theoretical debate on power tends to be heated, with strong proponents for different views.

The purpose of addressing power theoretically in this thesis is not to engage in favour of any particular side in the debates, but to explicate basic assumptions on power relevant to the tailor-made approach the Department of Adolescent Social Services and the Centre for Health Promotion in Settings collaborated on. A second (and secondary) concern in this chapter section and the next is to relate these assumptions to various approaches to empowerment in health promotion and human resources. In chapter 1.2 several differences between these disciplines were noted, for instance in the importance empowerment was attributed (e.g. cornerstone or tool), or target audience (e.g. disenfranchised or employees). As will become evident here though, there are also notable similarities between the two disciplines; clearly suggesting that empowerment may have the same meanings in them. This is of course relevant when emphasis is on how empowerment can have consequences for employee health and organisation performance concurrently.

The critical issue in this context is “what is power in empowerment?” As commented in chapter 1 the literature on empowerment often does not specify assumptions on power, but instead assumes that the reader will understand what is meant (Rowlands, 1997). There are notable exceptions in both health promotion (Laverack, 2004) and human resources (Boje and Rosile, 2001), but it is not sufficient to make general references to these or other texts when conducting an empirical investigation into a concrete subject matter. On the other hand, it is necessary to be fairly pragmatic and not go into all nuances on theories on power, which is a complex subject matter indeed. A lot can be accomplished though by addressing three basic questions; what is power, where is it located, and what does it accomplish.

Concretely, seeing power as a finite or infinite entity is emphasised concerning what power is; “structure” and “agency” concerning where power is located, and “product” and “process” concerning what power accomplishes. The dimensions in power thereby identified are analytical, but in practice they are interwoven in clusters of understandings of power. As will become evident these clusters are similar in health promotion and human resources, suggesting the somewhat surprising assertion that there may be more similarities between these disciplines than within them.

What is power, where is it located, and what does it accomplish?

One of the most debated theoretical issues on power is whether or not it is a finite entity yielding “zero-sum” relationships, meaning that more power for some invariably means an equivalent loss of power for others. Such an understanding of power was more or less taken for granted by the first notable contributors to theories on power, for instance Weber (1971), Dahl (1957) and Lukes (1974/ 2005). Power then unilaterally becomes “power over” someone. This understanding of power has been contested by various contributors, and “power to” has evolved as an alternative understanding. Whereas “power over” refers to ability to make others comply, “power to” refers to ability to do or accomplish something by oneself (Laverack, 2004). “Power to” is sometimes divided into “power with (others, in collaboration)” and “power from within (a person’s inner energy)” in line with Starhawk’s (1990) suggestion. Associated with “power to” is seeing power as capacity to transform social relations in ways beneficial to all (“win-win”). This is a common – but as will be returned to below not exclusive – understanding of power in the empowerment literature. Lately there has been growing interest in how these forms of power can interact, e.g. how “power to” can be secured and promoted by diligent use of “power over”, for instance in communities where public services workers may use their “power over” resources to facilitate citizen groups’ capacities to mobilise their “power to” improve their social realities (Laverack, 2004).

Another debated issue in theories on power is where it can be located. Proponents of either “power over” or “power to” often share an assumption of power as residing with agents (like

individuals, groups or institutions) with identifiable and coherent interests (Clegg, 1989/2002, Wallerstein, 1992, Kuokkanen and Leino-Kilpi, 2000). A common notion is that although interests may be clouded they can be clarified, making it possible to pursue realisation of an agent's "real interests". In both health promotion and human resources this notion has been criticised, particularly by contributors inspired by social philosopher Michel Foucault (Boje and Dennehy, 1994, Lupton, 1995, Andrews, 2003). Foucault argued that power is not an institution, not a structure, and not a particular capacity anyone can possess, but a contingent phenomenon presenting itself in relations (Sandmo, 1999). Figuratively he argued the "need to cut off the King's head" (Foucault, 1980: 121), i.e. not identify power with any particular agent. Instead power and knowledge can be seen as intertwined: "((T)here is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1977: 27). The knowledge-power nexus operates through discourses defining some social practices as normal and others as abnormal. By adhering to these standards agents not only exercise power over themselves, but risk contributing to disenfranchisement of those agents attributed abnormal. Power dynamics thus unfold in relationships of opposition; of which "us and them" is a typical example (Bauman, 1990). From this perspective agents do not have genuine "real interests", but exercise power by participating in "discourse formations" they have not decided upon by themselves.

For instance, both health promotion and human resources are "discourse formations" in Foucault's terminology, manifested by production of knowledge (research and practice) and sustained by institutional practices (universities, government agencies, work organisations). It is perfectly possible to argue that both – contrary to what most contributors in health promotion and human resources contend – disempower people by making them conform to the idea that a normal person is an empowered person. Seen like this health promotion and human resources are self-defeating; manipulating instead of facilitating, disciplining instead of emancipating. These concerns are raised fairly frequently in both health promotion and human resources (Lupton (1995) and McDonald (2004) provides balanced discussions within each of these disciplines).

Foucault is but one of several contributors seeing power as mediated through language and communication not mirroring anyone's "real interests" (Engelstad, 1999). Still, power cannot solely be located in social structures such as institutions and language. Agents have to enter the equation, or else power becomes meaningless as a construct for social life. Most contemporary contributors to theories on power do not see it as unilaterally located either in structures or agents, but as mediated in relationships between agents and structures (Clegg, 1989/ 2002, Giddens, 1984, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995, Berger and Luckmann, 1992). The relationship structure-agency is seen as dialectic – with agents and structures mutually influencing each other – not as duality or dichotomy. Hence, emphasis is on power as a process, yet a process that yields products, these products then leading to new processes, with more or less continuous alteration of social realities as a consequence.

Taken together power can be seen as enabling or constraining, as residing in agents or structures or in the relationships between them, and as both a process and an outcome. The sheer complexity of power makes it practically impossible to highlight all its dimensions in any empirical investigation. If assumptions on what dimensions in power an empirical investigation is relevant to are not specified, there is considerable risk of comparing apples and oranges when comparing various research findings. Nevertheless, there are certainly similarities between contributions to the empowerment literature that can be seen as "clusters" of assumptions on power.

Clusters of assumptions on power in health promotion and human resources

The three clusters identified below are derived from extensive reading of the empowerment literature, as part of this research project. They are analytical and should not be confused with any particular approach to empowerment in either health promotion or human resources. They are also highly debatable, as they are developed through interpreting basic assumptions on power in empowerment most often not explicated in the literature. Still, they are relevant to this thesis for a number of reasons: They identify what is generally acceptable as assumptions on power in empowerment in both health promotion and human

resources. They allow specification of how the assumptions on empowerment in this thesis relate to other empowerment approaches. They draw attention to how various assumptions on power are sought integrated in “comprehensive” approaches, as the tailor-made approach highlighted in this thesis is an example of. They also pre-empt the issue of how facilitation of empowerment can come about, which is addressed in chapter 2.2.

Concretely, in both health promotion and human resources the literature suggests that there are three clusters of approaches with markedly different assumptions on what power is, where it is located, and what it accomplishes. These are:

- “Problem-focused”; consisting of approaches emphasising scientific evidence or best-practice for increasing *agents’* (typically individuals’, oftentimes psychological) *power over* influences on their health or performance, and with preferences for observing or measuring *products* such as health status or task performance.
- “Political”; consisting of approaches emphasising *structure* change by increasing *groups’ power to* transform their social realities, and with preferences for *processes* that can yield permanent societal changes in distribution of power.
- “Solution-focused”; consisting of approaches emphasising meso- or settings-level (typically a community or a work organisation), displaying great variation with regards to understandings of what power is, where it is located and what it accomplishes, but often eclectic in combining perspectives in order to generate solutions to various issues in a concrete setting.

Evidently these categories are painted with broad strokes, but especially the tensions between the first two clusters are acknowledged in both disciplines. In health promotion it has been described as “a withering crossfire between the more-rigorous-than-thou rhetoric from the radically reductionist, scientific wing of health promotion on one side and the more-equitable-than-thou rhetoric of the politically correct wing on the other” (Green, 1998: vii). In parallel, within human resources there is conflict between approaches seeing empowerment as a management tool for modifying employee behaviour, and the tradition

of Industrial Democracy emphasising changes in power structures regulating the employer-employee relation (Boje and Rosile, 2001).

There are also similarities in how these clusters have evolved and competed in the two disciplines. In health promotion the construct “lifestyle” gained prominence in the 1970’ies (Lalonde, 1974). It highlighted that major health problems in the Western hemisphere in the post-WWII era could be ascribed to how citizens chose to live (“diseases of affluence”), and not to infectious diseases or living conditions which up till then had been dominating population health concerns. Education on lifestyle related issues – built on evidence-based research and other forms of expertise – was utilised to empower citizens in the sense of exhorting them to take more control over their lifestyles. This approach was soon criticised for “blaming the victim”, i.e. the individual citizen whose choices are restricted by cultural and societal factors like for instance class (Raeburn and Rootman, 1998). International political statements and declarations on health promotion from the 1980’ies onwards instead supported a “social model” of health, with emphasis on political interventions for building healthy public policy; creating supportive environments; strengthening community action; developing personal skills; and reorienting health services (Ottawa-charter, 1986). The past decade both the lifestyle and the social model approaches have had considerable support in public health policy, where elements from the two for instance are sought integrated to combat “the big five” risk factors – tobacco, alcohol, cholesterol, hypertension and obesity – for disease (Stortingsmelding 16 (2002-2003)). How these approaches coexist is further addressed in chapter 2.2.

By analogy concerns for individuals’ empowerment in organisation disciplines like human resources also emanated from the “diseases of affluence” in the 1970’ies and 1980’ies, albeit in a different form. The strong economic growth in the Western hemisphere in the post-WWII era gave little impetus to produce efficiently, and especially industry based on mass production grew “obese” with multiple production sites and increasing numbers of employees in specialist functions. The call for “lean production” was fuelled by the combination of economic decline and Japanese success particularly in the auto industry (Babson, 1995). Whereas Western industry was highly influenced by Frederick Taylor’s (1911) maxim of removing all possible brain work from the shop floor by achieving maximum

specialisation of tasks, Japanese industry more often had cross-trained production workers rotating jobs, being organised in teams with responsibilities for larger segments of production processes than their Western colleagues. Defects were identified and corrected immediately, and there was less need for (among other things) repair units, storage facilities, inspection or maintenance personnel; resulting in “lean production”. It was argued that Japanese employees were more empowered and therefore also more motivated, and that Western industry should follow suit (Peters and Waterman, 1980). The idea of empowering employees quickly stuck on and sparked a lot of optimism, because it seemed to accomplish two things at once: Both maximization of efficiency and humanisation of work, by way of exhorting employees to take control over their work environments and use their creativity to its full potential (Womack et al., 1990).

As in health promotion the emphasis on individual level behaviour change was soon criticised for failing to recognise how social structures may impede empowerment (Parker and Slaughter, 1995). It was observed that employers still retained fundamental control of overall production processes, and without more collective worker control (by way of ownership or unions) it was questionable if employees were empowered at all (Babson, 1995). Even more severely, it could be argued that lean production exploited employees, because they had to take on more responsibilities and be under constant pressure to produce more efficiently. “The effects of recession and widespread redundancy may have meant that organizational survivors simply have more work to do, and the (cynical) label for this is that they have become empowered” (Morrell and Wilkinson, 2002: 121).

Consequently, in both disciplines there are tensions between approaches on the one hand emphasising evidence or best-practice for enabling or exhorting individuals to increase power over decisions and actions in their lives so as to realise specific outcomes, and on the other hand approaches emphasising structural change for groups of people to increase their capacity to pursue their interests. These similarities may well reflect underlying trends, as they can be found in other disciplines too. This is an interesting phenomenon, but not discussed further here because it is of marginal relevance to the research issues and questions raised in this thesis.

The labels “problem-focused” and “political” are roughly consistent with mainstream approaches in both health promotion and human resources. As already inferred approaches from these clusters can be in conflict (Babson, 1995, Green, 1998), but as noted both in health promotion (Mittelmark, 1999) and human resources (Spreitzer and Doneson, 2005) they more often coexist with little interaction between them. In both disciplines a few but notable contributors have tried to bridge the schisms. For instance; in health promotion Raeburn and Rootman (1998) have explicitly positioned their “People-Centred Health Promotion” as a third way, emphasising interaction between people and meso- and macro-structures. Furthermore; Tones and Tilford (2001) have developed an empowerment model indicating how system change through “healthy public policy” can be combined with “health education” aimed at individual and group behaviour in an integrated effort for health promotion.

Similarities between clusters of empowerment approaches in health promotion and human resources go even further. The third cluster identified above was labelled “Solution-focused”. It typically refers to projects operating in or between settings where people interact on a regular basis (communities, work organisations, cities, hospitals, schools and so on). To some extent conflicts between political and problem-focused approaches are materialised here, with initiatives tailored to serve either purpose. However, in concrete settings both approaches face similar challenges, e.g. in health promotion experts often have to participate with lay people on organising their activities (Mittelmark, 1999). More generally, small-scale projects in concrete settings will often *combine* elements from various approaches depending on objectives and circumstances. This is evident in both health promotion and human resources. Emphasis is typically not on realising political or scientific ideals, but on “what works” in order to realise agreed upon objectives. This is particularly true when outside consultants are commissioned to assist change processes. Small-scale projects may have confusing and conflicting understandings of what power is, where it is located, and what it accomplishes. Still they provide fertile ground for empirical investigation of how various assumptions manifest in practice.

Alas, contributions from such projects to theory development on empowerment are scarce and downplayed in favour of highly descriptive accounts of unique projects. Alternatively,

emphasis is on developing approaches increasing the probability of realising objectives that a priori are deemed desirable, whether they are “scientific” or “political”. As such, the most problematic schism is probably not that between “radically reductionist scientific” and “politically correct” wings, but between empowerment theory and practice. Without more extensive “testing” of theoretical assumptions in practice – as opposed to taking desirability for granted – it will be difficult to develop substantial bodies of knowledge on empowerment in either health promotion or human resources, let alone in the intersections between the two. This thesis is intended as a small contribution to this challenge, as specified below.

Basic assumptions on power in empowerment in this thesis

From the presentation of the tailor-made approach (TMA) in chapter 1 it should be evident that the research highlighted in this thesis builds on assumptions on power consistent with the cluster “solution-focus”. There was no pre-determined approach to any specific dimension in power. Instead there was an eclectic approach in which perspectives were combined and in a sense “activated” based on what proved to be important to increase employees’ self-determination in DOAS as a setting. Precisely the understanding of DOAS as a “setting” was important. DOAS was a work organisation, and there would thus be other opportunities and limitations for self-determination than for instance in settings like communities or families. In chapter 1 it was argued that “mandates” in effect determine the scope of employees’ self-determination in work organisations. It was also indicated that one of the features separating “autonomy” from “empowerment” in work organisations is the level of decision making authority, i.e. whether or not employees participate in decisions on what objectives the organisation should pursue, how it should be organised to do so, and how changes in daily work practices are initiated and sustained.

These three levels of decision making authority are reflected in a fairly abstract theory on power developed by sociologist Stewart Clegg (1989/ 2002), later specified for use in work organisations by Boje and Rosile (2001). Using a system metaphor Clegg separates between three circuits power operates through:

- “Episodic”, meaning power as it is actualised when people engage in day-to-day interactions.
- “Dispositional”, meaning power as embedded in socially constructed rules, mental maps and blueprints.
- “Facilitative”, meaning power as comprised of systems of reward and punishment, systems of technology, and environmental contingencies.

These circuits can be ordered on a scale from micro (episodic) via meso (dispositional) to macro (facilitative) levels, and Clegg postulates “obligatory passage points” where these levels interact. For instance; use of episodic power can be legitimised by existing rules and mental maps on what is desirable within the organisation (dispositional level), or by interpreting how political and public expectations should be understood (facilitative level). It is evident employees have varying degrees of control over these passage points. Clegg infers that empowerment or disempowerment will occur depending on how control over passage points change over time. He also infers that to obtain such control there has to be organisation, i.e. collaboration in order to change rules, mental maps, systems of rewards and punishment, technology, etc.

Somewhat simplified compared with Clegg’s constructs the terminology used in this thesis (elaborated upon in chapter 2.3) is “daily work practices” (instead of “episodic”), “organising” (instead of “dispositional”) and “prioritising” (instead of facilitative). In other words; employees can increase their scope of self-determination by participating in decisions on prioritising (what objectives the work organisation should pursue), organising (how – formally and informally – to collaborate to pursue objectives), and daily work practices (how specific tasks should be conducted). Instead of “obligatory passage points” the construct used in this thesis is “meeting-places”, meaning forums where employees interact in decision making processes. The idea of “obligatory” connections between different levels of decision making correspond well with what employees often experience, for instance that changes in daily work practices are difficult to sustain unless they are accompanied by changes in organising and priorities. Highlighting how power operates at

different yet inter-connected levels in a work organisation, also provides a theoretical rationale for emphasising *collaboration* as a vehicle for employee empowerment.

The approach taken in this thesis is to examine how collaboration between employees across levels and units in the organisation on decision making influences DOAS' priorities, organisation, and daily work practices. Alterations in practices are fairly easy to document, and thus form the basis for empirical analysis of "the power in empowerment" in this concrete case. Alterations in practice following changes in power dynamics can also be assessed for employee health and organisation performance consequences.

In addition the concept of "boundaries" is central to the understanding of power in empowerment in this thesis. Evidently there are many boundaries influencing employees' practices in a work organisation, e.g. resources like economy or competence, formal decision making authority, politically sanctioned laws and by-laws, expectations from clients and citizens in general, and more. The practices of employees influence such boundaries, and open up for an interesting perspective on power: "(I)f power is the capacity to act upon boundaries that affect one's life, to broaden those boundaries does not always mean to delimit those of others. In this sense power may have a synergistic element, such that action by some enables more action by others" (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001: 72). Seen like this "freedom is the capacity to act on these boundaries to participate effectively in shaping the boundaries that define for them the field of what is possible" (Hayward, 1998: 12). The possibility to "act upon boundaries that affect one's life" is in a nutshell what was suggested to the participants in the tailor-made approach, as will become more evident later in this thesis.

Taken together, the ambition with the TMA was to increase employees' *power to act on boundaries* so as to alter work practices in ways generating "power with" and a win-win situation for them and for major stakeholders (employees, clients, owners (politicians)), seeing the relationship between *agents* (employees) and *structure* (the work organisation) as dynamic and in flux (hence possible to change through a constructive organisation learning-action research approach), yielding *outcomes* manifested as changes in DOAS' priorities, organisation and daily work practices.

Admittedly these points are somewhat abstract, but they will be examined more concretely in empirical analyses in later chapters. For now emphasis remains on theoretical issues. In the next chapter section implications for *facilitation* of empowerment are discussed. Assumptions on how power can be altered (i.e. facilitation) are closely related to the clusters of assumptions on power discussed in this chapter section.

2.2 Facilitation of empowerment

In chapter 2.1 it was suggested that facilitation of empowerment will vary depending on assumptions on what power is, where it is located, and what it accomplishes. Given the prerogative of self-determination in empowerment, it is evident that a facilitator has to practice in ways increasing facilitatees' (those facilitated for) opportunities to decide for themselves. The issue then becomes how can this be accomplished? Because people can only empower themselves no act intended to facilitate can guarantee empowerment as an outcome (and conversely any act can empower irrespective of intentions), but this does not mean that any or all facilitation practices have equal worth irrespective of circumstances. Because power is a multidimensional phenomenon it is reasonable to assume that self-determination can increase in relation to some issues, but remain unchanged or diminish in relation to others. Furthermore, it is quite likely that specific facilitation practices will work as intended in some instances, and yield unintended consequences in others.

Facilitation of empowerment is thus not an easy task, and – as will be clarified below – requires a spectrum of competencies. To the Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) facilitation was a particularly challenging issue because the tailor-made approach (TMA) was a mixture of ideas on how to facilitate employee empowerment: Using CHPS' expertise in developing and carrying out the course, being assistants to DOAS' workplace development projects, and being advocates for seeing employee health and organisation performance as two intertwined dimensions in work practice that should be given equal weight.

Although the complexity in facilitation is far greater than can be captured in any model, the clusters of empowerment approaches depicted in chapter 2.1 can be helpful also in this context. From each of the three clusters it is possible to identify "ideal-types" for facilitation of empowerment, which – as will be returned to later – all were relevant to analyse CHPS' approach to facilitation in the TMA. "Ideal" in this context does not mean normatively superior, but "abstract" in the sense of exaggerating certain observable features in order to form a coherent model of what is "typically" present in the real world (Weber, 1971, Abercrombie et al., 1988). All features of an ideal-type will not always be present in concrete

cases, and so the ideal-type does not claim to represent all instances of facilitation. Instead it serves as an analytical tool for comparing various instances of what could roughly be determined as variations of the same phenomenon.

Table 2.1 Ideal-types for facilitation of empowerment

Ideal type:	Problem-focused	Politician	Solution-focused
Dimension:			
Aim/ objective	Behavioural change	Policy/ system change	Capacity building
Point of entry	Issues	Decision making processes	Settings
Typical area of interest	Minimise risks and deficits	Healthy public policy/ Industrial Democracy	Community Development/ Organisation learning
Dominant activity	Intervention	Lobbying	Collaboration
Legitimised by/ as	Evidence-based/ expert knowledge	Ideologies	Help to self-help
Role of facilitator	Technician	Advocate	Assistant
Language mode	Didactic	Rhetoric	Dialog
Perspective on participation	Persuasion	Mobilising	Voluntarism
Power dimension highlighted	Episodic (daily work practices)	Facilitative (deciding priorities)	Dispositional (organising)

It is important not to confuse these ideal-types with any specific approach to facilitation of empowerment in either health promotion or human resources. They are inductively developed as an analytical tool from an extensive but by no means a conclusive reading of the literature on empowerment, and they are both contestable and open to modifications. Still, it should be fairly easy to see each of them as providing images of typical ways of practicing facilitation.

The first type is here termed “Problem-focused”, and depicts a facilitator aiming at behavioural change in relation to specific issues. The facilitator develops an intervention based on evidence or expert knowledge, and becomes a technician in the sense of utilising the most efficient means available to realise a priori defined objectives. The preferred

language mode is didactic, aiming at educating and persuading individuals in the target group to take up certain behaviours. The perspective on power is typically episodic (see chapter 2.1), emphasising how power can be exercised by individuals or groups in situations or settings. Examples from health promotion close to this ideal-type are programs developed to combat specific risks or health hazards either issue-based (like tobacco, obesity etc) or population-based (like adolescents, unemployed, etc). For an overview of such programs see IUHPE (2000). Examples from human resources close to this ideal-type are interventions developed to increase employees' abilities in relation to specific work tasks or challenges. For an overview of such interventions see Spreitzer and Doneson (2005).

The second ideal-type for facilitation of empowerment is here termed "Politician", and depicts a facilitator aiming at policy or system change through decision making processes, thus typically interested in (for health promotion:) healthy public policy or (for human resources:) industrial democracy. The facilitator lobbies and is an advocate for specific political values and ideologies. The preferred language mode is rhetoric, aiming at mobilising people to support the cause. The perspective on power is typically facilitative (see chapter 2.1), emphasising how power is exercised through decision-making on priorities and objectives.

The third ideal-type for facilitation of empowerment is here termed "Solution-focused", and depicts a facilitator aiming at capacity-building in settings, thus typically interested in (for health promotion:) community development or (for human resources:) organisation learning. The facilitator aims for collaboration with those residing within the setting in order to help them help themselves, and as such becomes an assistant who responds to self-defined needs within the setting. The preferred language mode is dialog, aimed at increasing peoples' awareness of own problems and resources; insisting on their participation being voluntary. The perspective on power is typically dispositional (see chapter 2.1), emphasising how power relations become manifest in practice and formal or informal organisations.

Of course this typology is not original in a strict sense. For instance, the three ideal-types can be seen as roughly consistent with Habermas' typology on knowledge-constituting interests as either technical (here problem-focused), understanding (here solution-focused), or

emancipatory (here politician) (Habermas, 1972). More prosaic and directly relevant to this thesis the model depicts the types of activities undertaken by CHPS in DOAS, namely education (problem-focused), consultancy (solution-focused), and advocacy for health promotion values (political). The typology directs attention to what characterises various approaches to facilitation, but perhaps most challenging is the issue of how they can be related to each other or combined. First though it has to be established whether or not all three ideal-types identify legitimate practices for facilitation of empowerment.

Is one facilitation type preferable to the others?

The model in effect claims that facilitation of empowerment can be conducted by engaging in markedly different sets of activities, aiming at different objectives that are relevant to different dimensions in power. It is clearly possible to argue that the typology is wrong, asserting that one or two of the ideal-types are not consistent with empowerment. As noted in chapter 2.1 there is polarisation in both health promotion and human resources because contributors give a priori preference to a particular scientific approach or a particular political ideology.

For instance, it is not uncommon in the empowerment literature to find recommendations that facilitators should nourish certain behaviours in order to stimulate facilitatee's self-determination. Within the health field it has been argued that "nurses need such attributes as courage, commitment, intuitive understanding, flexibility, an appreciation of diversity, tolerance, co-operativeness, a willingness to compromise and empathy" (Gibson, 1991: 358). Within social work Starrin (2007) argues that empowerment is about creating positive emotional states by talking and acting in particular ways, in order to allow people to come forward with what they want, with empowerment as anti-thesis of paternalism. Especially the "problem-oriented" ideal-type in model 3.1 is difficult to reconcile with such assertions.

It is obviously legitimate and for many purposes fruitful to delimit empowerment and facilitation thereof as Gibson, Starrin and many others do. Still, when commitment is towards a specific ideal for facilitation – partly as opposed to the ideal of increasing

facilitatees' scope for self-determination – there is risk of involuntarily committing an “instrumentalist fallacy” (Skjervheim, 2001). For instance, when seeing facilitatees as incapable of shielding themselves from a facilitator's expertise and speaking their minds unless the facilitator is tolerant and empathic irrespective of circumstances, they can also be seen as incapable of interacting on equal terms with the facilitator. They become objects that have to be treated delicately, instead of people who have opinions on issues, and sometimes make rational and sometimes irrational decisions like – indeed – the facilitator him- or herself. This does not mean that behaving respectfully, tolerant, empathic and so on is wrong, but if facilitatees' increased self-determination is the overall objective it can – depending on circumstances – be more useful if the facilitator acts as an expert or an advocate than as an assistant. It is as easy to imagine a problem-focused approach yielding emancipation from exploitation (e.g. by providing employees insights in their judicial rights), as it is to imagine a solution-focused approach yielding exploitation (e.g. by assisting employees in seeing their interests as compatible with that of the employer's when they are not).

Probably most common in professional practice throughout the public sector are more or less conscious changes between ways of facilitating; sometimes providing expertise, sometimes stimulating people to generate their own solutions, and sometimes advocating values. Professionals (in their capacities as facilitators for clients) are not necessarily aware of when they engage in what practice, and obviously run the risk for instance of acting as experts in situations where acting as assistants would be more conducive to empowerment. As will become evident from chapter 6 onwards CHPS also found the “when do what” issue challenging in the TMA.

The challenge of changing between ways of facilitating empowerment is probably most acknowledged among professionals trying to facilitate community empowerment, i.e. “communities with the capacity for solving problems, developing support structures, and increasing access to resources” (Wallerstein et al., 1999). Professionals then practice in the interface between public services and communities, for instance trying to develop community organisation, meaning “the process by which community groups are helped to identify common problems or goals, mobilize resources, and in other ways develop and

implement strategies for reaching the goals they collectively have set” (Minkler and Wallerstein, 1999: 30). In extensive collaboration with citizens in a community the facilitator is in effect an *assistant* offering *expert* advice throughout the entire process, with the explicit intention of *advocating* emancipation of citizens from impediments. The facilitator does not stick with a fixed role, but changes own practices depending on the situation at hand, i.e. what dimension in power is relevant at any given time. The three ideal-types depicted in table 2.1 should thus not be seen as role descriptions, but as something else.

Frames, not roles for facilitation

An important consequence of this line of reasoning is that the ideal-types can be seen more as frames than as roles, in the sense outlined by sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). When defining a situation people explicitly or tacitly address questions like what is happening here, who are we now, in what capacity do we encounter each other, what should we expect of each other? A shared definition of the situation constitutes a frame, and without frames interaction would fall apart (Aakvaag, 2008). Depending on how the situation is defined either of the frames in table 2.1 (or others) can be relevant. Seeing ideal-types as frames makes facilitation a dynamic relationship between two parties altering practices depending on explicit or tacit agreement on the situation they are in. Instead of sticking to a role the facilitator switches between frames, with commitment predominantly to facilitatees’ self-determination and consequences thereof. Emphasising how situations are defined has direct implications for understanding of tailoring in this thesis, i.e. tailoring can here be seen as alterations in definitions of situations; for instance when CHPS-employees alternate between being experts, advocates and assistants.

It could reasonably be argued that because self-determination is crucial to empowerment, facilitatees must be able to define the situation at own discretion. This means that the facilitatees’ expectations to what will occur in the relationship must be emphasised. The facilitator must be prepared to switch between frames based on the facilitatees’ preferences, or – if in disagreement – must be prepared to engage in dialog with the facilitatees on how the situation should be defined. Qualities like courage, commitment,

intuitive understanding, flexibility, appreciation of diversity, tolerance, co-operativeness, willingness to compromise, empathy and so on will clearly be helpful when it is problematic to define a situation, but more fundamentally the challenge is to engage in open-ended dialog on the issues confronting the facilitator and the facilitatee, as neither side have an a priori access to the truth about how the situation could best be understood or approached. Instead solutions have to be developed, or “constructed”, in dialog. Such dialog contains considerable potential for abuse of power, as will be addressed later in this chapter section. What is more common though, is that people do their utmost not to offend each other, maintaining and protecting each others’ respectability and dignity with demeanour characterised by deference (Goffman, 1992), seeking consensus and compromise. As will become evident particularly in chapters 6 and 7 this was also the case in the tailor-made approach DOAS and CHPS collaborated on.

Combining or blurring facilitation frames?

It is evident that many approaches combine practices compatible with the ideal-types more as a rule than as an exception, like multi-level or comprehensive interventions. Comprehensive approaches will typically give one change ambition preference, but have to go “outside the box” at least on occasion. For instance; a comprehensive intervention for behavioural change will typically seek to engage in partnership with others, or seek to mobilise political support for the intervention, and conversely a comprehensive intervention for capacity building will typically provide training or other forms of didactic or technical interventions to increase likelihood of realising objectives. In this way facilitation provides a bridge between seemingly diverse approaches to empowerment, because they have similar experiences and challenges in practicing facilitation proficiently.

Several contributors to empowerment in health promotion emphasise how facilitation of empowerment combines bottom-up initiatives with top-down support (for instance Labonte, 1994, Restrepo, 2000, Tones and Tilford, 2001, Laverack, 2004). The same idea is prevalent in human resources, where for instance organisation learning based in action research principles is used to stimulate dialog between stakeholders in a work organisation, so as to

combine initiatives bottom-up with top-down authority to create sustainable organisation changes (for instance Engelstad, 1995, Levin and Klev, 2002).

Does this mean that it is always a good thing to combine ideal-types for facilitation? The examples provided thus far certainly indicate that combining frames may be necessary to practice facilitation proficiently. The challenge is not always one of obtaining clean hands (adhering to principles that follow logically from scientific evidence or a political program), but to know when and how to combine frames so as to increase likelihood of realising objectives in a setting (“when do what”). However, blur can definitely occur when practical relevance is paramount too, for instance by not acknowledging didactic and technical elements in a partnership approach, or by not acknowledging lobbying and advocacy in a problem-focused approach. Failure to acknowledge inconsistencies will definitely yield less valid research, and can also constitute ethical problems in practice, for instance because of discrepancy between intention and practice.

It is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to assess blur in concrete projects or public policies generally, yet relevant to raise a concern: Policy documents often combine what is seen as desirable from either approach; in health promotion for instance social change for disenfranchised groups being paired with individual level behaviour change assisted by rhetoric of partnerships (as in a Norwegian white paper on public health (Stortingsmelding 16 (2002-2003))). In organisation development for instance delegation of decision making authority being paired with stronger emphasis on individual performance indicators assisted by rhetoric of partnerships (as in the strategic plan for the municipal organisation DOAS is part of, see chapter 4). There is much optimism in such claims, and they may be warranted. However, change ambitions associated with “politician”, “problem-focus” and “solution-focus” can certainly be in conflict too. It is probably not a credible solution to develop policies with rhetoric “as if” all concerns (like behaviour modification, emancipation, and collaboration) always can be catered for concurrently. Somewhat paradoxically and inadvertently all-encompassing policies may fuel conflict because different interest groups may use different policy elements to support their cause.

Seen from a practice-oriented perspective, it is strikingly rare to find serious discussions on combinations or blurs in facilitation practices. It may be stretching the argument too far, but this can perhaps be accounted for by a commonality between problem-focused and political approaches: In both it is taken for granted that facilitation is benevolent – it is about doing things right to get the right things done – and facilitation only becomes an issue when the facilitator falls out of character; for instance manipulates in a political endeavour to emancipate disenfranchised, or provides different input to different members of a target-group in interventions aimed at solving problems. Although speculative the “taken-for-grantedness” of many empowerment approaches could certainly account for why there is little interest in discussing facilitation seriously. Specifying qualities or behaviours a facilitator should adopt irrespective of circumstances do not, however, attune well to the idea of empowerment as self-determination. It may very well be that facilitatees want something from outside a pre-defined repertoire. Seen like this facilitation is a major challenge indeed, as different frames require different competencies and resources from the facilitator.

Power issues in the facilitation relationship

Irrespective of how facilitation of empowerment is approached power in the relationship between a facilitator and a facilitatee will always be an issue. The very basis for the relationship is differences in access to resources in one form or another. Both parties have some things to offer and other things to gain. A facilitator of empowerment invariably legitimises his or her involvement as altruistic; it is about helping others. Precisely because of this common intention no facilitation practice in the vicinity of either of the ideal-types can completely absolve itself from paternalism; each propose solutions to what is seen as others’ problems.

There are also some more or less obvious pitfalls that may make the facilitation relationship paradoxical, i.e. disempowering despite intentions of the opposite. Examples include:

- “Empowerment-paradox”, when actions intended to help others become independent creates a relationship of dependency (Slettebø, 2000, Gruber and Trickett, 1987).
- “Facipulation”; using facilitation to manipulate a desired outcome, e.g. making employees do what their company wants them to do, while making the employees think it's their idea (Conway, 2006).
- “Coercive persuasion”, meaning absence of viable alternatives to the facilitator’s preferences, for instance if employees fear consequences of not accepting increased control at the workplace (Schein, 1999).

These outcomes can occur despite the best intentions of facilitators, i.e. it is not the intentions of facilitators that determine outcomes of empowerment processes. The reason for this is simple: It is facilitatees who interpret and thereby in effect determine quality of such processes. What the facilitator can do is to try and address power issues as part of the facilitation. This can be done for instance through dialog and critical consciousness raising (Freire, 1973). Alas, this does not necessarily solve the issue. Whether or not dialog is possible and if so what it can accomplish is highly contested within social sciences, with on the one hand Habermas’ theory of communicative action suggesting the possibility of power-free dialog making the best argument prevail even in normative disputes (Habermas, 1999, Kalleberg, 1999), and on the other hand contributors like Lyotard (1996) and Luhmann (1998) altogether dismissing the possibility of reaching genuine consensus or power-free dialog (Ulvestad, 2003).

Because of the complexity of this issue there is risk of involuntarily making the whole empowerment process revolve around the relationship between facilitators and facilitatees, in a sort of “running to stand still” type of movement. Probably the best one can do is to acknowledge own interests as much as possible, communicate them, and subject them to criticism both for relevance and for how they materialise in practice. Still, as shown by Bourdieu and others (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995, Solli, 1994) it is notoriously difficult to determine one’s own position and interests. The morale seems to be that power – also in relationships of facilitation – has to be analysed empirically.

Taken together, CHPS' assumption was that facilitation would be most relevant to facilitatees' self-determination if the facilitator was prepared to switch between frames, depending on how the situation was defined. When, as in this case, the facilitatees' objectives were improved health and performance, it would be more relevant to stay committed to these objectives than to a particular role. Still, CHPS assumed that "assistant" would be the most appropriate frame from the outset of the TMA, because DOAS-employees were to develop workplace development projects based on their own discretion, and engage in learning processes covering many months. As will be analysed in chapters 6 and 7 this assumption was not necessarily correct.

2.3 Organisation learning for employee empowerment processes

In chapter 1.4 organisation learning was posited as the engine for employee empowerment processes investigated in this thesis. The proposition was that employees should engage in such learning in order to increase control over their work practices, because they – given the backdrop of flexibility and expectations to do more for less – are mutually dependent of each other to initiate and sustain changed practice. This proposition was given a theoretical rationale in chapter 2.1, by highlighting how employees engage in decision making at various levels in the organisation, and have to interact in “meeting places” (obligatory passage points) to change power relations and sustain changes in work practices.

There are many different approaches to organisation learning, and the objective with this chapter section is to clarify the approach taken in this thesis. As will become evident CHPS suggested a vocabulary for organisation learning to DOAS. The vocabulary comprises concepts for activities employees typically engage in, but often are unaware of, when they engage in practices relevant to organisation learning. The vocabulary can be related to decision making on three levels, i.e. prioritising (defining objectives), organising, and changing daily work practices, roughly corresponding to the three “power circuits” addressed in chapter 2.1 (Clegg, 1989/ 2002, Boje and Rosile, 2001). The vocabulary was based in an understanding of organisation learning that has to be clarified before it is presented. The theoretical assumptions highlighted here are relevant to the tailor-made approach CHPS intended as a framework for supporting organisation learning, but the rationale for this framework is not addressed until chapter 5.

The concept of organisation learning

The notion of organisation learning is not new. As pointed out by Laiken (2001) it goes back at least to the beginning of the industrial revolution. Still, when the highly influential organisation learning theorists Argyris and Schön in their second major book on the subject (Argyris and Schön, 1995), reflected on the reception of their first major book (Argyris and Schön, 1978), they could identify considerable changes over the interim period: Whereas the

very idea of organisation learning had been confusing to most scholars in the late 1970ies, by the mid-1990ies it had become conventional wisdom that organisations have to learn to adapt to changing environments. This change in understanding had to do with the development commented in chapter 1 in this thesis, with stable mass-production being replaced by flexible production both in private and public sectors. In order to succeed when flexibility is an imperative work organisations have to “draw lessons from past successes and failures, detect and correct the errors of the past, anticipate and respond to impending threats, conduct experiments, engage in continuing innovation, build and realize images of a desirable future” (Argyris and Schön, 1995: xvii).

Whereas organisation learning was a marginal phenomenon three decades ago, it is now common to think of work organisations as presenting employees with a “learning imperative”. Contrary to positive assertions of opportunities to create a desirable future it has been argued that “the required generative learning process is coercively imposed on most of the managers and employees which puts them into a situation comparable to the prisoner in a political prison” (Schein, 1999: 163). The comparison with “political prison” is probably meant as a provocation towards the many contributors who are panegyric about potential benefits of organisation learning. Still, Schein’s assertion is an important reminder that organisation learning – especially when it cannot be averted – may contradict self-determination and thereby also employee empowerment.

Organisation learning is basically about learning how to deal with change as an ongoing phenomenon, not as a one-off or project. For instance, a work organisation like DOAS experiences frequent reforms initiated by government, changes in organisational structures and access to resources initiated by the municipality, changes in employees (due to turnover) and in clients (due to changes in cohorts and mobility of people moving in and out of the municipality). Because the work organisation is in flux there is need for continuous adjustments, and learning how and what adjustments to make is the crux. Organisation learning typically becomes manifest in incremental changes in work practices. It is thus more “from practice to structures” than vice versa; generating more than implementing new practices.

The concept “organisation learning” does not imply that the organisation is a subject that learns, i.e. it does not imply methodological collectivism or a collective consciousness (which are not viable assumptions from a theory of social sciences perspective (Gilje and Grimen, 1993)). Instead it is learning through interaction that is implied. “Learning is an activity of interdependent people (...) Individuals cannot learn in isolation and organisations can never learn” (Stacey, 2003: abstract). Employees in a work organisation have different roles that enable them to learn on behalf of the organisation. Their learning experiences are important not only to themselves, but to all affected by their work practices. When colleagues share and reflect on their experiences they engage in collaborative learning processes, which in turn motivate changes in the work organisation’s practices.

Organisation learning is not confined to particular “areas” or “levels” of learning. For instance, it can be “single-loop” changing work practices without changing underlying theories of what is valuable, or “double-loop” where individuals and organisations address desirability of the norms that govern what they see as valuable, also referred to as their “theories-in-use” (Argyris and Schön, 1995). In addition it is a crucial challenge for organisations to “learn how to learn”. This type of learning is also called “deuterolearning” (Bateson, 1972), or “triple-loop learning” (Snell and Chak, 1998). Learning can thus be centred on implications of existing rules for work practices, on changing such rules, or on learning about learning.

In addition to changes in contemporary work life associated with flexible production, two other developments have stimulated a significant growth in the field of organisation learning: Scholars from many disciplines have taken an interest in the phenomenon, and many see the potential for commercial use through consultancy (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). Because of widespread interest in organisational learning the concept has been conceptually fragmented, and in a sense an interdisciplinary meeting place between scholars. Because of the potential for commercial use a large quantity of templates and recipes – many following the trajectory of Peter Senge’s (1990) work on “learning organisation” – have been developed. As a consequence the meanings attributed to “organisation learning” vary considerably, and a review of organisational learning theory

found that “learning from experience” is the only feature common to most understandings (Prange, 1999).

One way of categorising approaches to organisation learning is to distinguish between a “technical” and a “social” perspective (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). The technical perspective emphasises how organisations can increase efficiency in processing information, for instance by how they follow or change rules for production. The social perspective emphasises how people make sense of their experiences at work. In so doing they use “artefacts”, not only material ones but also constructs, that become “vehicles of thought” (Salomon, 1993). Because such “artefacts” or “vehicles” vary considerably between work organisations, the meaning of “organisation learning” will vary between organisations. Whereas the technical perspective is compatible with applying recipes for organisation learning, the social perspectives sees each work organisation— at least in principle and at least to some extent – as having unique prerequisites for learning. Argyris and Schön (1995) emphasise that *productive* organisation learning, i.e. learning conducive to objectives, is particular to each work organisation. They argue that organisation learning has to be specified in each particular context, and that it cannot be put on formula or captured in recipes intended for use in a wide variety of organisations. In other words, employees have to engage with their productive capabilities and address issues that are specific to their settings.

Organisation learning and action research

To Argyris and Schön research on organisation learning “must take the form of action research that aims at generalizable understandings of organizational phenomena through the attempt, in collaboration with practitioners, to *produce* the rare event associated with productive organizational learning” (Argyris and Schön, 1995: xxii). The approach taken in this thesis is consistent with this view on the relationship between organisation learning and action research. In effect action research – systematic cycles of planning, acting and evaluating ongoing experiences – is what drives the organisation learning processes. Learning outcomes have to be *made* conducive to objectives through repeated attempts to

“get it right”. Because work organisations experience ongoing changes, there is a continuous flow of learning opportunities, i.e. opportunities to develop new practice.

When organisation learning is seen as an ongoing, social phenomenon fairly specific to each work organisation, and necessary to conduct proficiently to realise desired objectives, it is relevant to argue that organisation learning requires organisational structures, in parallel with how daily work practices require organisational structures. Whereas structures for daily work practices typically are created to increase likelihood of specific outcomes, structures for organisation learning can be created to increase the quality of learning processes. This idea has been followed up on by the Norwegian Work Research Institute (WRI), whose concept “development organisation” has been applied in various work organisations throughout Scandinavia (Engelstad and Gustavsen, 1993, Engelstad, 1995, Pålshaugen, 2001). The basic idea is to make a distinction between operational tasks or “daily work” (Pålshaugen, 2001) on the one hand, and various tasks associated with trying to improve – learn from and develop – how daily work is carried out. WRI’s favoured approach has been dialog conferences, so as to enable learning and development through exchange of opinions and ideas across management levels and layers in work organisations. Central to WRI has also been the idea of creating a “backstage”, in which employees can reflect on their daily work experiences, without having to produce specific outcomes (Berg and Eikeland, 1997). The idea of establishing a structure for organisation learning and development was central in CHPS’ tailor-made approach as well, although “gatherings” were used instead of “conferences”, the implications of which will be discussed later in this thesis.

Having a structure for organisation learning is one thing, but there are also issues of what to address and how to do it. As will become evident in the next paragraphs CHPS presented DOAS with a vocabulary for organisation learning, which was intended to increase awareness of how DOAS decided on objectives and made priorities; how DOAS organised to pursue its objectives, and how DOAS practiced when aiming to implement changes in daily work practices.

A vocabulary for organisation learning

CHPS was very much influenced by one of the tenets in action research, being we (outside agents) suggest, you (people residing within the setting) decide (McNiff, 1990). For instance, the course in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” provided DOAS with many perspectives and methodologies they could try out – or not – based on own discretion. Implementing specific tools or recipes for change would be contrary to ideals of both employee empowerment (self-determination), organisation learning and action research. CHPS therefore did not apply a “tool’s perspective”, but a “tool-box perspective”, inasmuch as tools were provided but it was up to DOAS-employees to decide what tools to apply and how to use them.

This line of reasoning was central also to CHPS’ ideas on how issues of relevance to organisation learning should be addressed. In effect a number of concepts were suggested, but DOAS-employees had to decide whether or not they made sense to them. This was all the more reasonable as it is an acknowledged challenge for external agents and members of a work organisation to develop a common language, for instance to bridge “theoretical perspectives” and “practical experiences” (Gustavsen, 2001). Most of the concepts used in the vocabulary are everyday phrases taking on specific meanings in the context of organisation learning.

The vocabulary below was intended as a set of “sensitising concepts”, i.e. concepts developed and used to give “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look” (Blumer, 1954: 7). Sensitising concepts condense meaning from similar empirical instances, as was the case here. They can be related just as much to theory as to practice. More importantly they transcend a dualistic understanding of theory and practice, as they are developed through “theoretical” reflections on “practical” experience, motivating both theory development and empirical investigation, not that dissimilar to ideal-types (see chapter 2.2). The meaning each concept is attributed below should thus not be read as authoritative definitions, but as open for modifications for instance by DOAS-employees or others with relevant experiences.

The common denominator for the concepts below is that they were intended to explicate “what is it we do in order to do what we do in our work practices?” For instance, what is it we do when we define objectives and make priorities, or when we decide on how to organise to conduct our work practices, or when we try to change our work practices? Such activities are not identical to daily work practices, but they nevertheless influence such practice. By becoming aware of how such activities are carried out it is easier to increase control over work practices, hence strengthen employee empowerment processes.

Prioritising what the work organisation should seek to accomplish

Setting priorities and defining objectives is of course fundamental to a work organisation. As discussed in chapter 2.1 increased employee control over work practices can also mean increased control over deciding on what the work organisation should give priority to. Such decision making will differ depending on what issues the work organisation is addressing. DOAS was a public sector organisation, and as shown in a recent systematic literature review there has been little empirical research on organisation learning in such organisations (Rashman et al., 2009). Although they share many features with work organisations in the private sector, there are also notable differences. One of them is that public service organisations address continuous objectives, i.e. objectives that are never fully realised like “good upbringing conditions for adolescents”. As will be shown in chapter 4 public service organisations in Norway are given considerable discretion in how to approach such objectives. On the other hand, there are many expectations and considerable pressure from various stakeholders like government, municipality, clients, interest groups, citizens, professions, and mass media, and their expectations often point in different directions.

CHPS saw DOAS as operating in an environment presenting it with a “surplus of expectations”, and much more so than is usual for private sector work organisations. Somewhat paradoxically this surplus provided considerable opportunities to influence how priorities were set, because it was almost as impossible to do everything wrong as it was to do everything right. As long as laws and by-laws were upheld DOAS could reckon on

satisfying at least some expectations. Doing “more for less” could in this context mean meeting multiple expectations through one and the same set of work practices. Precisely how would have to be determined on a case by case basis, but a prerequisite was to become aware of how priorities were made. CHPS suggested the following concepts as a vocabulary for setting priorities:

- *Manoeuvrable space.* DOAS’ discretion in determining what services to offer and how to provide them.
- *Explore boundaries.* Identification of various types of opportunities and constraints constituting manoeuvrable space.
- *Translation.* Deliberations through which employees consciously determine how to use their manoeuvrable space, i.e. decide on what objectives they will pursue.
- *Management by defining boundaries.* The manoeuvrable space managers provide for public service workers, i.e. their mandates.
- *Good enough.* Criteria for sufficient rather than optimal performance, highlighting how incremental changes in work practices can be identified.
- *Solution focus.* Giving priority to solutions for the future as opposed to problems of the past.
- *Give the emperor what belongs to the emperor.* Making sure not to engage in work practices contrary to other stakeholders’ vital interests.

These phenomena and related activities determine the work organisation’s “opportunity structure”. The concepts can be explored theoretically and related to various empirical research on work organisations, but such a venture is completely beside the point in this context. As noted above the idea was to present DOAS with a set of ideas on what influenced their prioritising. As will become evident in later chapters DOAS-employees took interest in these concepts. By analysing the boundaries constituting their manoeuvrable space they could translate expectations, decide on who should do what, monitor own progress as opposed to discrepancies with idealised objectives, and highlight what they wanted to do in the future while checking out the compatibility between what they and

other stakeholders would like to see happen. Particularly to the top-management group in DOAS it was evident that this had to be a collaborative venture, and not something they could decide upon in isolation. As such the vocabulary could be useful for increasing employee control over work practices, but whether or not that actually occurred is an empirical issue that will be addressed in later chapters.

Organising principles for conducting work practices

In DOAS there was a lot of concern about how projects tended to become isolated from ongoing work practices. Project activities were typically conducted on the side and in addition to daily work, and when the project funding ended or project employees resigned the activities were not sustained. It was also experienced as annoying that project funding “came from above” and recruited the most competent employees, but with little benefit particularly to the work organisation and probably also to clients. In addition project employees who returned to their permanent positions in DOAS were often disheartened by not being allowed to continue what they were doing. This, in addition to the motivation for initiating interdisciplinary collaboration across units and layers in DOAS, were examples of a rising interest in organising principles in DOAS. CHPS contributed with some concepts that could be useful for DOAS in their further examination of how to organise their work practices. Particularly the first two were especially relevant to stimulate reflections on organising not only for daily work practices, but also for organisation learning. The suggested concepts were:

- *Meeting places.* Scheduled meetings between employees in which opportunities for collaborative learning and decision making were explored.
- *Time out and go meta.* Stop work practices for a limited period of time, so as to reflect systematically on them.
- *Exit.* Stop existing work practices.
- *Interdisciplinary collaboration.* Organising for collaboration across socially constructed barriers; in addition to disciplines for instance units and departments.
- *Top-down.* Organising to execute managerial decisions.

- *Bottom-up*. Decision making authority residing at grassroots level in the organisation.
- *Encapsulation*. Activities undertaken by a limited number of employees in isolation from colleagues, for instance in projects.

These concepts were intended to motivate DOAS-employees to reflect on how they organised to accomplish their objectives, whether they were related to daily work practices or to organisation learning. Neither of the “organising principles” in the above points list are preferable or irrelevant irrespective of circumstances, and employees can influence (i.e. increase their control over) their work practices by becoming aware of and choose how to organise.

Planned change in daily work practices

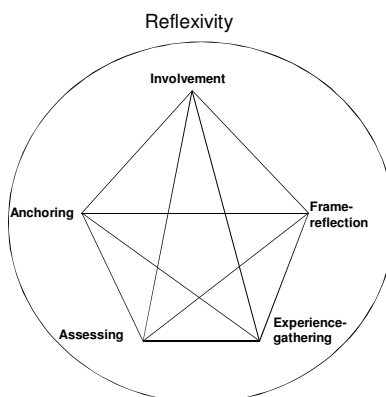
Making sustained changes in a work organisation’s daily work practices is a considerable challenge indeed. There is an abundance of conceptual models for addressing this challenge, typically dividing change processes into distinct phases or stages, which are presented as following each other logically. Approaches aiming at diagnosing problems and applying instrumental rationality in addressing them are frequent both in health promotion, for instance Bracht’s (1999) model on community development or Green and Kreuter’s (1991) PRECEDE-PROCEEDE model, and in organisation theory (for instance Lyngdal, 1992, Berg and Eikeland, 1997).

The repertoire to choose from is considerably slimmer when emphasis is on solutions for the future as opposed to problems of the past. One of the text-books included in the curriculum in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” offered such an alternative though (Langslet, 1999), but CHPS also had some ideas of its own. The point of departure was to identify activities employees typically engage in when working with planned change. Altering such activities could increase employee control over an important aspect of work practices, i.e. how changes in work practices come about. The concepts below were intended to enable systematic reflection on such activities. They were also presented in a didactical model (see

below), so as to underline that the activities were not seen as sequential, but as “relational”. Depending on circumstances the activities could be relevant at any given time during processes of making changes in work practices. The concepts were included in the model below:

- *Anchoring*. To secure support for planned change initiatives.
- *Frame-reflection*. Raising awareness of underlying assumptions on what change is desirable, feasible, and worth the effort.
- *Assessing*. Comparing experiences with one or more sets of criteria which the change processes are expected to meet.
- *Experience-gathering*. Activities with explicit ambition of learning either from ongoing trial and error, from own previous experience, or from others’ experiences.
- *Involvement*. Including stakeholders in processes of planned change at various points in time, to varying degrees, and at various levels.
- *Reflexivity*. The activity of systematically examining the relationships between the activities in the model.

Model 2.1: The CHPS-model for planned change in daily work practices



The model posits that planned change initiatives are more likely to succeed if the activities included in the model are continuously related to each other. Concretely, the need for securing support, identifying assumptions on desirability of the change initiative, deciding on what criteria to assess the initiative in relation to, relating experiences with the change initiative to other similar instances, and deciding on who should be involved, may surface at various points in time during a change process, depending on where the process is going.

The CHPS-model was also intended to challenge the ruse of habitual thinking about how to initiate and accomplish change. It was included in the tool-box alongside other and more typically used tools, both in the rational-linear tradition and Langslet's (1999, 1996) solution-focus approach. It was thus up to DOAS-employees to determine its relevance in the change processes they were initiating as part of their "workplace development projects" The CHPS-model has since been used on a number of occasions, and it has proven to be useful as a set of sensitising concepts in various circumstances (Hauge et al., 2002, Hauge and Ausland, 2003, Hauge, 2004), but it has not been submitted to systematic empirical investigation.

In this chapter section organisation learning has been described as an activity separate from yet intertwined with "daily work" in work organisations. The main idea is to have an organisation for learning that enables employees to conduct incremental changes in their work practices. It has been argued that productive organisation learning can be accomplished by means of action research. CHPS suggested a vocabulary for organisation learning to DOAS, so as to increase employee control over three levels of decision making. This vocabulary and other educational devices were seen as tools employees could use at their own discretion, hence a "tool-box perspective". This perspective was followed up on in the tailor-made approach addressed in chapter 5. As mentioned in chapter 1 and in the introduction to this chapter section the tailor-made approach was intended as a framework for supporting organisation learning. CHPS' also assumed that this approach to organisation learning would increase employees' opportunities for self-determination, and that they would use such "manoeuvrable space" to pursue health and performance. This latter assumption is further explored in the next chapter section.

2.4 Employee health as resource for transforming stress

In chapter 1.4 it was argued that an employee empowerment process includes outcomes (or “effects”) of empowered actions, the quality of which have consequences for sustainability of employee empowerment. In this thesis two dimensions of such outcomes are highlighted, i.e. employee health and organisation performance. These dimensions are here seen as emanating from the same set of ongoing work practices that employees engage in. Documenting these dimensions presents rather different types of challenges though. Organisation performance is relative to the work organisation’s objectives, and will be assessed as part of the empirical analyses from chapter 6 onwards. The data from the collaboration between DOAS and CHPS allow assessments of how the “workplace development projects” (WDP) impacted organisation performance. There is also some data on changes employees initiated in their work practices, both concurrently with the tailor-made approach (TMA) and in the aftermath, that were inspired by the TMA. There are, however, no theoretical challenges needing clarification prior to the actual analyses.

The challenge is markedly different for employee health, because health is a much more ambiguous construct. In this chapter section emphasis is on clarifying what aspects of health are relevant in later empirical investigations, and on how indicators relevant to health will be identified in data.

Health is “a nebulous, multi-dimensional notion – open to multiple interpretations” (Tones and Tilford, 2001: 2). The most influential definition is the one adopted by the World Health Organisation (1948): “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Although this definition is widely criticised for being illusive and utopian, it underlines a simple yet vital point: Health is too complex a phenomenon to be put on formula. Any empirical investigation has to confine itself to some dimensions and some interpretations of it. In this thesis an understanding of health as resource is highlighted. Particular emphasis is on how this resource can be influenced through collaboration between employees increasing their control over work practices. The understanding of health as resource is central to health promotion:

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. Therefore, health promotion is not just the responsibility of the health sector, but goes beyond healthy life-styles to well-being. (Ottawa-charter, 1986: 1)

This definition of health in the context of health promotion has several important implications for the understanding of health in this thesis.

- The first sentence – the process of enabling people to increase control over – clearly underlines the importance of empowerment for improving health.
- The definition also underlines interchange between people and their environments, making health a multi-level and multi-disciplinary phenomenon, as well as a multi-sector responsibility.
- This so to speak “official” definition of health promotion determines health both as a state – echoing the famous 1948 definition quoted above – and as a resource for realising that state, hence health is determined both as a process and an outcome.
- Furthermore, the emphasis on health as “resource for everyday life” and “a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities” signals that attention should be given to the processes making people healthy, as opposed to processes making people sick.

The consequences of highlighting processes making people healthy as opposed to processes making people sick, were explored in relative depth by sociologist Aaron Antonovsky (1979, 1987). He coined the term “salutogenesis” (for processes making people healthy) in opposition to “pathogenesis” (for processes making people sick). He underlined that these

are complementary processes in determining health, but also criticised the pathogenic approach for presupposing that the relationship between health and disease is dichotomous, i.e. in the pathogenic approach people are either sick or healthy, and health is defined negatively as absence of disease. Instead he argued the relationship between health and disease as a continuum allowing a multitude of combinations of the two, and where both pathogenic and salutogenic processes occur concurrently. Asking how people approach the positive pole of health-disease, or “health-ease – dis-ease” as he called the continuum, becomes complementary to the asking how people get sick (Antonovsky, 1987). Privileging the pathogenic approach leads to a reductionist focus on identifying and combating causes of disease, thereby overlooking the oftentimes more complex processes making people healthy.

An important implication of the theory of salutogenesis is that processes promoting health-ease are different from processes preventing dis-ease. Consequently, Antonovsky raised awareness of processes that has been little investigated, yet potentially have great importance to population health. He suggested that his theory on salutogenesis should be used to guide the emerging discipline of health promotion specifically (Antonovsky, 1996). In his empirical research Antonovsky was particularly interested in how stress influences processes leading to health-ease. His contributions to stress research will be returned to below, and their relevance to this thesis clarified, but first it is necessary to clarify the meaning of “stress” in this context.

Stress as phenomenon

Employees who are expected to increase their control over work practices in order to do “more for less”, will certainly experience stress. The challenge they face can be seen as one of transforming work stress into sustainable productivity (see chapter 1.2), i.e. *making* work stress conducive both to employee health and organisation performance. This is not a straightforward challenge, among other things because stress is an ambiguous phenomenon.

As noted by Knardahl (2000: 266 my translation) “stress can mean almost anything”, for instance phenomena inducing stress on people, processes of dealing with such phenomena, or outcomes of such processes. All contributors to research on stress seem to agree though on stress emanating from the relationship between people and their environment (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). Fundamentally, stress is environmental impact being processed through individual perception and cognition (Sørensen et al., 1998). Although terminology is inconsistent, it is reasonable to think of stress as environmental impact on individuals which – depending on qualities of the stressor and (biologically and socially based) individual ability to deal with it – may lead to distress (pathogenic processes), productive resolution of the stressor (salutogenic processes), or a combination of the two.

Stress research has a fairly short history, with the first notable contributions in the 1930’ies and 1940’ies (Allvin et al., 2006). Initially stress was analysed as a purely physiological phenomenon, with emphasis on how people react in life-threatening situations. It was established that people exposed to extreme stress can experience severe strain with impairing consequences. In the 1950’ies and 1960’ies the focus was broadened to include various life events, herein also events generally seen as desirable like for instance pregnancy or holidays. Emphasis was on documenting how much energy people mobilise in order to adapt to new life situations. Over time the meaning of “stress” was further expanded, and used to explain both psychological and social phenomena. In contemporary understandings of stress people are typically seen as constantly facing stressors they have to respond to as part of living.

Within psychology Richard Lazarus made landmark contributions by developing theories on how people appraise situations and use resources to cope with stress. In his understanding most stressors are ambiguous and open to interpretation in social contexts, and people can usually choose how to deal with them (Lazarus, 1981). People are not merely passively responding to stressors. On the contrary, their ability to deal with them is usually quite extensive. Research on human cognitive capacity has documented that people, when dealing with stressors, tend to see what they want to see, engage in wishful thinking, see connections where there are none, misinterpret actual connections, interpret own behaviour and motives differently from those of others, choose explanations in own favour,

are not very competent in separating relevant from irrelevant information, allow themselves to be directed by coincidences, are never neutral, and relate to decisions by either jumping into or postponing them (Lai, 1999). Somewhat surprisingly such responses to stressors typically make people confident in their abilities to make judgements. Humans thus have an innate capacity to interpret stressors in ways making them capable of acting in complex situations, but – as will be examined empirically in subsequent chapters – these capabilities do not necessarily lead to desirable outcomes.

Sense of coherence as global orientation towards stressors

Antonovsky was one of the pioneer scientists investigating what people do when faced with stressors. As described above he coined the term “salutogenesis”, and in his research he was interested in how stress influences health-ease in the health-ease – dis-ease continuum, i.e. how people deal with stressors in ways promoting their health (as opposed to preventing dis-ease). Through his empirical research he identified qualities in individuals dealing with extreme stress proficiently, and found a common denominator in their ability to experience what happened to them as coherent. He identified three components as vital for such a “sense of coherence” (SOC), being 1) a cognitive component of making stressors comprehensible, 2) a practical component of making stressors manageable, and 3) (and most important) a motivational component of making stressors meaningful (Antonovsky, 1987). A person with a high SOC – measured by scores on variables of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness respectively – will clarify the nature of a stressor, select resources appropriate to deal with it, and be open for feedback leading to adjustments in resources mobilised (Lindström and Eriksson, 2005b).

Although Antonovsky was a sociologist and expressed considerable interest in how SOC is formed in social settings, he introduced his work in psychology, more specifically in the Anglo-American tradition of the discipline. He posited that SOC is an individual global orientation to life, expressing trust in one’s ability to resolve environmental contingencies, and greatly influenced by socialisation processes and access to “general resistance resources” like for instance money, ego-strength, cultural stability and social support. SOC

was therefore not a personality trait, but still a fairly stable orientation resulting from (in a wide sense) living conditions. Antonovsky was not overly optimistic about the possibility of increasing individual SOC-levels after a person had reached the age of 30 (Antonovsky, 1987), thereby giving his theories a flare of fatalism.

Within the Anglo-American tradition of psychology there are several neighbouring and partially overlapping constructs to SOC, like for instance locus of control, hardiness, resilience, coping, will to learning, and learned helplessness (Eriksson, 2007). Given this backdrop it is not surprising that research on SOC up till now has focused on 1) validating the construct, 2) examining the relationship between individuals' SOC and health, and 3) examining how stable SOC is in order to open the possibility of developing interventions. Status on this research can briefly be summarised as 1) SOC is partially overlapping but not identical to neighbouring constructs, 2) SOC has a positive correlation with quality of life, a positive correlation with optimism and self-esteem, and a negative correlation with anxiety and depression, and 3) individual SOC-levels are indeed stable but tend to increase with age and can (at least in passing) decrease when people are exposed to severe strain (Lindström and Eriksson, 2005a, Eriksson and Lindström, 2007).

Alternatives to highlighting individual SOC-levels

As commented above research on “sense of coherence” (SOC) this far has mainly focused on individuals. A number of screening instruments in the trajectory of Antonovsky’s “Life Orientation Scale” (Antonovsky, 1987) have been developed, and have emphasised psychological variables more than cultural or sociological ones (Tishelman, 1996). There are at least two concerns making it relevant to consider complementing the predominantly psychological research on SOC with sociological approaches. For one, stress – which SOC is a response to – is generated in relationships between individuals in the social settings they participate. It is not a far-fetched assumption that an individual’s propensity to experience sense of coherence will vary depending on how such relationships are. Secondly, and from a practical point of view; as it has been established that SOC in adults is a fairly stable “global orientation” towards life, it is probably more feasible to change the relationships people

participate in, i.e. their “environments” or social settings. The general idea is then to *change settings in ways enabling even individuals with low SOC-levels to experience stressors as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful*. For instance, a change process in a work organisation can be conducted in many different ways, and it is possible to try to conduct it in ways making it easier for employees to experience it as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful.

Such a settings approach was indicated (but not followed up on with empirical investigations) by Antonovsky: “What can be done in this ‘community’ – factory, geographic community, age or ethnic or gender group, chronic or even acute hospital population, those who suffer from a particular disability, etc. – to strengthen the sense of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness of the persons who constitute it?” (Antonovsky, 1996: 16). There is some research on how social settings like families (for instance Wickens and Greeff, 2005) or schools (for instance Modin et al., 2011) influence sense of coherence, but no research on how settings can be altered in ways conducive to whatever level of SOC people have. Such alterations can be initiated from “above” (in work organisations for instance by managers facilitating change processes that are comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to employees), or from “below” (in work organisations for instance by employees having increased control over their work practices), or a combination of the two. The assumption investigated empirically in this thesis is that the “persons who constitute” the setting (or “community” as Antonovsky somewhat loosely called it) *themselves* are capable of providing answers, i.e. employees with increased control over their work practices can *make* such practices more comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to themselves, even when they are faced with stressors associated with having to do “more for less”.

Indicators of comprehensible, manageable and meaningful

One of the challenges with what loosely could be called “an environment approach to SOC” is to identify indicators of the variables comprehensible, manageable and meaningful.

Screening people for their individual SOC-scores will not provide the necessary data, because

such instruments do not provide information on what employees do in collaboration to increase sense of coherence when exposed to stressors. It is necessary to examine actual work practices in the setting, and then try to determine the relationship between such practices and SOC.

However, screening instruments provide information on what indicators to look for. In the original "Life Orientation Scale" Antonovsky (1987) used several variables as indicators of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness respectively. Below these variables are presented in a highly condensed manner:

- Comprehensibility is depending on being understood, knowing people one interacts with on a daily basis, experiencing consistency and predictability in others and in one's life, being able to clarify ambiguities and generate solutions, how one's expectancies of change are, frequency of having mixed-up or undesirable feelings, feeling certainty of future events, and not over- or under-estimate importance of events.
- Manageability is depending on being able to get things done in cooperation with others, counting on people and not being disappointed or treated unfairly, finding solutions to painful things in life, how one reacts to unpleasant events, having consistency in good feelings, having people one can count on in the future, not feeling like a loser, expecting success in overcoming difficulties in important aspects of life, and being able to keep feelings under control.
- Meaningfulness is depending on experiencing caring, interest, fascination, purpose, pleasure, satisfaction and meaning in one's daily activities.

Antonovsky's indicators are by necessity wide as they relate to a person's global outlook on life. Hanson (2004) has made an attempt to identify indicators for comprehensible, manageable and meaningful at the workplace. He suggests that:

- Comprehensibility depends on knowledge about environment, sector, company history, company organisation, work content, work environment, own roles, and change, as well as feedback from managers, colleagues and clients.
- Manageability depends on having resources and support in the form of access to tools and materials, people, a clear organisation and clear guidelines, as well as opportunity to influence work pace, work place, and decision-making, in addition to professional, social and communicative competence. He also includes stamina both physically and mentally, having breaks, and being able to distance oneself from a situation.
- Meaningfulness depends on motivation generated for instance by visions, objectives, salary and fringe benefits, as well as values related to ethics, moral, and fair treatment. He also includes positive experiences from relationships with colleagues and managers, good work environment, humour, variation, satisfying activities, and sense of self.

It should be fairly evident that the indicators identified by both Antonovsky and Hanson make it difficult to separate the three dimensions in SOC analytically, and even more difficult to separate them at a practical level. It can safely be assumed that any given work practice is relevant to all dimensions, and that numerous interpretations of how the variables interact are possible. Outcomes on either set of indicators cannot be determined conclusively, but is a result of interpretations that by necessity are contestable. Still, it is possible to deduce from what employees say and do whether or not their work situations are more or less comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to them. What they then assess and do *differently* is more related to alterations in their work organisation as a setting, than related to their individual global orientations towards life. It is thus predominantly the work organisation as a setting that is altered. Precisely how this setting can be understood is addressed in the next chapter section. This chapter section can be concluded though by stating that CHPS' assumption was that employees could use and develop sustainable resources for both health and performance in stressful working conditions, if given the opportunities to make work practices comprehensible, manageable and meaningful.

2.5 Settings approach to workplace health promotion

An important issue in all research is determining what the data resulting from empirical investigations are examples or “cases” of (Ragin and Becker, 1992). Particularly in the social sciences data can often be used as examples of various phenomena, depending on interest and choice of theoretical approach (Aakvaag, 2008). In this thesis it has thus far been indicated that the data used serves as an example of employee empowerment processes. More specifically it has been suggested that data will be used to analyse how 1) a tailor-made approach combining continuing education and “workplace development projects” in a department of adolescence will facilitate 2) systematic organisation learning in the form of action research cycles, which in turn will strengthen 3) employee empowerment processes, leading to increased likelihood of 4) sustainable employee health and organisation performance. This line of investigation could be argued as relevant to several disciplines or fields of knowledge, for instance “continuing education at the workplace” or “salutogenic approach to organisation development” or “organisation learning approach to health promotion”, to mention but a few of the possibilities.

Without disregarding potential relevance for any of the mentioned or other possibilities, the alternative highlighted in this thesis is *settings approach to workplace health promotion*. This choice is to some extent motivated by the context in which the employee empowerment processes were investigated. As the name “Centre for Health Promotion in Settings” (CHPS) indicates, a key motivating factor for collaborating with Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) was to approach DOAS as a setting of interest to health promotion. An important feature in CHPS’ approach was not to privilege concerns for employee health over concerns for organisation performance. Instead, as addressed in chapter 1, the idea was to see employee health and organisation performance as two intertwined dimensions emanating from one and the same set of work practices. It was thus *work practices* that were highlighted, and not employee health or organisation performance per se. How this approach relates to other approaches to workplace health promotion (WHP) is addressed later in this chapter section. In order to pinpoint the approach it is first necessary to

determine what type of “settings approach” it was intended to be, and to compare the approach used here with other approaches to the intersection between work and health.

The “settings approach” in health promotion

The “settings approach” is widely recognised as one of three main approaches to health promotion, the other two being “issue approach” (e.g. injuries, substance abuse, obesity) and “population approach” (typically population groups) (IUHPE, 2000, Tones and Tilford, 2001). The main rationale for the settings approach was stated in the Ottawa-charter (1986): “Health is created and lived by people within settings of their everyday life, where they learn, work, play and love.” The settings approach is thus thoroughly consistent with understanding health as a resource for everyday living, as addressed in chapter 2.4.

However, the concept “settings approach” is not used univocally in health promotion. Somewhat simplified it is possible to make an analytical division between a “settings approach to health promotion” and “health promotion in settings”. The first alternative takes the “naturally” occurring activities in the setting as a point of departure, for instance learning activities in a school or work practices in a work organisation. When people interact in a setting “health” is rarely the reason why they come together. Still, how they choose to interact has health consequences. For instance (as mentioned in chapter 2.4), many alternative ways of reorganising a work organisation can lead to roughly the same conclusions on how the formal structure should be, yet *how* the reorganising is carried out will have different consequences for employee health. Similarly, how “more for less” requirements are addressed – for instance through employee empowerment or through standardisation of work practices – will have different consequences for employee health. Consequently, *how* people in a setting choose to carry out what they come together to accomplish, *also* has health consequences. By becoming aware of such consequences they can promote health *as part of* their regular activities, and not as a separate concern. The ambition then becomes to promote health concurrently with improving activities already taking place in settings, for instance quality of both education and health in schools (Samdal et al., 1998).

In contrast, “health promotion in settings” typically approaches settings as “convenient locations” for implementing health promotion programs (Tones and Tilford, 2001). Emphasis is then on working with issues (like for instance smoke cessation, physical exercise or substance abuse) in a fairly coherent population (like employees at a workplace, pupils at a school, or citizens in a community), and the (organisational) structures and resources in the setting is sought mobilised to achieve health objectives. Health then comes as an additional concern to regular activities in settings, although there is often an ambition to change such activities in ways conducive to health.

Approaches roughly consistent with “health promotion in settings” typically address (known) risks for disease or ill-health, whereas approaches roughly consistent with “settings approach to health promotion” typically address health as a resource. In the terminology of the salutogenesis theory conveyed in chapter 2.4 this is consistent with the difference between trying to prevent processes leading to dis-ease on the one hand, and trying to promote processes leading to health-ease on the other. Both from a practical and a theoretical point of view these approaches represent different competence challenges. “Health promotion in settings” requires specialist competencies either in particular issues or population groups, with emphasis on knowledge about the processes generating dis-ease and how they can be prevented. With a “settings approach to health promotion” it is more relevant with “generalist” competencies, e.g. on how people can strengthen or develop their resources in interaction within their setting or across settings.

The main rationale for settings approaches is the importance of environments for population health. The first landmark contributions within public health came as a result of addressing living conditions (Wilkinson, 1996), but later more emphasis was put on educating people on how to reduce risks for disease. Health promotion has played a major part the past few decades in vitalising the interest for environments. In the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) declarations on health promotion environments have been a recurring theme, and the idea of (socially, politically and economically) “supportive environments” has been at the forefront (Sundsvall Statement, 1991). Health promotion is inspired by socio-ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), using systems thinking developed for investigation of natural

phenomena by analogy on societies. One of Bronfenbrenner's core ideas was "reciprocal determinism" between settings at levels ranging from micro to macro, suggesting for instance that decisions made at National levels determine activities in settings like families, communities, or work places. Notions like these have strengthened the general idea of making "healthy choices the easy choice" by means of inter-sectoral "healthy public policy" (Draper, 1991, Tones and Green, 2004), i.e. seeing policy decisions in all sectors as having health consequences (Mittelmark and Hauge, 2003).

Settings approaches to health promotion can be categorised in various ways (Whitelaw and Baxendale, 2001), but two tensions are particularly relevant for pinpointing the approach taken in this thesis. For one, there is a tension between on the one hand highlighting one setting too narrow-mindedly (thereby overlooking how activities in the setting is influenced by activities in other settings), and on the other hand overstating how activities in all settings are inter-connected (thereby making the settings approach too complex to provide information people can act on). Secondly, there is a tension between on the one hand seeing settings as stable structures outside agents (like for instance health promotion specialists) can interact with and influence fairly predictably (Tones and Tilford, 2001), and on the other hand seeing settings as unstable social entities in flux. Somewhat simplified approaches similar to "health promotion in settings" as depicted above highlight single settings seen as fairly stable, whereas approaches similar to "settings approach to health promotion" as depicted above highlight the inter-connectedness between settings and how they (as a consequence) always are in flux.

These are of course analytical dimensions, but they are nevertheless useful for discussing peculiarities in specific approaches. The approach taken by CHPS in collaboration with DOAS was closest to a "settings approach to health promotion". The idea was to take employees' actual work practices as a point of departure, and highlight potential for "doing what they already do" in ways strengthening both employee health and organisation performance. As will become evident in chapter 4 CHPS examined how activities in other settings at National and municipal levels influenced activities in DOAS, but still this is predominantly a single-setting analysis. This is because CHPS did not see activities in other settings as causally determining activities in DOAS. Instead it was emphasised how DOAS-employees could

increase control over their setting by how they interpreted (oftentimes conflicting or contradicting) influences from various other settings. CHPS saw DOAS as in flux due to changes in their environments (National level, municipal level) and in the composition of employees (turn-over, formal organisation changes), this providing considerable manoeuvrable space. Furthermore, CHPS assumed that any intervention aiming at stable solutions to work practice challenges (at best) would have impact for a limited period only, and that it would be more promising to try to strengthen the employees' resources for dealing with flux at an ongoing basis, hence organisation learning. In that way employees could themselves generate the changes they saw desirable.

Other approaches in the work-health intersection

There is massive interest in the interplay between work and health, both academically and in the population in general. As commented in chapter 1 this interplay can be approached in many different ways. One approach generating substantial bodies of research over many years, is to examine health consequences of various aspects of work, herein both effects of work practices themselves and the contexts in which such practices are carried out.

Although the literature is too rich to comment seriously in a few sentences, at least one consistent finding relevant to this thesis warrants a comment: Time and again it has been documented that employee control over the work situation is an important mediating variable in the relationship between work and health (Schabracq et al., 2003), although – as noted by Knardahl (2000) – “control” is attributed different meanings. Research highlighting health consequences of work is prevalent in what loosely could be referred to as “health sciences” like medicine, psychology and epidemiology, with main emphasis on the dis-ease pole in the health continuum, i.e. employee control has been found to be conducive to prevention of disease and injury, or risks thereof.

A different (though to some extent overlapping via psychology) approach emanates from the classical “Hawthorne” studies in the 1920ies and 1930ies, which found considerable data to support the notion – central in the human resources approach to work organisations – that a satisfied employee is a productive employee (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). Various

consequences of “job satisfaction” have been investigated empirically, among them its consequences for absenteeism. At various points in time and in various cultures a negative relationship between satisfaction and absenteeism has been documented (Matrunola, 1996, Siu, 2002). In the trajectory of this research there has been considerable interest in identifying what managers can do (at low cost) to increase satisfaction of employees (with reduced absenteeism as a consequence), i.e. an “investment” in health for the purpose of improving organisation performance.

Within health promotion and community development there are several approaches interested in organisation development and learning (for instance Constantino-David, 1982, Raeburn and Rootman, 1998, Minkler, 1999, DeJoy and Wilson, 2003, Joffres et al., 2004), but in parallel with the job satisfaction tradition in organisation sciences the interest is primarily instrumentally motivated, i.e. use of organisation development and learning for promotion of health issues, with little or no investigation of consequences for organisation performance.

Needless to say these are superficial descriptions of some of the most prevalent approaches to the interplay work-health, but the main point is that they approach this interplay either from the vantage point of health or from the vantage point of organisation performance. There is little interest in the health sciences for organisation performance per se, and little interest in the organisation sciences for health per se. Hence, neither approach is directly transferable to the settings approach to health promotion described above, which is characterised by seeing employee health and organisation performance as dimensions emanating from the same work practices.

Several other approaches to the intersection between work and health are more directly relevant in the sense that they highlight consequences of work practices for employee health and organisation performance concurrently. For instance, “occupational health and safety” (OHS) is a field of knowledge meticulously investigating how work practices can be conducted effectively while simultaneously minimising risks for health and safety hazards for employees. This approach differs from the settings approach described earlier by 1) focusing on the dis-ease end of the health continuum, and 2) aiming at developing procedures

instructing employees how to act in specific circumstances, i.e. standardising work practices. Although this approach has notable successes a recurring problem has been securing commitment of employees, leading to interest in how employees can become more committed by participating actively in health and safety issues (Granzow and Theberge, 2009).

In the introduction to this thesis there was a quotation from Karasek and Theorell (1990) asking about the possibility of achieving both health and productivity. Their “demand-control-support” (DCS-) model examines the relationship between demands employees are subjected to at work and the control they have over work tasks, and how social support (from colleagues and managers) influences this relationship. The assumption – supported by considerable research – is that employees can deal productively with more demands if they have more control, especially if they have social support. Among the strengths of their approach is that they do not separate between “actions for health” and “actions for organisation performance” respectively, but take actual work practices as their point of departure. Furthermore, they emphasise how the work organisation as an environment presents resources for dealing proficiently with work stress, which is consistent with a settings approach. They are adamant on this point and note that “(t)he tendency to focus cures for stress on the individual is ironic in light of the inevitability of an environmental source when a stress process is implied” (Karasek and Theorell, 1990: 86). However, research has shown that the DCS-model is best equipped to explain why employees with little control over their work situation experience strain. “Increased flexibility and new organisation forms probably raises new questions which the demand-control-model and the demand-control-support-model not necessarily can answer” (Knardahl, 2000: 273 my translation). Karasek and Theorell and later contributors to research on the DCS-model have primarily highlighted indicators at the dis-ease end of the health continuum. Their interest has also been more in job redesign based on psychological demands, than in how employees themselves can transform their work environments.

The point here is of course not general criticism of other approaches than the settings approach, but highlighting similarities and differences so as to clarify what issues in the intersection work-health the settings approach can be relevant to. Relevance of either

approach is relative to what issue is addressed. Conceptually the settings approach is relevant when emphasis is on employee health and organisation performance consequences of work practices concurrently, when emphasis is on employees' resources more than their exposure to risks, and when emphasis is more on what they can do to increase control over work processes than how work can be organised for them.

Workplace health promotion

In the introduction to this chapter section it was underlined that the research documented in this thesis is intended as a contribution to workplace health promotion (WHP). WHP developed much in response to oscillating lifestyle-related health problems in the 1970ies. Employee health problems became increasingly detrimental to production, motivating employers to address lifestyle issues. Employers recognised that they stood to gain if employees renounced high-risk behaviours in their private lives. Indeed, it seemed evident that all major stakeholders (state, employers, employees) could benefit from implementing workplace health promotion (Dooner, 1990). From the outset most WHP-programs aimed at encouraging employees to engage in "healthier behaviours", by means of health education, skills training, support and facilities like gyms and cafeterias. Among the health problems most frequently addressed were nutrition, substance abuse and stress. Employees were approached as individuals and not as colleagues. There was little or no attention to how the workplace itself influences employee health. It was thus health promotion in the workplace as a setting, and not a settings approach to health promotion.

This approach continues to have strong endorsement, for instance by the World Health Organisation (WHO). WHO argues that investing in employee health will be beneficial both for the employee (e.g. enhanced self-esteem, reduced stress, increased job satisfaction) and the work organisation (e.g. a positive and caring image, improved staff morale, reduced staff turnover and absenteeism, and increased productivity) (World Health Organization, 2010b). Still, as mentioned in chapter 1.2 it has proven notoriously difficult to monitor if investment in health "pays off" for the employer. A recent review of the literature concluded that the evidence base for cost-effectiveness of WHP-programs for organisation performance is very

limited, but there is some evidence to suggest that such programs can reduce absenteeism and medical costs (Sockoll et al., 2009). A fair assessment is that WHP-programs– in the meaning health promotion in the workplace – alone do not solve the challenge of improving employee health and organisation performance concurrently.

One line of criticism towards WHP-programs is centred on how they are implemented, often detached from concerns in a particular work organisation. It has been asserted that employees should not be passive recipients but active in determining what they see as most important. Furthermore, programs should secure support from management and unions, combine multiple and multi-level initiatives, activate groups, mobilise social support of significant others, motivate positively and point to short-term gains (Schreurs et al., 1996). The general point in this line of criticism is that workplace health promotion should develop more “comprehensive” approaches that are more adjustable to local circumstances.

Another line of criticism towards WHP-programs is that they put too much emphasis on individual employees, and too little emphasis on how the workplace influences employee health: “The purpose of workplace health promotion is generally not to promote workplace health but to enhance the lifestyle-related well-being of those who happen to be working there. That is, to workplace health promotion, the workplace represents the location of health promotion intervention, not its target. The workplace is a convenient, efficient site for health promotion programming, an access point for reaching and mobilizing an elusive at-risk population – adults” (Eakin, 2000: 169). The arguments for highlighting workplace determinants of health are compelling. For instance, on the negative and dramatic side it has been estimated that worldwide each year approximately two million employees die in work-accidents, 268 million employees have non-fatal accidents, and a further 160 million suffer from work-related illnesses (World Health Organization, 2010a).

Both lines of criticism have been taken seriously by contributors to WHP, and they are reflected for instance in international policy documents like the Luxembourg declaration (ENWHP, 1997/ 2007). In this declaration workplace health promotion is determined as “the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve health and well-being of people at work”, advocating improvements in work organisation and work environment,

promoting active participation, and encouraging personal development as means to that end. Rhetorical emphasis is even more on workplace determinants than on individual lifestyle-related behaviours, and the same trend is to be found in the extensive WHO-developed “Healthy workplaces” initiative (World Health Organization, 2010a). Furthermore, whereas employee empowerment previously was not a concern in WHP, the literature documents growing interest in the phenomenon (Peltomäki et al., 2003, Arneson and Ekberg, 2005, Hochwälder, 2007).

Various approaches to combining “traditional” (emphasis on individual employees’ lifestyles) and “new” (emphasis on workplace determinants of health) WHP have been developed, for instance by Noblet (2003, 2006), who advocates a “comprehensive approach” combining interventions directed at individuals and work organisations. Perhaps the most thoroughly elaborated framework for reorienting WHP is “Promoting Workplace Determinants” (PWD) as developed by Polanyi and colleagues (2000). They argue that emphasis should be on the relationship between job strain and ill health, aiming at reducing workplace psychosocial demands by increasing social support and employee participation in decision making, achievable for instance through flexible work hours, job redesign or rotation, and supervisor training. As such the PWD-approach has many similarities with the demand-control-support model commented above, but the PWD aims at a structured and democratic process of identifying, analysing and acting on issues at the workplace. Emphasis on increasing employee control over workplace determinants of health is consistent with employee empowerment as described earlier in this thesis. On the other hand, the PWD differs from the approach documented in this thesis by not seeking to integrate concerns for organisation performance in its approach, and by emphasising the dis-ease end of the health continuum.

Given the scope and magnitude of population health challenges it is evident that health promotion in the workplace as a setting will remain a relevant strategy. Interventions addressing individuals’ lifestyle-related behaviour will probably continue to be in demand, for instance due to higher retirement age in most countries (Schreurs et al., 1996). On the other hand, it is just as evident that a settings approach to workplace health promotion is a viable and concurrent alternative, and not just because of the importance of workplace

determinants of health. In order to deal with flexibility and “more for less” requirements employees have to take on more responsibility for what work practices to initiate, and more responsibility for the consequences of such practices, both for their workplaces, their clients and customers, *and* for themselves.

Employees can hardly avert engaging in how the “manoeuvrable space” they have affects their health and performance. The approach documented in this thesis, highlighting health and performance as two dimensions emanating from what employees do in their everyday work practices, how employees can improve employee health and organisation performance by means of increased control over their work practices (employee empowerment), and how such efforts can influence processes leading to health-ease, could potentially be a valuable addition to the field of workplace health promotion.

Attention is now directed towards concrete empirical investigations of the tailor-made approach CHPS and DOAS collaborated on. Chapter 3 combines a detailed account of the data used in this thesis, with a clarification of the approach taken to data analyses.

Chapter 3 Methodological issues

As described in chapter 1 this chapter is divided between 1) an account of the data generated and gathered from the tailor-made approach (TMA) the Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) and Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) collaborated on, herein also included data prior to and in the aftermath of the TMA, 2) an assessment of the quality of data and a description of the approach taken to data analyses in this thesis, and 3) an account of considerations on research ethics. Taken together these issues – addressed in three separate chapter sections – clarify methodological and ethical concerns relevant to the research documented in this thesis.

3.1 Overview of data generated and gathered

In chapter 1.3 the tailor-made approach (TMA) used in the collaboration between Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) and Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) was briefly presented. The TMA was intended as a framework for supporting organisation learning, which in turn was intended to be the engine for sustainable employee empowerment processes (see chapter 1.4). The planning and implementation of the TMA is thus at the centre of the empirical investigations reported in this thesis. Included a planning phase the TMA was carried out over a period of one and a half years from June 1999 to December 2000. In order to get a clearer understanding of how the TMA impacted DOAS as a setting, it is also necessary to include investigations of the processes that led to the creation of DOAS in 1998-99, and some of the processes that occurred in DOAS in the aftermath of the TMA up to 2005. Although data from the periods prior to and after the TMA-period are scarcer, they provide vital information for understanding the impact of the TMA.

During the TMA-period data were gathered at an ongoing basis to serve a dual purpose; both documenting and influencing ongoing processes in the TMA. Data gathered and used at

one point in time contributed to subsequent generation of data, making data intermingled and to some extent cumulative. Furthermore, data were both generated and gathered by all participant groups in the TMA, who, as briefly described in chapter 1.3, were 1) the top-management group (TMG) in DOAS, 2) service workers in DOAS participating in workplace development groups (WDP), and 3) CHPS-employees. As there were six WDPs a total of eight groups were engaged in generating, gathering and analysing data in the TMA. In effect each group were engaged in both separate and shared action research processes. It is therefore not a straightforward task to provide an overview of the data used in this thesis.

As commented in chapter 1.5 there is no uniform methodological approach or framework for gathering, organising and analysing data from action research. As will be discussed in chapter 3.2 adapting frameworks from other approaches was considered, but found to be of scarce relevance for various reasons, one of them being that this thesis is based on a multitude of data sources. This is typical for action research because practical challenges are complex and require different sorts of data (Kemnis and McTaggart, 2000), and therefore all approaches to data gathering can be relevant (Greenwood and Levin, 1998, Reason and Bradbury, 2001). The only pre-determined research-methodological approach used in this case was “to document the TMA-processes as completely as possible”. Various approaches (e.g. document analyses, interviews, observation) were used by different TMA-participants at different points in time. I was one of the participants, and the role I had in the TMA greatly influenced my opportunities to generate and gather data. Below details on that role is provided, followed by an extensive overview of the data used in the research documented in this thesis.

Own role and generation of data

The purpose of this chapter section is to provide a complete account of data and what information it provides, thereby also noting where data are lacking or scarce. In chapter 3.2 there is an assessment of strengths and weaknesses in data for addressing research questions raised in chapter 1.5. Strengths and weaknesses in data can – to a large extent – be seen as a consequence of the action research approach generally, and more specifically

to the role I had in the TMA. This role provided me with a set of opportunities and limitations for participation in various TMA-activities, and these opportunities and limitations had implications for what data I could and could not generate and gather as part of my work practice. Somewhat simplified: There were some work practices I could not participate in, some work practices I had some level of participation in, and some work practices that I participated fully in. This means that I have different relationships to the data used in this thesis; some data were (to a varying degree) part of my own work practices, whereas others were not. Precisely how my relationship to data varies is shown in table 3.2 below. However, because the role I had so clearly affected my empirical investigations it is necessary to start out with a description of how that role was intended.

The issue of how a researcher's subjectivity influences the research process has been seriously discussed over many decades, particularly in the social sciences, where Max Weber (1971) made important contributions just over a century ago. At present few would argue that research can be "value free", i.e. that a researcher's (value-based) preferences do not influence the research process at all. Consensus seems to be that the relevant questions are how, where and how much researcher subjectivity enters the process, and the ideal is to make such influence as transparent and open to investigation as possible. Recommendations on how this ideal should be approached varies. For instance, some argue that researcher subjectivity should be used extensively in the research process (Brown, 1996), whereas others recommend that the researcher painstakingly should try to denote his or her "habitus" i.e. how ones social, cultural and economic position influences the research process (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995).

While acknowledging that my subjective preferences certainly may influence the research process, the approach to understanding how, where and how much is here quite pragmatic. I had a specific role in the collaboration between DOAS and CHPS, and this role – as will be examined below – gave me fairly specific opportunities and limitations as to what I could and could not do in the TMA. It was thus my *practice* as action researcher more than for instance subjective preferences or habitus that determined how I approached the research process. This does not mean that issues like subjective preferences and habitus do not influence the research process, but such properties are here seen as less relevant than determining what I

actually did and had to do to in order to do my job competently. The “positioning of my subjectivity” is thus here mostly seen as a consequence of role requirements, and not as a consequence of personal preferences. Seen like this, probably the most challenging “subjectivity” issue was risk of bias and short-sightedness due to own active participation (see also chapters 1.5 and 3.2). As described in chapter 1.5 I intended to address these concerns by trying to follow an “ethos of social science”, with emphasis on what later in this chapter will be called “craftsmanship” validity.

I was an employee in CHPS, and CHPS was commissioned by DOAS to collaborate on planning and carrying out the TMA. As described in chapter 1.3 DOAS and CHPS had different responsibilities and mandates. Broadly speaking DOAS was responsible for organisational impact of the TMA, e.g. recruitment of participants, availability of resources, determining workplace objectives, organising workplace development groups (WDP), and making changes in DOAS’ work practices. CHPS was responsible for developing and carrying out a 15 ECTS course in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”, and for supervising DOAS’ ongoing work practices related to the TMA (concretely WDPs and the part of the TMG’s work practices that were directly relevant to the TMA).

More specifically CHPS was to engage in the following activities: Planning the TMA in collaboration with DOAS, planning and carrying out gatherings divided between lectures and structured dialog between participants, supervision of project work conducted by WDPs and the TMG, stimulating “meta-reflections” (see chapter 2.3) on organisation learning within DOAS (particularly the relationship between work practice and education), providing feedback on assignments and exams, and documenting the TMA-process as fully as possible. These activities were divided between five CHPS-employees as outlined in the table underneath:

Table 3.1. Overview over activities and roles among CHPS-employees

Role description	Project manager	Senior	Teacher	Teacher	Process facilitator
Planning					
Gatherings					
Supervision TMG					
Meta-reflection TMG					
Supervision WDPs					
Meta-reflection WDPs					
Feedback assignments					
Documentation of TMA					

These roles should be fairly recognisable in most educational projects of some size. The *project manager* was engaged in all activities except documenting the TMA. She (I was the only male among the CHPS-employees) coordinated and assisted in activities of the other CHPS-employees. Her leadership role also included formal responsibility for conducting the course and supervision as planned and within budget. The *senior* had previous experience from educational activities in the municipality, and she was known to many of the DOAS-employees. She was as a door opener for the collaboration between CHPS and DOAS, and she contributed significantly in the planning process. During the TMA itself she continued to participate in meetings with the top-management group (TMG). These meetings revolved around TMG's attempts to initiate and sustain employee empowerment processes in DOAS, and as such combined supervision in relation to course requirements and meta-reflections on organisational learning in DOAS. She also contributed by giving lectures and initiating dialog in gatherings. She was not engaged in the individual workplace development groups (WDPs), or in documentation of the TMA. Two of the CHPS-employees had tasks that were fairly consistent with those of a *teacher*. They lectured and engaged in dialog in gatherings, supervised employees on their project work in WDPs, and provided feedback to group assignments, without being involved in the overall planning of the TMA or in interaction with TMG. Finally, my role can be described as *process facilitator*. As such I engaged predominantly in three types of activities, being planning, meta-reflection in groups with TMG and WDPs respectively, and documentation of the TMA. However, CHPS by no means had sole responsibility for documenting TMA. Each participating group had to document

their TMA-related activities, both continuously and with a concluding project report that was also the exam assignment in the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” (see chapter 5 for details).

The table above shows how roles and division of tasks were intended for practical and principled reasons. Practically the project manager, the senior, and the teachers did not have allotted time and resources to engage in more activities than they did. Because of a grant from the Norwegian Research Council I could invest more time and resources in documenting the TMA than would normally be the case, and could thus alleviate my colleagues from this task. Principally we thought it wise to separate the role of process facilitator from supervision, lecturing and feedback on assignments, so that participants could reflect more freely on impact of the TMA on their everyday work practices in “meta-reflections”. We also thought it wise to have a project manager fully engaged in all types of activities, i.e. a “hands-on” approach to managing.

There were some tensions in the intended role-set, and – consistent with an action research approach – we were open for changing it depending on experiences and circumstances. Particularly one type of tension was evident to us from the outset: it could be artificial and undesirable to separate reflecting upon work practices (in supervision) from reflecting upon what could be learned from the work practices in a wider context (in meta-reflection), both for DOAS- and CHPS-participants. On the other hand, it could become confusing to all participants if CHPS-teachers and the CHPS-process facilitator engaged in the same issues and questions with WDPs, for instance if they advised employees differently. Whether or not the division we opted for was desirable or not is an empirical question. For now emphasis is on methodological consequences of my role, which are fairly evident: The role I had gave me certain opportunities and limitations in relation to gathering of data. Some of the activities in the TMA I had firsthand experience with, others I did not. Some of the activities I had access to because of the mandate I had, others I did not. This means that how data are recorded, in what amount, and with what quality varies. This issue is further addressed in the overview of data below.

Overview over data gathered

To some extent it is fair to assert that the chosen approach to data gathering was opportunistic in the sense that data were gathered wherever and whenever possible, and unfocused in the sense that relevance of data for research issues and questions for a large part was determined after the completion of the TMA. The data that proved to be less relevant was subsequently labelled “background information”; i.e. secondary data not directly relevant to the research questions, yet useful in the sense of enhancing understanding the context of the primary data. This approach was deliberately chosen, principally because it was impossible to know in advance what activities (hence data) would prove to be of importance for the outcomes of the TMA. As the data are in different text formats and genres, and gathered by different people at different periods in time, it is quite a laborious task to make (and read) an account. Data can be organised in more ways than one, but the organising principle chosen here is to present them chronologically and according to activities participants engaged in. There is a reasonably clear timeline not only from establishing DOAS in 1998-99 via TMA in 1999-2000 through to processes in DOAS in the aftermath of the TMA up to 2005, but also within the TMA-period. Although the activities participants engaged in during this period may seem bewildering, they can all be categorised by how they relate to the objectives with the TMA. Chronology and activities thus provide the structure in which data will be presented.

Table 3.2 Overview of data used in subsequent chapters

Activity	Participating group			Own part.	Primary data doc. in
	Service workers	TMG	CHPS – others		
Chapter 4: The Department of Adolescent Services					
Reorganising of Sagene-Torshov municipality (among other things leading to the creation of DOAS)					Official documents and notes. Comments in taped and transcribed conversations (TTC)
Chapter 5: Planning of the tailor-made approach (TMA)					
Planning TMA-framework					Own and others' notes
Planning TMA-content					Own and others' notes
Planning TMA-course requirements					Curriculum, planning notes, hand-outs
Recruiting employees					Comments in TTC
Chapter 6: The "Workplace development projects' decision making processes					
Chapter 7: What the "Workplace development projects" did, and consequences thereof					
Gatherings					Own notes
"Meta-reflection" with WDPs					TTC
Feedback from TMG to WDPs				Some	WDPs' and own notes
Project activities				Some	WDPs' and own notes
Project documentation				Some	WDP's notes and reports
WDP- group meetings					WDPs' notes
Supervision from CHPS					Indirect accounts in TTC
"Spin-off" activities					Indirect accounts in TTC
Meetings CHPS					Own notes, TTC
Chapter 8: Activities outside the TMA, and conclusions					
TMG's project activities					TMG's notes
TMG's project documentation					TMG's report
Meetings TMG-CHPS					TTC
Spin-off activities TMG					Comments in TTC
Activities in aftermath of TMA				Some	Own notes, various notes and reports of others

The table includes 19 types of activities in all, of which I participated in 11 (only to some extent though in four of these). Some of the activities took place prior to CHPS' involvement (reorganising of municipality) and some in the aftermath. All data from activities were documented in texts, varying between transcriptions of taped conversations, own field notes and summaries, other participants' notes from various activities, other participants' project reports, various documents produced as part of the TMA, reports from other sources, and official documents. Allowing different text formats the total number of pages exceeds 2.000

pages. Even though all relevant activities were documented, it is evident that amount and quality of data varies, as will be explored in the following paragraphs.

Data do not include any account of the TMA-participants' names, gender, age, tenure, profession or organisation unit affiliation. Given that the research issue and research questions puts emphasis on *relationships* between participants there was no need for such data. Still, a rudimentary description of the participants is useful for providing an image of who they were: The majority of participants were women, more than half had professional training, they were employed in all four main types of units in DOAS (day-care centres, maternal and school health services, child care, youth relief services), their mean age was approximately 40 years, and they varied considerably in tenure. While all these variables undoubtedly could be relevant when analysing occurrences in the TMA, the number of participants was not large enough to allow meaningful comparisons between for instance men and women, or between participants having different professional training or unit affiliations. In the data analyses one exception is done though. As participants in the WDP-groups were fairly balanced on tenure, it was possible – and proved interesting on a couple of occasions – to compare statements made by those with long and short tenure respectively, without running the risk of jeopardising their anonymity.

Data for chapter 4: The Department of Adolescent Services

Consistent with the settings approach explained in chapter 2.5 it was important for CHPS to understand the rationale behind the creation of DOAS in 1998-99. What issues and objectives did the politically elected owners want to pursue? How did they choose to reorganise the municipality's public services? How did political trends at the national level influence the municipality's decisions? How was DOAS intended to operate, and with what formal structures? How were employees involved in and affected by the process and outcomes of the reorganisation? CHPS' objective was to understand not only what they were trying to accomplish in their work practices, but also why and building on what experiences? As determined in chapter 1.5 these research questions were highlighted when examining the process that led to the creation of DOAS. The TMA was intended to change

existing work practices, but in order to do so it was vital to understand in what direction DOAS-employees wanted to change, and what manoeuvrable they space had.

Documents on the creation of DOAS were not plentiful, yet rich in information on rationale and objectives. Most prevalent were case notes and protocols from the political process leading up to the decision to establish DOAS. These documents typically discussed various organisational alternatives in relation to national and local political objectives, and also provided data on demography and living conditions in the municipality. This information was also addressed in meetings between CHPS and TMG, enabling CHPS to clarify how it was intended. The documents did not contain information about employees' reactions to the reorganising, and consequently the exposition in chapter 4 is not particularly comprehensive. Employees' reactions to previous organisation changes in the municipality emerged particularly at the beginning of the TMA, often in the form of explanations as to why they were optimistic or pessimistic about sustaining change initiatives in DOAS. In that sense the reorganising "lived on" and influenced the TMA, but how and why is not explored until chapter 6.

Data for chapter 5: Planning of the tailor-made approach (TMA)

The planning of the TMA was a collaborative effort by DOAS and CHPS. What was the rationale for developing the TMA as a framework for supporting organisation learning? What were the objectives the TMA was intended to contribute to? How were DOAS-employees involved in planning the course "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice" and the workplace development projects? What competence challenges did DOAS-employees identify? How was the curriculum in the course adapted to DOAS' requests? How and what employees were recruited to the TMA? What were the opportunities and risks with the TMA? As determined in chapter 1.5 these research questions are highlighted in relation to the planning of the tailor-made approach.

As shown in tables 3.1 and 3.2 I was a full CHPS-participant in the planning of the TMA. As such I took part in all planning activities conducted at CHPS, and all meetings between CHPS

and the TMG. I took extensive notes from all meetings, all of which were transcribed. In addition I gathered all documents produced as part of the planning process. Furthermore, I wrote extensive notes documenting my own reflections at the time. The amount and types of planning can be summarised as follows:

Table 3.3 Overview of activities and data sources from the TMA planning process

Activity	Amount of interaction DOAS-CHPS	Type of documentation	Time period
Planning CHPS-TMG (framework and content)	6 meetings	Own notes	April 1999- January 2000
Seminars with 40+ DOAS- employees (content)	2 x 2 days seminars	Own notes	June 1999 and November 1999
Planning at CHPS (framework, content and course)	Not relevant	Various documents (sketches, drafts, summaries, plans, curriculum, e-mails)	June 1999- January 2000

Documenting my own participation in initiating and developing the tailor made approach provided me with good data on early intentions, and good data on the process of planning the course in interdisciplinary collaboration, herein also involvement of DOAS-employees in developing the curriculum.

Experiences within the three participant groups (TMG, WDP, CHPS) from the planning process also emerged during later conversations in the TMA, thereby adding to the data I generated or obtained in the actual planning process.

Recruitment of DOAS-participants to the TMA was TMG's responsibility, but the issue was addressed in several meeting between TMG and CHPS. The deliberations were documented in notes from the meetings. How DOAS-participants experienced the recruitment process was addressed on several occasions in later conversations that were taped and transcribed.

Data for chapters 6 and 7: The WDP-groups' decision making and project activities

Chapters 6 and 7 highlight the workplace development groups' experiences with the TMA. The six WDP-groups all carried out their project activities in the period from February to November 2000. Chapter 6 highlights the sub-process Enable- Explore, as detailed in model 1.1. This sub-process formally started when the WDP-groups were constituted in February 2000, and ended with WDP-groups deciding on their project activities. Chapter 7 highlights the sub-process Explore-Effect, and examines the project activities the WDP-groups engaged in including completion of their project reports. Somewhat simplified: Chapter 6 examines the WDP-groups' decision making processes, whereas chapter 7 examines the WDP-groups' activities following decisions. The data sources are the same for these two sub-processes, and so they are presented concurrently in this chapter. The chapters address different research questions though:

In chapter 6 the first question to address is what mandates the WDP-groups were given? In addition it was important to establish what they wanted to accomplish by participating in the TMA? What did they see as important for realising their objectives? How did their previous experiences with organisation change in the municipality influence their expectations? What were their initial project ideas? How were these ideas modified by feedback from the TMG and CHPS? What were their final project decisions? How did they arrive at these decisions? What could be learned from this sub-process with relevance for the next sub-process? Illuminating these research questions (also included in chapter 1.5) allows an in-depth analysis of the decision making processes WDP-groups engaged in.

In chapter 7 the first question to address is what activities WDP-groups actually carried out after decisions were made? What did they accomplish relative to their own objectives and the mandates they had been given? How did they document and evaluate their projects? What did they learn from their projects? What did they learn from interacting in groups? What did they learn about their DOAS-colleagues? How did they use what they learned from WDPs or other features of the TMA in their daily work practices? How did CHPS influence

their learning processes? (These research questions were also included in chapter 1.5.) Emphasis in this chapter is thus not only on effects of their projects, but on what they learned that could be useful for subsequent work practice in DOAS.

Documenting WDP-groups' activities:

The activities the WDP-groups engaged in are crucial for documenting their processes, i.e. their processes became manifest in what they did (herein also said and listened to) during the approximately nine month long project period. As previously mentioned and shown in table 3.2, it is fairly easy to identify the activities WDP-groups engaged in as part of the TMA. They 1) participated in gatherings (5 x 2 days) organised by CHPS and open to all DOAS-participants, 2) engaged in "meta-reflection" with me as a process facilitator on how their workplace development projects associated with the TMA were related to their everyday work practices, 3) had meetings or other forms of communication with TMG in order to clarify mandate and resources for what they planned to do and actually did, 4) carried out project activities in DOAS, 5) documented their activities ending up with project reports which also served as exams in "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice", 6) had individual WDP-group meetings in which they discussed course material and planned project activities, 7) got supervision from CHPS on their WDPs, and 8) (to a varying degree) took initiatives in their everyday work practices inspired by the TMA ("spin-off activities"). All these data sources provide information on both sub-processes (Enable-Explore, Explore-Effect), although 4) and 8) predominately provide information on Explore-Effect.

The data I have from these activities vary considerably. An important distinction is between activities I participated in (the first five) and those I did not (the last three). Within the first category there is a further distinction between activities I participated in extensively (gatherings and "meta-reflection"), and activities I only partially took part in (meetings between WDPs and TMG, WDP's project activities, and WDP's documentation of their activities). More specifically concerning the activities I participated in fully, I was mostly observing in gatherings (which I documented with own notes), whereas I was actively initiating meta-reflection with WDP-groups (which I documented using audio recordings). Finally I took no part in WDP-groups' regular meetings, in CHPS-supervision of the WDPs, or

in “spin-off” activities initiated by participants in their everyday work practices so to speak “outside” of TMA.

The three types of activities I did not participate in were clearly outside my mandate. I had no role in WDP-groups’ meetings where they discussed course material and concrete project activities; no role in CHPS-supervision of projects (as explained earlier we were concerned about the distinction between project supervision and “meta-reflections”); and no role in spin-off activities outside the TMA. My assessment was that it would make my role unclear if I observed or interviewed participants about these activities. This is a somewhat problematic consequence of the action research approach (to be discussed in chapter 3.2), because important activities in the TMA were not documented as completely as I would have liked to. At the same time it is important to note that the chosen approach still provided “indirect” data on activities I did not participate in, for instance comments made in conversations and the WDP-groups’ own documentation.

My level of engagement in activities deviated slightly from the activities that were planned in advance (as outlined in table 3.1.), but it was still within the mandate I had as “process facilitator”. I informed the participants that I could – if they wanted me to – participate in activities concerning how the TMA functioned as a framework for supporting organisation learning. The slight deviation was related to the three types of activities I participated in to some degree. As detailed in the table below I was invited to some such activities, i.e. meetings between WDPs and TMG, WDPs’ project activities, and assisting in WDPs’ documentation process. Taken together my engagement with WDPs – outside the ten full-day gatherings where all DOAS-participants were invited to attend – can be summarised as follows:

Table 3.4 Hours of interaction I had with each of the six WDP-groups

	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Total
Scheduled conversations	5	4	5	4	4	5	27
Meetings between WDP-groups and TMG	1,5	1,5					3
WDPs project activity		3		6		3	12
WDP's project documentation	3,5	1,5	1,5		2		8,5
Hours total	10	10	6,5	10	6	8,5	50,5
Number of meetings (N)	7	7	6	6	5	6	37

Group numbers in the table are randomised. Numbers within each box refer to time used (hours) unless otherwise stated, rounded to the nearest half hour. In total I interacted with the six WDP-groups for just over 50 hours. Although the number of hours were markedly fewer with some (groups 3 and 5) than others, I was satisfied with being able to meet each group at least five times during the period February to November 2000. Each of the four types of meetings I had with WDP-groups provided different data:

Scheduled conversations

There were five scheduled conversations with each WDP-group, the purpose of which was to facilitate their learning processes by initiating “meta-reflections” on the TMA. Three groups attended all meetings, and three groups attended four out of five meetings. The attendance was higher than I realistically expected, because “meta-reflections” would be the easiest activity to cancel if groups were pressed for time, as the other activities they were engaged in were directly related either to the course or the workplace development projects. There was usually one or two group members not attending the scheduled conversations, but this did not seem to inhibit participants from engaging.

All scheduled conversations except two hours (due to technical problems) were taped and transcribed, providing a body of text of app. 560 pages (400 words per page). The quality of audio produced by the recording device (a small MiniDisc with a tiny external microphone) was very high, and there were hardly any occasions where I found it impossible to identify

what was said or by whom, despite all conversation being in groups with sometimes animated discussions. The recording device was also completely silent.

No participant expressed any discomfort about the conversations being taped. When asked the most frequent answer was that the issues we discussed were not experienced as person sensitive, and many also said they felt confident that I would secure their anonymity. Nobody asked me to omit anything of what they said from data. Taken together I have no data to suggest that recording the conversations inhibited participants from speaking their minds.

All audio recordings were transcribed into text (Norwegian). Almost without exception I managed to transcribe the audio from conversations with a WDP-group before the next meeting with the group. All person sensitive information was omitted from the transcripts, and I used "(...)" to indicate such instances. The tapes were deleted after being transcribed. In each of the transcripts I assigned numbers to participants, so as to be able to recreate some of the dynamics in the conversations. However, I renumbered each participant (starting with 1, 2, etc) each time a new issue was introduced, so as to make it impossible to track what one particular individual said at different points in time. My own statements in conversations are marked "Q." (for "question"), and statements from other CHPS-employees are marked "CHPS".

It was inevitable that some meanings got "lost in translation" from Norwegian to English. When translating I emphasised the content in participants' statements. I tried to omit grammatical errors, and (although to a limited extent) to "straighten out" highly complicated sentence structures. I also included commas and full stops, so as to make it easier to follow participants' train of thought.

The audio tapes would have allowed me to use a more elaborate system of transcription than I did. A lot of information on the micro-interaction (pauses, punctuations, pitches, postures and so on) between participants was lost in the transcripts, but I included side comments on the prevailing mode statements were made in (for instance "humorous"). I decided not to use a more elaborate system than described here, mainly because my

emphasis was on overt and not covert meanings, and how such meanings evolved in interaction between participants. This issue is further addressed in chapter 3.2.

The two hours of scheduled conversations not recorded due to technical problems, were documented with extensive note taking and later transcribed, following the same procedure as for transcripts of audio recordings.

On several occasions already I have used the concept “conversations” on the communication I had with the WDP-groups, intended to stimulate “meta-reflections”. Prior to the TMA started I used a lot of time contemplating how the conversations should be organised, and also considered other approaches than what is here fairly loosely determined as “process facilitation”. In the tradition CHPS was most influenced by, originating from the Norwegian Work Research Institute, dialog conferences was a favoured approach (Ebeltoft, 1991, Pålshaugen, 1991, 2001, Engelstad, 1995). Such conferences are however organised to engage the entire work organisation concurrently in organisation development, and this was not the case in DOAS. An alternative was to engage participants in structured and deep mutual reflections on relationships between own assumptions and practices as in “collaborative inquiry” (Heron, 1996, Baldwin, 2001,), but the very basis for such inquiry is (extensive) experience with the subject addressed, whereas DOAS-participants were in a situation where they addressed challenges they had limited experience with. A third alternative, which I was closest to try to implement, was to structure the conversations as focus group interviews. With this approach I could act as a moderator encouraging participants to build on each others’ contributions (Morgan and Krueger, 1998), but the idea of pre-determining a focus seemed counter-productive among other things because it was likely that groups would be engaged in different issues in their projects.

What I in fact ended up with was to have no pre-determined structure for the “meta-reflections”; they were simply “conversations” starting out with me asking “what would you like to talk about today?”, or words to that effect. My “process facilitation” consisted mainly in encouraging all to participate by asking them questions, trying to sum up what they said and present such summaries to them, circle around issues of relevance to the TMA and their daily work practices, and – in particular – to ask about their experiences with their workplace

development projects. The first few meetings this approach made me feel somewhat incompetent, but as the conversations went on I felt increasingly confident about having such a “loose” approach. When transcribing I realised that what we had talked about was indeed relevant to their experiences with the TMA and everyday work practice, and because we met repeatedly (and I for the most part was able to transcribe between meetings) I could readdress issues and points made in previous meetings, thus being able to maintain a focus over time. I was surprised by how well this approach worked, but as will be discussed in chapter 8 this occurred probably because the approach allowed participants to become a “communicative sphere” before establishing a “communicative structure” (Kemnis, 2001), i.e. the conversations were a “meeting place” where participants could interact freely and get to know each other without having to produce something specific. Over time though, they became more interested in talking about concrete challenges they faced in their projects, thereby also (on occasion) altering the “facilitation frame” (see chapter 2.2) in ways that made it relevant to use more of my expertise in project work and documentation.

More generally the conversations were highly useful for seeing the various activities (listed above) in conjunction, for instance reflections on how issues raised in gatherings influenced project work in ways addressed in group meetings and supervisions, and so on. In fact, the conversations were much more centred on the relationship between activities than on any particular activity per se. It was particularly in this way the conversations provided “indirect” data on the activities I did not participate in.

WDP-groups’ contact with TMG, project activities and project documentation

As shown in tables 3.2 and 3.4 I participated to some extent in WDP-groups’ meetings with the top-management group (TMG), WDP-groups’ project activities, and their project documentation. Concretely I attended two meetings (with two separate groups referred to as group 1 and 2 in table 3.4) between WDPs and TMG. The purpose of the meetings was for the TMG to provide feedback on the WDP-groups’ project ideas. Analytically these meetings were positioned in the feedback loop from Explore to Enable in model 1.1. As will be described in chapter 5 such meetings were intended as part of the TMA, and a procedure was established to secure interaction between TMG and the WDPs prior to WDP-groups’

final decisions on what projects to undertake. Only two WDP-groups had meetings with TMG, and I attended both of them. The other groups received either written or oral feedback to one or two of its group members from the TMG. The amount of interaction between TMG and WDP-groups in this context was much lower than CHPS has anticipated, and consequences thereof will be addressed particularly in chapter 6. I do however have adequate data on the little interaction there was. I took extensive notes in the two meetings, which were then transcribed and made available to those attending each of the meetings. I also got access to the written feedback from TMG, and participants' (both in TMG and WDP-groups) experiences with feedback were addressed in conversations.

The project activities initiated by WDP-groups also had less scope than CHPS anticipated from the outset. This was (as will also be discussed in later chapters) a major problem for the TMA, but made it easily accomplishable to document what they actually did. I attended the activities initiated by three of the groups. Of the three others one group had a confined project activity (two meetings with a reference group), in which my participation clearly would have been counterproductive. The remaining two groups produced a video and a photo exhibition respectively, which I (as others) could see but not participate in. In addition to own documentation of project activities the WDP-groups provided extensive documentation themselves, which I asked for and got access to.

Concerning WDP-groups' project documentation the level of activity was high, as groups spent a lot of time writing up their project reports. Four of the groups wanted to address this activity specifically in conversations with me. To some extent this was problematic due to the division of labour between CHPS' supervisors and me as a process facilitator, but what in effect happened was that most of these conversations occurred after the supervision my colleagues engaged in had ended. Because an important part of the documentation process was to determine how the TMA had affected their everyday work practices I decided – after conferring with my CHPS-colleagues – to engage in these meetings. They were seen as an extension of the conversations, and as such taped and transcribed. Because they occurred at the end of the TMA they provided opportunities for participants to “pull it all together”, and as such generated highly useful data on the groups' overall experiences with the TMA.

Individual WDP-group meetings, supervision from CHPS, “spin-off” activities

As noted earlier I did not attend individual WDP-group meetings in which they discussed course material and planned project activities, nor supervision from CHPS to WDP-groups, nor WDP-participants’ initiatives in their everyday work practices inspired by the TMA (“spin-off activities”). As commented I got information on these activities indirectly in conversations. On the other hand, I also got access to the WDP-groups’ own ongoing documentation. The groups were by no means obliged to provide me their written material. I asked for – and got – permission to use such material as data in ways consistent with research ethics requirements (see chapter 3.3.).

The WDP-groups’ documents provided for the most part summaries from group meetings, background material and plans for their project activities, and drafts for their final reports (exams). There was also considerable variation between the groups as to what and how much they documented of their activities. I found the documents most useful for identifying what the groups were contemplating, and issues emerging in documents were often addressed in conversations.

By far the most extensive written information WDP-groups produced were project reports. Because these reports were exam assignments in the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”, they were tailored to meet exams requirements (see Appendix 2), and these requirements were in turn tailored to secure documentation of the groups’ reflections on own experiences with the TMA. In combination with observations I did of project activities the reports provided data on groups’ work processes so to speak “outside” of the conversations we had. Taken together; the WDP-groups’ ongoing documentation, their project reports, their comments on own work processes in conversations, and my observation of project activities in three of the groups, provided me with fairly extensive data on the groups’ work processes.

CHPS’ supervision of WDP-groups was commented both in conversations I had with WDP-groups, and in conversations with the CHPS-supervisors. This gave me a rudimentary

understanding of how participants experienced the supervision, but not enough data to evaluate CHPS' supervision practices comprehensively.

Finally, an important objective with the whole approach was that participants should use their learning experiences from the TMA in their everyday work practices. As commented earlier my mandate as process facilitator was not compatible with participating with individual employees in their "spin-off" initiatives, and so I have only indirect data (mostly through conversations, but also some in documents WDP-participants produced) on these activities. Data provide some interesting examples, but by no means a comprehensive documentation of initiatives taken "outside" the TMA.

Gatherings:

As mentioned earlier there were a total of ten (5x2) full-day gatherings as part of the TMA, which CHPS was responsible for organising. Each day was divided between lectures (typically before lunch) and group work (typically after lunch). Details on how the gatherings were organised are presented in chapter 5. I attended gatherings mostly as an observer, but was asked on occasion to comment on issues concerning the TMA. I could devote most of the time to take comprehensive notes to document what went on. These notes were mainly descriptive, noting what was said and done, and particularly what I could register of DOAS-participants' responses to the issues addressed and perspectives and methods presented. To some extent I also included my own reflections on what caught particular interest. The notes were transcribed and then given to the CHPS-employee who had been responsible for a gathering, allowing comparison between our understandings. My CHPS-colleagues found this approach interesting, but also artificial as we would normally not provide feedback to each other in such a manner. I therefore decided to change my approach, and instead addressed the issue of how gatherings impacted the participant groups' practices in conversations with DOAS-participants and my CHPS-colleagues respectively. Combining observation with discussing experiences in this way provided a fairly comprehensive understanding of how the gatherings influenced participants.

Conversations with CHPS-colleagues:

Data used for analysing the WDP-groups experiences also include data from taped and transcribed conversations I had with my CHPS-colleagues. These data offer alternative perspectives on some of the WDP-groups' experiences. As shown in table 3.1 we were five CHPS-employees engaged in the TMA. To some extent we had overlapping activities, and to some extent different activities. Definitely most engaged in the TMA were the project manager and myself. We were both central to the planning of the TMA, and participated on a regular basis in many different activities. The "senior" was not engaged in WDP-activities, and the two "teachers" were not engaged in TMG-activities. The participation of these three was thus more confined, and from the outset we saw this as a potential problem because the TMA was not "just a course" or "just a workplace development effort", but combined course and workplace development in ways that made interaction with both top-managers and service workers useful. During the TMA I had two 3-hour conversations with CHPS-colleagues that I taped and transcribed (using the same approach as for conversations with WDPs). Data from these conversations provide interesting information on how the role-set shown in table 3.1 functioned, and on the challenges for CHPS as an "outsider" (in relation to DOAS) in facilitation of employee empowerment processes.

Data for chapter 8: Activities outside the TMA, and conclusions

In chapter 8 the descriptive questions addressed – included also in chapter 1.5 – are what activities did the top-management group in DOAS initiate outside the tailor-made approach? How did their collaboration with CHPS influence how they initiated and carried out such activities? What did the TMG-members learn from these experiences, and what would they seek to do in their future work practices? What activities did the TMG initiate in the aftermath of the TMA, and what was the relevance of these activities for employee empowerment processes? Highlighting these research questions allows an analysis of activities that occurred outside the TMA, both concurrently and in the aftermath.

Chapter 8 highlights the top-management group's (TMG's) activities outside of yet concurrently with the TMA, as well as events and activities in DOAS in the aftermath of the

TMA. The TMG had a “workplace development project” that differed considerably from the WDP-groups consisting of service workers in DOAS. Firstly, the TMG was a “natural” group existing very much independently of the TMA, and not created as part of it (which was the case for the WDP-groups). Secondly, and as a consequence of the first point, the TMG were engaged in several workplace development issues in DOAS alongside TMA. Thirdly, the TMG had an overall responsibility DOAS’ work practices, and thus had a particular role in the employee empowerment process as depicted in model 1.1. They could vary means to enable other employees’ exploration of increased control, and they could decide whether or not new work practices were to be sustained.

Concerning data on the TMG’s activities the most important ones are once again taped and transcribed conversations, this time from meetings between TMG and CHPS. (The approach to taping and transcribing was the same as for conversations with WDP-groups and CHPS.) These meetings were typically divided between 1) TMG’s role towards other TMA-participants, and 2) the TMG’s workplace development initiatives within and outside of the TMA. These issues were very much related, as the TMG highlighted management practices in relation to employee empowerment processes. The conversations also provided detailed information on how the TMG used perspectives and methods from the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. There were a total of seven (taped) conversations between the TMG and CHPS during the course of the TMA, and I attended them all. In addition to the conversations the TMG’s project report provided important data on TMG’s assessment of their learning through the TMA. Data primarily documents TMG’s reflections on what they did, and not their actual activities which mostly took place in their everyday work practices in DOAS “outside” the TMA.

Activities in the aftermath of TMA

Although the TMA was a project the very idea with it was – by means of being a framework for supporting organisation learning as described in earlier chapters – to facilitate sustainable employee empowerment processes. It was therefore of great interest to monitor what happened in the aftermath of the TMA. Immediately after the course on “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” ended in December 2000, I was invited by DOAS

to participate in an effort to develop new municipal policies on adolescence. This gave me an opportunity to see how perspectives and practices initiated by the TMA were taken up in DOAS, especially as more DOAS-employees took part in the policy-making process than in the TMA. I also had ample opportunity to talk with employees in less formal circumstances than the taped group-conversations, which provided not so much new data as a deeper understanding of employees' experiences with the TMA. My participation ended in June 2001 and I had scarce contact with DOAS until autumn 2004, when I was invited by DOAS to attend a two-day seminar and give a lecture. This gave me the opportunity to attain data on how DOAS had continued to work with organisation learning and employee empowerment processes. These data were a mixture of own notes from the seminar, meetings and informal conversations, and notes and reports produced either by DOAS-employees or other institutions (than CHPS) they had collaborated with. My contact with DOAS ended in June 2005, with an oral presentation on the experiences with the TMA at an international conference prepared in collaboration with DOAS-employees (Hans A Hauge and Johansen, 2005).

It is evident that the data I have from the aftermath of the TMA are far more cursory than the data I have from the period the TMA was carried out. My data from the aftermath are not representative for all activities in DOAS, and – for the activities that were documented – not extensive. As time goes by it also becomes increasingly difficult to determine whether changes made were or were not motivated by experiences with the TMA. Still, the examples included in this thesis are compelling in the sense that they document changes in DOAS' organisational structure and ongoing work practices.

As promised in the introduction to this chapter section it was a fairly elaborate task to provide an account of the data used in this thesis, as well as a preliminary assessment of their relative strengths and weaknesses given the ambition "to document the TMA as completely as possible". Although all data are in texts there are – as shown – considerable variation between them. Taken together it is a fair assessment that they provide an extensive and (for the most part) continuous documentation of most – but not all – of the TMA-activities. A further examination of strengths and weaknesses in data relative to research questions is carried out in the next chapter section. Chapter 3.2 also specifies the

action research approach to data analyses chosen in this thesis, and asserts what type of knowledge can be produced with this approach.

3.2 Assessment of data and approach to data analysis

From the previous chapter section the following can be considered a fair summary of what characterises the data used in this thesis: The data documents most activities in the TMA-period from June 1999 to December 2000 extensively, in ways that allow a comprehensive analysis of the processes that were initiated. The action research approach made it possible to address issues and statements made at different points in time and in relation to different activities in all participant groups (WDP, TMG, CHPS). Of particular interest is of course how the TMA functioned as a framework for supporting organisation learning, how such learning influenced employee empowerment processes, and how employee empowerment influenced employee health and organisation performance. These issues can be addressed extensively by combining data from the action research processes the various participant groups engaged in.

The strength in data is in identifying what made it easier or more difficult for employees to become empowered, i.e. what happens when they try to increase control over work processes. For instance, it is possible to analyse what they contemplated when deciding what to do, how they decided, how they planned their activities, how they carried them out, how they assessed own practices in relation to what they wanted to accomplish, and what the consequences thereof were for organisation performance and employee health. Data also allows a tentative description of DOAS as a setting prior to and after the completion of the TMA-period, thereby making it possible to tentatively assess the overall impact of the TMA.

Taken together the data should be adequate for addressing the research questions highlighted in chapter 1.5. This does not mean that the data are without limitations and weaknesses that have to be addressed. These concerns are addressed in the subsequent paragraphs, before attention is directed towards choice of strategy for data analyses.

Quantity and quality of data

Concerning the TMA-period specifically it should be evident from chapter 3.1 that – despite being extensive when taken together – the quality of data differs considerably. However, it was possible to address all data sources in the conversations, or “meta-reflections”, I had with all participant groups. As commented in chapter 3.1 the conversations thus gave me a better understanding of data generated and gathered by all participant groups in the TMA. It was mostly conversations that documented participants’ reflections on what to do, how to do it, and their experiences after actually having done it (or done something other than they planned). It was particularly in conversations where reflections of relevance to employee empowerment, employee health and organisation performance emerged. In other words, the quality of data was definitely highest in the transcripts of conversations, and it is predominantly – but by no means exclusively – these data that are used in the empirical analyses in this thesis.

Confining data used from the TMA-period mostly to conversations is also helpful for one of the most challenging aspects in this research, namely amount of data. As commented in chapter 3.1 data consisted of more than 2.000 pages in total. In a qualitative investigation of this kind (a PhD) this is too much to analyse extensively, and ambitions to do so could reasonably be subjected to criticism for “reversed positivism” in the sense of “mirroring the positivist emphasis on large quantities of quantitative data with large quantities of qualitative data” (Kvale, 1996: 179). Kvale made his comment in the context of structured qualitative interviews, but the issue is somewhat different in an action research project where data are less focused in relation to research questions. This is true also for the taped and transcribed conversations, which include longer segments with scarce interest for the research questions. Such segments are nevertheless useful as background information, among other things for understanding the context in which statements were made or actions conducted, but they warrant no extensive analysis.

Unfortunately the challenge of having too much data is difficult to address beforehand in an action research approach of the type used here, fundamentally because a pre-defined methodological approach would be illogical. It is often impossible to ascertain the relevance

of events there and then. Whether or not an event will prove to be of importance depends on unpredictable chains of events. Participants may for instance come up with what seems to be an interesting idea or suggestion, but subsequent events proves it to be of little or no relevance. Conversely, a seemingly nonsensical statement may initiate an important chain of events. Hence, the better the documentation the easier to analyse the contexts in which events that proved to be important (or unimportant despite expectations of the opposite) were initiated. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that relevance of data can be asserted confidently. A rough estimate is that no more than a quarter of the data gathered was subjected to serious analysis. The remainder was – as stated above – used as background information.

What data are not good for

There are some obvious limitations in data, much related to my role as process facilitator. For instance, I was not able to gather structured data on how DOAS-participants – individually or in groups – worked with the curriculum in the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. In order not to confuse my role with the roles of the other CHPS-participants, I made it a point not to go deep into their course activities. Furthermore, as commented in chapter 3.1 my role was incompatible with following up individual employees’ “spin-off” activities (use of learning experiences in the TMA in daily work practices). Taken together, my role prevented me from obtaining structured data useful for evaluating “the course as a course” and “impact of the TMA on individual work practices”.

In addition, I have scarce data on how the TMA impacted clients and owners. This could be argued as a serious weakness in data, but – rather unfortunately – it is a consequence of the type and level of activities in the WDPs. Two of the groups addressed their colleagues exclusively. The other four groups conducted activities involving or otherwise affecting clients, but only marginally, as will be addressed in chapter 7. The data I have on these (marginal) activities are extensive though. Concerning DOAS’ owners, the publicly elected politicians (either in person or represented by the CEO of the entire municipal organisation), were informed about the TMA and invited to participate, but chose not to.

A more principled problem with data is that they are not good for establishing individual differences between participants. This is a consequence of emphasising relationships between participants and the activities they engaged in. For instance, I do not have data on employees' "work-life balance", which is emphasised in various approaches to workplace health (Polanyi et al., 2000, World Health Organization, 2010a). Individual differences tend to be suppressed in groups. Who says or does what and why is less important than consequences of what was said or done for interaction in the group. Typically someone will say something about an issue initiating various responses from other group members, either building on or contrasting that statement. How the issue is understood by the group is often ambiguous and multi-faceted, and always "in the making" as it is subjected to mutual investigations. The idea with the approach I used was precisely to document such processes, based on an understanding of employees as practicing in situations of flux, seeing how they deal with it as crucial for their empowerment processes. Conclusions or summary statements in groups like the WDPs can thus typically not be attributed to anyone in particular, yet to some extent to all. This does not mean that for instance subjective assertions and preferences never were stated, and that they could not be interpreted as expressions for instance of personality, values, professional training, tenure, age, gender, etc. However, statements were generally not responded to as subjective in the conversations. Instead the content of what was said entered ongoing discussions on issues.

It is evident that for instance (retrospective) qualitative interviews with individual employees would have provided data on individual differences, and would have been highly interesting as an alternative strategy to examine organisation learning, employee empowerment processes, and employee health and organisation performance. I did not have the capacity to conduct (and most likely not a role compatible with conducting) such interviews, which also would have required a revision of the research questions highlighted in chapter 1.5. These questions and the overarching research issue do not highlight individual differences, and do not require data on such differences to be analysed comprehensively. Highlighting relationships instead of individual differences did however present some challenges from a research ethics point of view, as will be addressed in chapter 3.3.

Alternative approaches to data analyses considered

The overall approach to research in this thesis was in chapter 1.5 determined as adhering to norms generally accepted within social sciences. Key concerns in such an “ethos of social science” are generating truthful and fruitful answers to academically and practically interesting questions using data and theoretical constructs; assessing (in wide terms) reliability and validity of data, influence of researcher subjectivity and activities on the research process, how unique or representative examples of social practice are; accounting for how weaknesses in data are approached; using constant comparison between different instances of what can be regarded as the same phenomenon; trying to disprove one’s favourite assumptions for instance by using a “devil’s advocate” strategy, and more generally develop habits of counterintuitive thinking, questioning definitions and premises, and linking findings and process analyses to other cases.

Whether or not this ethos is adhered to has to be assessed by examining the craftsmanship in how research is conducted, i.e. in gathering, managing, reporting, discussing and concluding from data. In that sense the “proof is in the pudding” and not in a particular recipe. The quality of research in this thesis thus has to be assessed “on its own merits”, and not for instance by how a specific framework has been used. This was by no means a pragmatic decision, as it would have made the task of analysing data much less laborious if a framework could have been applied. Common to such frameworks is that they provide their users procedures that increase likelihood of adhering to the ethos. They have typically been developed over time and based on experience, and provide guidelines for how truthful, fruitful, reliable, valid, and reflexive research can be accomplished.

The problem was that – due to what in chapter 3.1 was described as an opportunistic and unfocused approach to data gathering that resulted in a wide variety of data – no existing framework could be applied. Even more general and overarching approaches to data analyses could not reasonably be used. Concretely I considered three such approaches to data analysis in parts of this thesis; document analysis, conversation analysis, and participatory action research.

Concerning document analysis there are a number of approaches to choose from, but (apart from “deconstructivist” or “post-structuralist” approaches) they all share the characteristic of trying to discern the meaning or meanings intended by the authors of texts, by analysing the contexts in which they were written. Such an approach was not useful for texts produced as part of the TMA, where I could ask for intended meaning in conversations, and follow how meanings developed over time. I could have used methodology for document analysis on documents from the process leading up to the creation of DOAS, but my emphasis was on how the reorganising of the municipality affected employees’ opportunities to engage in employee empowerment processes, and not on what was intended by those responsible for the reorganisation. Consequently, I decided that it would be counterproductive to use time on such analyses, and instead used these documents to identify rationale and intentions with the reorganisation.

Conversation analysis (CA) was contemplated much because the data I use most extensively in this thesis are transcripts from conversations. CA highlights that conversations are not “just words”. People do different things in conversations or “micro-interaction”, for instance try to control how they are perceived by others (Goffman, 1992). CA offers a stringent system for punctuations, pauses, etc, so as to enable analysis of meanings so to speak “underneath” what is stated explicitly (Silverman, 2000).

Given the challenges associated with translating not only statements, but also the contexts they were uttered in, from Norwegian to English, it was evident that using CA would be even more time-consuming than it usually is. In addition CA requires training and competence I do not have. I decided not to invest time in such training and analysis not just for pragmatic reasons, but also because my emphasis was on the relationships between statements and actions between different groups at different points in time. For my research purposes CA would probably have been most relevant to analyse how facilitation frames (see chapter 2.2) evolves and changes in interaction. This would certainly have been an interesting addition to the research I conducted, but I did not find sufficient grounds to undertake it. With the (more shallow) approach I used I could still analyse (in rough) how changes in definitions of situations influenced facilitation practice.

Concerning participatory action research (PAR) this is a strategy for data analysis in high regard within action research. Emphasis on collaboration is generally strong in action research, not only as a means for generation of knowledge, but also as a means for democratic development (Pasmore, 2001, Greenwood and Levin, 1998). Within PAR it is strongly recommended that both researcher and practitioners are involved “in the research process from the initial design of the project through data gathering and analysis to the final conclusions and actions arising out of the research” (Whyte, 1991a: 7), hence, the research process is determined as a mutual responsibility (Whyte et al., 1989). A similar but not identical approach is “co-generative learning”, in which researchers bring forward scientific theories and practitioners bring forward local theories, seeing collaboration on combining theories as laying a foundation for testing out new actions to address concrete challenges, with the anticipated benefit of (for practitioners) improved practice and (for researchers) improved general theory (Elden and Levin, 1991).

In this research project it was not possible to adopt a PAR-strategy from the outset. As explained in chapter 1 there were three participant groups (TMG, WDPs, and CHPS) having different mandates and being engaged in different work practices. The idea was never to research collaboratively, but on the other hand it was obvious that the participant groups influenced each other mutually. In that sense data were not exclusively “theirs” or “mine”, they were also “ours”. The mutual influence was not limited to direct interaction, because each group had to anticipate consequences of their actions for the other groups. Although my approach was not consistent with PAR or co-generative learning, I nevertheless invited participants both from DOAS and CHPS to engage in my research process, asking them to read and comment both data and notes I made during the TMA. Unfortunately this approach was not successful, as participants could not find the time to engage. Although it could have been useful if they had engaged, I am not too concerned about consequences for data analysis. Research requires time, interest and competence, and serious contributions to my separate research process could not realistically be expected because they were seriously engaged in their own research processes.

Validity in data generated through action research

In chapter 1.5 several consequences of this thesis being based on an action research approach were addressed. It was emphasised that this research is intended as a contribution to existing bodies of knowledge (and not confined to particular participants or a particular setting), and it was argued that action research is integrated in and not detached from other approaches to social science. It was also argued that action research can be particularly useful for generating knowledge on social processes and how they can be changed. In order for that to happen, it is necessary to adhere to norms for how social science is to be practiced, i.e. an ethos of social science. Certainly central among these norms are to assess validity and reliability of data. Reliability of data was addressed above and in chapter 3.1. Validity of data is a more complicated issue though, particularly in the context of action research.

As referred to in chapter 1.5 action research has been criticised for “amateurism” (Fals Borda, 2001) and “sloppiness” (Dick, 2003, Eikeland, 2003). Various explanations as to why range from time (Eikeland, 2003), via competence (Greenwood, 2002), to other ideals for research (Reason, 2003a). Concerning this latter concern, other ideals for research, it has been discussed if the issue of (research) validity should be dismissed in action research altogether (Wolcott, 1990), “because the discourse is inextricably bound to the ideals of positivism” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001: 447). Instead it is suggested that action research should emphasise “engagement, dialogue, pragmatic outcomes and an emergent, reflexive sense of what is important (because) truth results from an emancipatory process, one which emerges as people strive towards conscious and reflexive emancipation, speaking, reasoning and co-ordinating action together, unconstrained by coercion” (op. cit).

A less pointed approach to this issue is to argue that “truth can only emerge in settings where all assertions are equally open to critical scrutiny, without fear or favour” (Kemnis, 2001: 93). Hence, whether or not participants see interaction as open and without hidden agendas has major consequences for validity of data, because they will act and talk strategically (as opposed to communicatively) if they fear consequences of speaking their

minds. Seen like this research validity depends on the quality of communication between participants in a research process.

A different validity criterion is how action research succeeds in developing new practice, i.e. if the constructive intent in action research yields more desirable practices or not. "Action research aims to set in motion processes by which participants collectively make critical analyses of the nature of their practices, their understandings, and the settings in which they practice in order to confront and overcome irrationality, injustice, alienation (...) (This is the criterion against which the quality of action research is to be evaluated as *research*" (Kemnis and McTaggart, 2000: 592-593 italics in original). Seen like this "(v)alidity claims are based on figuring out whether the knowledge created leads to concrete actions that really solve the 'practical' problem at hand" (Levin and Greenwood, 2001: 105), and the "credibility-validity of action research knowledge is measured according to whether actions that arise from it solve problems (workability) and increase participants' control over their own situation" (Greenwood and Levin, 1998: 76). Emphasis on "workability" and "increased participant control" as criteria for validity is of course interesting in the context of this research. Precisely these criteria are used in a strong defence of action research, arguing that it "is not only scientific, but it insists on much stronger criteria and processes for creating new knowledge. Not only must the theories pass the acid test of being negotiated by the involved parties, but the knowledge must also pass the test of creating workable solutions to real-life problems" (Levin and Greenwood, 2001: 105).

There is however a third criterion that should not be dismissed either, which is closely related to the "ethos of social science" that was discussed in chapter 1.5. All three criteria are included in a typology developed outside of action research, intended for use in qualitative social research by Steinar Kvale (1995). He differentiates between communicative, pragmatic and craftsmanship validity.

- Communicative validity involves testing conflicting knowledge claims in dialog. Participants present arguments that are collaboratively scrutinised for the purpose of establishing mutual agreement on what is an accurate description of a phenomenon.

- Pragmatic validity literally means “to make true”; hence validity of knowledge claims are demonstrated through their applications.
- Craftsmanship validity refers to the credibility of the researcher, particularly based on strength of attempts to refute knowledge claims, for instance through looking for negative evidence, checking out rival explanations, following up surprises, and triangulation.

It is evident that all three validity criteria are relevant to the research reported in this thesis. In the groups established by the TMA knowledge claims were tested in conversations. Furthermore, the ambition with the TMA was to make employee empowerment processes conducive to sustainable productivity, and the “pragmatic validity” of this endeavour can certainly be assessed. However – and this is a major point – without emphasis on craftsmanship validity it would (in principle) be impossible to assert either communicative or pragmatic validity. The point is that establishing if statements in conversations are representative and “free of force or favour”, and establishing if changed work practices are actually leading to desirable outcomes, prerequisites craftsmanship validity. Without this third type of validity it will be impossible to assess whether or not action research produces what Silverman (2000) has called “defensible knowledge claims”.

What may make this task easier is that, at least in theory, action research has an internal self-propelling logic for strengthening communicative, pragmatic and craftsmanship validity. Action research is about constantly revising ideas (theories) based on assessments of practice (data), so as to realise desired objectives. It is about “making good practice” or “making practice good”, and as such validity can be strengthened through processes of doing and learning. Whether or not validity was strengthened in this way in the research documented here, is an empirical question that will be analysed in subsequent chapters. Finally, there is also the issue of how process knowledge can be generated by means of action research. This issue can be illustrated with a landscape metaphor.

What type of knowledge is generated through this action research project?

A landscape metaphor

An action research process can metaphorically be seen as a collaborative journey to reach a desired destination, in a landscape that from the outset only can be conceived in rough. Participants have different ideas on which route to take; some are hesitant or reluctant to the journey altogether and may want to stay foot or go back at any given time. Practitioners and researchers share on taking the lead, depending on the changing characteristics of the terrain. Emerging obstacles have to be faced, sometimes necessitating retreat and search for alternative routes. On other occasions short-cuts present themselves in parts of the landscape where obstacles were expected. Using time and energy to try and keep the group together have to be balanced with participants' requests to find their own routes. For everyone participating in the journey weather is an unpredictable factor. Unexpected storms may make it impossible to continue, and sustained bad weather may shatter motivation for continuing. If the weather is reasonable the journey may make participants aware of other, more desirable destinations, thereby diverting the course from what was intended from the outset. Even if a destination is reached there is no way of knowing in advance if the journey would be worth the effort; to some it might and to others it might not. Thus, action research resembles hiking in the Norwegian mountains insofar as it is more realistic to say one is "going in the direction of" than saying one is "going to" a particular destination. And, as with hiking in concrete landscapes, the experience of being on a journey may turn out to be more fulfilling than reaching the destination.

Of course there are limitations to all metaphors. For instance, a work organisation cannot choose destinations solely based on participants' preferences, or remain in a state of enjoying hiking without reaching destinations *others* (owners, clients) also see as desirable. Nevertheless, the landscape metaphor provides a reasonable image of the epistemological strategy used in this action research project. It directs attention to

- Unexpected circumstances may make it necessary to postpone, retreat or set new objectives.

- Choice of concrete approaches for realising objectives depends on the situation at hand.
- Collaboration between participants with differing preferences may present major challenges.
- Participants develop better understanding of the setting (“landscape”) by trying to change its practices (“find new routes”).

From a theoretical point of view the most interesting events on such journeys occur when unexpected things happen, i.e. when there are “surprises” or even “breakdowns” in existing understandings that cannot be accounted for by existing theories (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2005). Seen like this action research is “on the scene” when knowledge is generated.

From a practice point of view it is evident that other work organisations face the same or similar landscapes and would like to reach the same or similar destinations, e.g. public service organisations wanting to facilitate employee empowerment. They can make good use of learning about difficulties and opportunities encountered, and how they can be dealt with when trying to change work practices. This can be seen not only as “mapping the landscape” (topography), but also – and probably more important – as a set of itineraries; descriptions of routes in the landscape and advise on where to go and how to get there. As noted by Kalleberg (1995, 1992) constructive questions are typically answered with recommendations or dissuasions. Knowing what *not* to do may be just as valuable as recommendations on what to do. The landscape metaphor is addressed again in chapters 7 and 8.

3.3 Research ethics

In action research there is relatively little emphasis on formal procedures for protecting human subjects, and no serious discussion on a “code of ethics”. Typically espoused is that “no action can be taken without agreement among the collaborators. It is hard to imagine a research process with greater human subjects protection.” (Greenwood, 2002: 134). However, good intentions are certainly not a guarantee for good practice. Arguing that action research is research “with” as opposed to “on” people must be understood as an ideal, not as an a priori established fact. Action research invariably means deliberate attempts to change existing social practices, and consequences for subjects involved may be difficult or impossible to anticipate. Furthermore, agreement is no guarantee against abuse of or retribution against participants from outside agents; for instance it is ethically questionable to encourage participants to take actions that may put them in harm’s way (Rowlands, 1997).

From a “practical ethics” (consequences of research as opposed to formal procedures for how research is to be conducted) point of view, the critical issue for action research is what consequences changes initiated by research have for participants. In general change should not only be desirable, but also feasible and worth the effort (Kalleberg, 1992). As it is highly unlikely that all participants’ judgements on these counts will concur, it is fair to conclude that action research activates ethical dilemmas that have to be dealt with more or less continuously. The issue in this context is how manifest and latent conflicts are dealt with in practice; as a part of and not detached from the research process.

The research this thesis is based on was also subjected to formal procedures for protection of persons. Concretely, from start to finish, this research project followed the code of ethics established in 1999 by the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH, 1999/ 2001). This committee does not approve or reject research projects, but provides information and guidelines on research ethics. Of particular importance in this research project were guidelines concerning protection of persons:

Obligation to obtain consent.

Participants in the tailor-made approach were informed both verbally and in writing about the purpose of my research, and that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time without negative consequences for themselves. The conversations I taped was part of the tailor made approach, but participating in them was not mandatory either in the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” or in the “workplace development projects”. Consequently, participants could withdraw from my research project without having to withdraw from either of the two components of the TMA. In practice, nobody chose to withdraw from the research project.

Responsibility for clear role definition.

As underlined previously in this chapter I had a role as a process facilitator. The participants were informed about this, and they were made aware of how they could “use” me, by inviting me to take part in activities related to the tailor-made approach. The participants were also informed that my research during the TMA was paid by the Research Council of Norway, and that my activities in the planning process were paid by CHPS. I also informed participants about my employment at CHPS. Clearly I had to deal with conflicting loyalties. My solution to this challenge was to insist on being loyal to the agreed upon objectives for the tailor-made approach, and I informed all participants about this decision. During the two years I was engaged in collaboration with DOAS I experienced two situations in which my loyalty was questioned, neither of them related to protection of persons. One situation occurred when I gave a project group advice contrary to that given by one of my CHPS-colleagues. The other situation occurred when I was perceived as a messenger for service workers to the top-management group. Both situations were swiftly clarified, and as far as I could establish without negative consequences for anyone.

The confidentiality requirement.

Persons who are subjected to research are entitled to confidential treatment of information on personal matters. A number of measures were taken to secure confidentiality. As the

approximately 50 participants (including those from CHPS) were divided into eight groups that I met on a regular basis, I did not need a register to keep track of participants. Still, participants could be identified for instance by what they told me in conversations. As the focus of my research was on work practices I had no need for personally sensitive information. I therefore omitted all such information – of which there was very little – from data. Consequently, I did not record any personal information on any of the participants, and could make sure that this was done consistently as I transcribed all notes and audio tapes myself. The other data I obtained – predominantly various notes from DOAS-participants – did not contain person sensitive information. The research material was kept under lock and key.

Participants were offered to read and comment the transcripts from group conversations in their respective groups, so as to enable them to identify statements they wanted to omit from data. Participants were not allowed to take the transcripts outside of the group setting. No one suggested or demanded that any of their statements should be excluded from data. I never discussed conversations with a group outside that particular group, and found that to be surprisingly easy, most likely because my role as process facilitator required that I participated on the basis of my own understandings.

Finally, as data were not obtained from or compatible with register data, and did not entail person sensitive information, they were not licensed by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

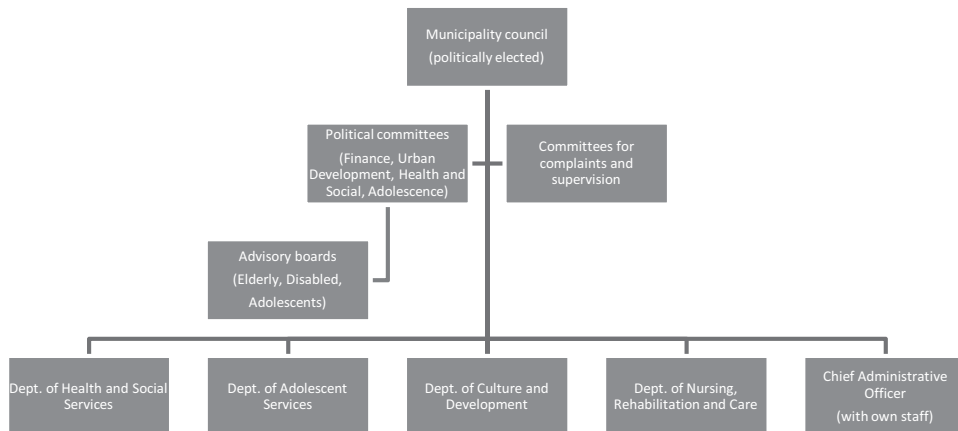
The next chapter is the first of altogether five chapters based on empirical analyses relevant to the research questions specified in chapter 1.5. Chapter 4 is on DOAS as a setting, chapter 5 is on the planning of the TMA, whereas each of the chapters 6-8 addresses one of the three sub-processes in the model of employee empowerment processes in chapter 1.4. Chapter 8 also includes analyses of what occurred in DOAS in the aftermath of the TMA, and a set of conclusions based on all empirical analyses in this thesis.

Chapter 4 The Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS)

This chapter positions the Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) as a setting so to speak within three other settings it is interlocked: The municipal formal organisation, the municipality with its inhabitants, and the Norwegian welfare state. All these (larger) settings influenced DOAS' practices directly and indirectly, and thereby also opportunities for employee empowerment. Furthermore, this chapter section provides a brief presentation of the concrete reorganising of Sagene-Torshov municipality, which led to the creation of DOAS in 1998-99. This reorganising was directly relevant to how, over what work practices, and for what purposes DOAS-employees could increase their control. Taken together this chapter addresses research questions raised in chapter 1.5, on: What issues and objectives did the politically elected owners want to pursue by creating DOAS? How did they choose to reorganise the municipality's public services? How did political trends at the national level influence the municipality's decisions? How was DOAS intended to operate, and with what formal structures? How were employees involved in and affected by the process and outcomes of the reorganisation? What was it DOAS wanted to change in its existing work practices, why, and building on what experiences? Answers to these questions are summarised at the end of the chapter.

The organisational structure of Sagene-Torshov municipality

Sagene-Torshov was in 1999 one of 25 municipalities in Oslo County, with the Municipality Council as its highest authority. Members of this council were elected in nationwide county- and municipality referendums every four years, and most often represented political parties. Politically elected representatives also took part in committees doing executive work for the Municipal Council. These committees had delegated decision making authority on administrative issues. There were four such committees in 1999 (Finance; Urban Development; Health and Social Services; and Adolescence). In addition there were committees with politically elected representatives working with complaints from clients, and with supervision of services.

Figure 4.1 Sagene-Torshov's organisation after reorganising in 1998-99

The municipality structure also entailed permanent non-political advisory boards, whose members were nominated to represent population groups. In 1999 there were three such advisory boards (Elderly; Disabled; and Adolescents). They had the right to assess and comment issues of particular interest to their respective interest groups before the Municipality Council made their decisions.

The municipality administration was headed by a Chief Administrative Officer, who had the dual responsibility of preparing case notes for the Municipal Council and the committees, and carrying out the decisions made by these bodies. The administration had delegated decision making power on a number of issues, for instance decisions that were regulated by politically approved standardised procedures, like ranking applicants for day-care centres. The Chief Administrative Officer had a staff to perform support functions, e.g. personnel administration. The majority of the approximately 1.200 employees in 1999 were assigned to work in one of the four departments, predominantly in direct interaction with clients. The departments were organised around fairly discriminate target areas, their names being

descriptive of the services they provided (Health and Social Services; Adolescence; Culture and Development; and Nursing, Rehabilitation and Care). The relative importance of these services was to some extent subjected to continuous change, as the demography in the municipality was changing.

Characteristics of the municipality

In 1998 there were 27.096 inhabitants in Sagene-Torshov municipality, with an expected annual population growth of 0.3% in the foreseeable future (Bydelsutvalget Sagene-Torshov, 1998). The demographic composition was skewed compared with other municipalities in Oslo. In Sagene-Torshov 10.7% of inhabitants were aged 0-15 years, compared with 17.2% on average in the same age group for all 25 municipalities in Oslo county (Sagene Torshov bydelsforvaltning, 1999). Conversely the proportion of elderly inhabitants – particularly 80 years of age and older – was substantially higher in Sagene-Torshov than average for Oslo. The reason for this was the housing structure in Sagene-Torshov, with 70% of homes being small flats (compared with Oslo's average of 40%). In addition 40% of Oslo's publicly owned homes were located in the municipality. As these homes were provided to those having social and health problems – often associated with substance abuse – living conditions for adolescents in or nearby such families were problematic (Bydelsutvalget Sagene-Torshov, 1998).

Sagene-Torshov also scored consistently below average on quality of life measures, and lowest among all Oslo's municipalities on a combined index used for allocation of resources by Oslo's parliament (Bydelsutvalget Sagene-Torshov, 1998). This index combined indicators on life expectancy, education, income, unemployment, disabilities, social benefits, mobility (proportion of inhabitants moving to a different municipality) and housing. For instance, Sagene-Torshov had a high proportion of single parents (47% compared with Oslo's average of 32%); average income was 78% of Oslo average; and 20% of inhabitants moved out of the municipality every year. The municipality also had an above average proportion of inhabitants (15%) being immigrants from developing countries.

These figures were changing fairly rapidly at the time DOAS was created. Sagene-Torshov was becoming a more attractive municipality for high-income groups due to its proximity to the city centre. New homes were constructed, and small flats were converted to family units. House prices were rising, gradually forcing low-income inhabitants to move to other municipalities. In addition publicly owned homes were to be dispersed more evenly between municipalities. With more families moving into Sagene-Torshov the estimate for 1995-2005 was an annual growth of approximately 2% in the age group 0-15 years, and an annual decline of approximately 3% in the age group 67 years and older.

The need for adolescent services was thus rising. At the same time there had been an annual cut of 2% in the municipality's total budget every year from 1996, while costs to employee salaries had increased. On top of that the municipality had been allotted new tasks, such as care for mentally disabled and substance abusers. The situation was challenging, and as commented in chapter 1.3 DOAS was in a situation where it had to do "more for less", i.e. provide more (and more diversified) services at lower costs.

Organisational flexibility in dealing with "more for less"

The municipality of Sagene-Torshov's opportunities to decide on its own organisation for provision of services, were greatly influenced by developments in the relationship between state and municipal levels in Norway. In general relationships between central and local levels are characterised by a tension between decentralisation and centralisation. At the time DOAS was created decentralisation was very much the order of the day.

Decentralisation is a construct that typically refers to two different dimensions in the relationship between state and municipal levels (Rømming, 1999). One dimension is delegation of tasks; the other dimension is delegation of political decision making authority. If delegation of tasks is not accompanied by delegation of political decision making authority, the municipal level becomes little more than an instrument for executing state politics. If, on the other hand, the municipal level has full political decision making authority, it will be impossible to attain equal standards of services for all citizens irrespective of which

municipality they happen to live in. As both state enforced equity and vibrant democratic processes at the municipal level are desirable, a tension is created.

How the tension between universal equality and local autonomy is sought resolved varies over time and between nations. For the past few decades there has been a global trend of sanctioning individual and group rights to services by law, while simultaneously decentralising responsibility for providing the services (Bauman, 1998). This is true for Norway as well (Selle, 1991, Johnsen, 1997). In essence this means that more weight is put on universal equality and less on local autonomy, with municipalities becoming more service providers than autonomous or democratic entities. Surveys document that this development is supported by a majority of citizens (Pettersen and Rose, 1997).

However, there are at least two counter-balancing trends to some extent tipping the scale towards more local autonomy. One is municipal politicians' advocacy to attain more decision making power. It is untenable for the legitimacy of municipalities as political entities to merely administer national policies. Another is related to what is generally sanctioned by law, which are often citizens' rights to have services adapted to their unique needs. In order to meet both these trends decision making latitude at the municipal level is necessary.

In Norway a tradition of local governance dating back to reforms undertaken in 1837 coexists with an egalitarian culture (Enzensberger, 1984). In the 1980'ies it was argued that state regulations reduced ability to adjust policies to local circumstances, making it difficult to increase efficiency of services. Some of the strongest concerns were raised by municipalities themselves. In the late 1980'ies two large projects were initiated to gain experiences with alleviating the problems (Rømming, 1999). The first project, called "Autonomous municipalities", was to 1) improve adaptation of public services to local circumstances, 2) improve services to citizens, and 3) increase efficiency in use of existing resources. The second project, called "Pilot municipalities" was to 1) vitalise citizen participation in political processes, 2) clarify distinctions between political and administrative levels, and 3) increase efficiency of public services. Consequently, there was a dual focus on improving municipalities both as democratic entities and as service providers.

Both projects had some success and substantial impact on the establishment of a new law for municipalities in 1992 (Ot.prp.; nr 42 (1991-92)). With this law municipalities were given wide decision making latitude on how to organise both their political processes and their public services. The law has increased variation between municipalities, and it has also stimulated frequent reorganising in search of optimal use of resources (Fimreite, 1997). At the same time the state level has been allotting more of its funding to municipalities as lump sums, partly as a result of a government green paper criticising the use of earmarked funding (NOU 1996:1). These developments have led to clearer distinctions between political and administrative levels in municipalities. Politicians are less engaged in the daily running of service provision, thereby increasing employees' decision making latitude.

It has been asserted that the state level uses three types of means to control municipalities, namely laws, funding and norms (Kjellberg, 1991), or whips, carrots and preaches as these control mechanisms also have been called (Vedung, 1995). As norms of individual clients' rights were sanctioned by law, and funding was allotted accordingly, control in the sense of documenting efficiency tightened. As in other industrialised countries tools consistent with "New Public Management" were developed to analyse cost-benefits, to budget and manage by objectives, to adapt services to clients' needs, and to seek efficiency by reorganising (Rømming, 1999, Ramsdal and Skorstad, 2004). Municipal public service organisations were also more exposed to competition from private services providers. In a nutshell the situation for Norwegian municipalities in 1999 was that they had been allotted more control over how to realise objectives and less control over what objectives to pursue, and was expected to document that they did more for less in a competitive environment. These features were operating in the background when the Municipality Council decided on DOAS' formal organisation.

Services and units included in DOAS

When the Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) was established in the reorganising in Sagene-Torshov municipality in 1998-99, it comprised services that previously had been in a Department of Culture (day-care centres and youth relief measures) and in a Department of

Health and Social Services (child care, maternal and school health services). These departments were also reorganised, and given new names as shown in figure 4.1. Organising services around adolescents' needs was a new feature of the municipal organisation. From a political point of view this was a strong signal on the importance of providing adequate services to adolescents. The ambition was to address social and health problems as early as possible in children's development, so as to minimise negative long-term consequences of inadequate care. Many municipalities in Norway organised similarly around the same time, so this was not a novel or unique idea.

It was evident that DOAS would interact with a large number of the municipalities' adolescents and their families. Maternal and school health services are offered to all, day-care centres and youth relief measures to many, and child care to those most needing. In theory it should be easier to identify needs and develop adequate services at an earlier stage than before, and easier to develop prevention and promotion strategies adapted to specific circumstances in the municipality. On the other hand, DOAS did not integrate all adolescent services. Schools and after school care were organised at county level, and several services directly or indirectly concerning adolescents were aimed at adults (e.g. social services, public housing, home care). There would still be need for collaboration between departments, and between municipal and county level. The first challenge for DOAS though, was to strengthen the collaboration between the four types of services it comprised. As shown in the table below these services were organised in separate units which had few meeting places between them.

Table 4.1 Size and scope of services offered by DOAS as budgeted for 1999

Type of service	Units	Positions	App. cost 1999 (million NOK)	Scope
Day-care centres	19	185	74	615 places. Waiting list 40 children
Child care	1	34	30	130 examinations per year. 220 children under care
Youth relief measures	4	23	13,5	Offered to all adolescents. Many services adapted to specific client groups
Mat. and school health services	2	22	9,5	All children in the municipality at regular intervals
Total	26	264	127	

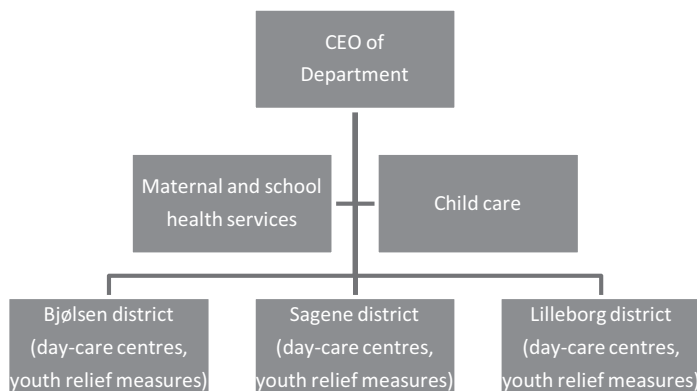
Many employees in DOAS had part-time positions. The 264 positions were taken up by approximately 350 employees, of which close to three out of four worked in day-care centres. The units were scattered all over the municipality, and employees in different units did not meet often. Units to a varying degree “shared” the same clients. Maternal and school health services were in a unique position as they interacted at regular intervals with all children and their families, although with very limited time for each of them. Conversely especially individual day-care centres had few clients but much time to get thoroughly acquainted with them.

Close to 100% of employees in child care and maternal and school health services had a minimum of three years of professional training at university college level. Conversely, much less than 50 percent of employees in youth relief measures and day-care centres had such training. Exact distribution of formal competence in DOAS was not monitored. All services had a turnover rate among employees on just under 20% per year. The proportion of employees on sick leave varied considerably though, between 2% and 14% per year in the different types of services.

Tensions in DOAS' formal organisation in 1998-99

The creation of DOAS meant that greater consistency was created between political and administrative levels in the municipality (see figure 4.1), and as such DOAS could be expected to be robust. On the other hand, DOAS "inherited" potentially conflicting structural characteristics from the previous Department of Culture (DOC). In 1995-96 DOC had been reorganised on the principle of decentralising authority. The municipalities day-care centres and youth relief services had been divided into three districts, and management authority had been delegated to three district managers (Sagene Torshov bydelsforvaltning, 1995). As part of the decentralisation a unit for special education was dissolved, and its employees relocated to various day-care centres. In addition the operative responsibility for short-term day-care centres was delegated from top-management level to long-term day-care centres.

Integrating adolescent services had been considered also in 1995-96, but it was decided to await evaluation of a project aimed at integrating services in one of the districts (Sagene Torshov bydelsforvaltning, 1995). As is often the case for public sector organisations (Dahler-Larsen, 1998), it was decided not to wait for the evaluation but to go ahead with reorganising. The project integrating services at district level was positively evaluated by employees (Stang, 1998b), but had little impact on the creation of DOAS. DOC' formal structure with three districts was continued in DOAS, despite intentions of integrating adolescent services.

Figure 4.2 Department of Adolescent Services in 1998-99

Whereas decentralisation was the main objective with the previous DOC' reorganising in 1995-96, integration was the main objective with the creation of DOAS in 1998-99. Both reorganisations were initiated top-down, and received little support and some open resistance from employees. As a consequence the relationship between top-management levels in the municipality and labour unions was strained.

The organising in districts had been somewhat problematic from the outset in DOC in 1995-96, because youth relief measures were of much less scope than day-care centres, and could not easily be divided into geographical entities. With the reorganising in 1998-99 this imbalance became much stronger, as Sagene-Torshov had only one unit for child care and two units for maternal and school health services. DOAS' formal organisation became a compromise between a decentralised structure of districts and integrated services for the whole municipality. It was in a sense half a step towards integration of services, and as such a volatile construction. Still, partly because of the strained relationship between top-management levels and unions it was decided not to conduct yet another formal reorganisation, but instead try to make DOAS function adequately with the structure it had, and make incremental changes based on what proved to be necessary adjustments.

The idea of making incremental changes in the formal organisation was not confined to DOAS, but was representative of an approach favoured in the whole of the municipality. At the end of 1998 the Municipality Council decided upon a strategic plan for 1999-2001 (Bydelsutvalget Sagene-Torshov, 1998). Three overarching challenges were identified (my translation):

1. Services have to be adjusted to demographic changes and reduced budgets.
2. The organisation has to adjust to new demands such as increased efficiency, client participation and competition.
3. We have to work with measures to improve quality of living in the municipality.

It was evident to the Municipality Council that solutions could not be found in a fixed (optimal) formal organisation. On the contrary, they anticipated more or less continuous adjustments to demographic changes, as well as changes in needs and expectations, and market conditions (competition with private service providers). The Municipality Council recognised that “more” (clients and client groups, tasks delegated from county level, competition with private service providers, demands for competence is provision of services) “for less” (shrinking budgets and increasing salaries) could not be accomplished without continued efforts to improve the organisation’s performance, hence organisation learning. It was decided that “Focus on own organisation and own employees” should be the number one priority for 1999-2001. Five principles for organisation development were established in the same document (my translation):

1. We shall have functional management-teams.
2. We shall have a top-management level organised for a) leading reorganising, development and planning processes, b) audit and control, c) serving the Municipality Council and political committees, and d) securing interaction between different levels and services.
3. We shall organise services in rational units that have main responsibility for leading, coordinating and providing services.

4. We shall have procedures that allow decisions to be made at the levels closest to the clients.
5. We shall have competence development supporting our objectives.

These principles were also consistent with ideals for New Public Management, with emphasis on management by objectives, audit and control; decentralisation of responsibility for realising objectives; more emphasis on clients' needs; and competence development seen as strategically important for the organisation (Ramsdal and Skorstad, 2004). Concretely, the strategic plan argued that the municipal organisation had to be continuously developed by

- Strengthening employees' competencies.
- Collaboration across units and professions.
- Empower each unit to decide on provision of services.
- Make unit managers accountable for efficiency (productivity and quality).
- Monitor cost-benefit of tasks.
- Conduct client satisfaction surveys.
- Implement systems for occupational health and safety requirements

Given this backdrop it was clear that DOAS' top-management groups' (TMG) vision of empowered employees (see chapter 1.3) was firmly anchored in politically (i.e. the owners') overarching ideals and objectives. The ambiguities associated with employee empowerment were also quite explicit: More decision making authority and competence development was to be accompanied by more responsibility for organisation performance, and outcome control in a competitive environment. These tensions highlight the constructive challenge raised in chapter 1.1, on how to make employee empowerment conducive to both employee health and organisation performance.

More generally, the descriptions in this chapter of settings DOAS was interlocked with (the municipal formal organisation, the municipality with its inhabitants, and the Norwegian welfare state) allow identification of some of the challenges facing DOAS' top-management group when embarking on the tailor-made approach in collaboration with Centre for Health Promotion in Settings:

- DOAS could expect to interact with more clients, and clients with more diversified needs for services. Improved collaboration was necessary not only within DOAS, but also between DOAS and other departments, and between municipal and county level, especially since DOAS did not comprise all adolescent services.
- DOAS' formal organisation was characterised by a tension between concerns for decentralisation and integration of services. How this tension was to be resolved was uncertain, but incremental changes were more likely than a major formal reorganising.
- The TMG's vision of empowered employees was firmly anchored in strategic plans for the municipality, albeit with strong emphasis on this being a means to achieve "more for less" in line with ideals for New Public Management.
- The reorganisations of 1995-96 and 1998-99 had created tensions between top-level management in the municipality and labour unions.

All these factors were likely to influence how the tailor-made approach (TMA) would be approached, understood, and used by employees in DOAS. Empirical analyses in chapters 6 to 8 also clearly indicate that these factors did have an influence.

With the research questions presented at the start of this chapter as a point of departure, this chapter can briefly be summarised as follows: The upbringing conditions for adolescents in the municipality were challenging, due to relatively poor living standards. The Municipality Council had been delegated more political decision making authority just prior to the reorganising of the municipality's public services in 1998-99. The reorganising had been a top-down initiative, and had created tensions between management and labour union levels in the organisation. A key feature of the reorganising was the new Department of

Adolescent Services (DOAS). This department comprised services that previously had been organised separately, concretely day-care centres, maternal and school health services, child care, and youth relief measures. DOAS was to provide more integration of services, but there were a number of challenging issues. DOAS “inherited” parts of the organisational structure from a previous department, in which decentralisation and not integration was a key concern. DOAS’ approximately 350 employees were dispersed over 26 units. The professional training and formal competence levels of employees varied considerably. The Municipality Council had also, inspired by ideals in New Public Management, decided on delegating authority to the departments. Delegation was to be balanced with emphasis on management, and audit and control systems, but also allowed employee empowerment in the sense DOAS’ top-management group envisioned it.

Whereas this chapter highlighted DOAS’ point of departure when starting the collaboration with CHPS, the next chapter starts with CHPS’ rationale for developing the TMA in the first place. This rationale was in effect CHPS’ point of departure before the collaboration with DOAS. The next chapter also details the collaboration between DOAS and CHPS on planning the TMA, i.e. the tailoring of the tailor-made approach.

Chapter 5 Planning of the tailor-made approach (TMA)

Various aspects of the tailor-made approach (TMA) developed in collaboration between the Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) and the Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) have been addressed in previous chapters. In chapter 1 it was commented that the TMA was a project, combining a 15 ECTS course in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” and “workplace development projects” (WDP). The TMA comprised three participant groups; 1) the top-management group (TMG) in DOAS, 2) the service workers in DOAS participating in WDP-groups, and 3) the CHPS-employees. These groups were engaged both in separate and shared activities as part of the TMA. The types and scope of these activities were presented in chapter 3, as part of a description and assessment of the data used in this thesis. The employee empowerment processes model in chapter 1.4 highlights three sub-processes in employee empowerment; between enabling and exploring, exploring and effecting, and effecting and enabling. The TMA was planned with the purpose of supporting all these sub-processes.

The planning period for the tailor-made approach (TMA) went from June 1999 right up till the official start of the TMA at a gathering in late February 2000. As described in chapter 3 the data from this period mainly consists of notes from meetings and various documents produced as part of the planning process. Data are adequate for describing the activities that took place, the deliberations that went on, and the decisions made on the TMA. As such data allows an “official account” of what was said and done, but not much information on what occurred “behind the scenes” in either of the three participant groups. Data thus reflect what characterised the planning period: the three participant groups interacted almost exclusively on concrete planning activities, and with a sense of urgency as a lot had to be decided upon in a relatively short period of time. There was not enough time to check out all the assumptions that the TMA was developed around. This was recognised by all involved, and the general expectation was that plans would have to be adjusted once the TMA started anyway, irrespective of amount of planning, because it was impossible to anticipate how the TMA could be of best use to the participants. It would depend on what they decided to do in

their “workplace development projects” (WDPs), and these decisions could not be made before the TMA got underway. Nevertheless, the plans were fairly elaborate and theoretically grounded, in ways that will be accounted for in this chapter.

As commented in chapters 1 and 2 the TMA was intended as a framework for supporting organisation learning. The assumption was that organisation learning would enable employees to increase control over work practices, thereby empowering them to address power, health and performance issues in their setting, with anticipated benefit to both employee health and organisation performance. Chapter 2 addressed the theoretical rationale for this assumption. This chapter also starts with articulating CHPS’ basic assumptions, here on the tailor-made approach itself. The TMA was intended to serve the best interests of both work organisations and academic training institutions. The second chapter section is centred on an account of the planning activities that took place between DOAS and CHPS, and within each of these organisations. The third and final chapter section details the concrete plans for the TMA. The chapter ends with reflections at the time on opportunities and risks with the planned approach.

Taken together this chapter addresses research questions raised in chapter 1.5, on: What was the rationale for developing the TMA as a framework for supporting organisation learning? What were the objectives the TMA was intended to contribute to? How were DOAS-employees involved in planning the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” and the “workplace development projects”? What competence challenges did DOAS-employees identify? How was the curriculum in the course adapted to DOAS’ requests? How and what employees were recruited to the TMA? What were the opportunities and risks with the TMA? Answers to these questions are summarised at the end of the chapter.

It is important to note that in this chapter, as well as in the next two, the discussions included at the end of the chapters convey the discussions that were made at the time, and not after the TMA had finished. The reason for this is that these discussions were formative for subsequent stages in the TMA. For instance the discussion on experiences with planning the TMA had consequences for activities intended to enable WDP-groups to explore what they would like to increase their control over, and so on in an action research type cycle with

planning, practicing and evaluating experiences. It was only after the TMA had finished that it was possible to examine its (total) impact with reasonable certainty, and therefore an “after-the-fact” discussion of the experiences with the various stages in the TMA is not conducted until chapter 8.

5.1 The rationale behind the TMA – health promotion and CHPS’ institutional affiliation

From the outset the TMA was very much CHPS’ idea, developed through an analysis of how the centre could best contribute to health promotion research and practice. As described in chapter 1 CHPS is based at Vestfold University College (VUC), and VUC has three main areas of activity; education, research and consultancy. CHPS was expected to contribute within all these areas, but precisely how was left open to CHPS itself.

Much energy was vested in the first years of CHPS’ existence, from 1995 onwards, in determining the centre’s profile. From the outset key contributors to the centre emphasised community development and marginalised groups like substance abusers. More often than not though, CHPS’ employees found themselves interacting with facilitators in communities or professionals in public services, as opposed to interacting directly with for instance citizens in a community. CHPS mainly provided training and guidance to those “doing the work on the ground”, either through consultancy or education. Furthermore, most of the students in the 60 ECTS course in health promotion CHPS administered were employed in public services, herein particularly health, social work and education sectors. Over a period of time CHPS’ emphasis was changed from direct involvement in local health promotion processes to competence and capacity building for professionals. This change was certainly reasonable given CHPS’ institutional basis in VUC, but it was also experienced as a desirable change as it enabled CHPS to obtain a wider outreach in society.

During the first few years of practice it became evident to CHPS that the need for training in health promotion in public services was much larger than anticipated from the outset. The prevailing rhetoric in the public sector at the time was certainly conducive to health promotion, with emphasis for instance on client participation and self-determination, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a resource perspective on health. In practice though, the situation was markedly different – and for understandable reasons: Professionals had been trained to practice competently within the realms of their profession and not in interdisciplinary collaboration; they were trained to be experts in solving problems and not

facilitators for others' empowerment; through work experience they learned how to fight for resources to secure own work practices and not to think of their work organisations and environments as a whole. Almost as a rule CHPS observed a discrepancy between professionals' espoused theories (often highly consistent with health promotion ideals), and their "theories-in-use" (often doing the same as before despite using different words to describe their practices).

The health promotion approach was fairly new at the time, with the Ottawa-charter in health promotion (Ottawa-charter, 1986) and the first Norwegian government green paper (NOU 1991:10) and white paper (Stortingsmelding nr. 37 (1992-93)) addressing health promotion published just a few years earlier. In order to realise health promotion ideals and objectives educating the workforce was (and continues to be) a challenge. What CHPS had learned in the formative years though, was that this is not a straight-forward challenge, i.e. it cannot be addressed solely by developing and delivering high quality education. For several reasons – among them the observed discrepancy between intentions and practice (or espoused theories and theories-in-use respectively) in public services – theoretical schooling was not enough. The interplay between work and education could therefore be identified as a key challenge, and the idea of combining work and education was nearby.

How to develop health promotion education for employees in public services?

One of the reasons why the interplay work-education is challenging has to do with characteristics of public service organisations, as addressed in chapter 1.3. Complexity in health and welfare production has increased substantially the past few decades and public service workers have to be flexible and make the most of a considerable "manoeuvrable space" in their daily work practices. Public services have more employees, have more professionals with expert training in specialist positions, have increased the number and types of services they provide, and relate to larger numbers of clients with greater expectations of or rights to services tailored to their specific needs. This development spurs more attention to coordination and collaboration across sectors, disciplines, professions,

organisations and units. It is not sufficient to be competent in interaction with clients; employees are also expected to improve quality and efficiency of services by utilising all resources in the organisation. Consequently, specialist competencies have to be complemented with “generalist” competencies in for instance decision making, interdisciplinary collaboration, organisation learning and project work. The challenge facing public service workers therefore transcends client participation in development of services, which of course is a considerable challenge in its own right.

Challenges associated with demands for flexibility are widely acknowledged, and as addressed in previous chapters an abundance of approaches to meet them have been developed and advocated. However, the solution is not as simple as replacing bureaucratic procedures of the past with contemporary ideals of flexible production. Concurrently with emphasis on flexibility there is also emphasis on expertise, so as to secure quality of services provided. This creates a tension raising the question “when do what?”, i.e. when opt for expert or collaborative solutions respectively, and under what circumstances are these solutions compatible or in conflict? For academic training institutions to address these questions tenably there is need for better understanding of the challenges work organisations and employees confront on a daily basis. Therefore, learning from work is even more relevant than before for developing disciplinary knowledge. Employees too have to know when to apply different organising principles so as to practice proficiently, and therefore have to be reflexive not only on how they interact with clients, but also on how they interact with colleagues and managers.

It is in how employees choose to conduct their work practices that the potential for health promotion and organisation performance can be realised. Education should thus be relevant to what they are (already) doing. As settings and practices employees engage in vary, education has to be tailored to fairly specific circumstances. This is also recognised by managers, who more often than before approach academic training institutions expecting that education will be tailored to their organisation’s specific circumstances. Seen like this it is in the best interest of both employees and training institutions to tailor-make education.

Connecting CHPS' specific concerns to long-standing challenges in education

The (oftentimes productive) tensions between work and education are of course nothing peculiar to the field of health promotion. For instance, right from the beginning of compulsory education in Norway more than a century ago there have been tensions between on the one hand work organisations' need for task-specific competencies, and on the other hand the autonomy of disciplines, concerning who should determine content in education (Baune, 1995). The past few decades this tension has intensified in higher education, because universities and university colleges are increasingly subjected to market mechanisms privileging disciplines popular with students (Slagstad et al., 2003). The tendency towards polarisation is evident, for instance there are many academics concerned about having to renounce scholarly learning, and instead having to develop easy sellable short-term "shallow-brained" courses (Bjerke, 2003).

On the other hand, particularly academic institutions offering professional training like VUC, are also concerned about the fact that many students after graduating experience what has been called a "practice-chock", i.e. a major discrepancy between what they are taught at the university college and what they experience at work (Smeby, 2008). In parallel with the polarisation between autonomy and task-specific competencies here too a split can be observed between proponents of either "theoretical learning" or "learning at work" (Larsen Damsgaard and Heggen, 2010).

At CHPS so called "third-positions" attracted most interest, meaning not seeing education as either autonomous from or as a vehicle to work organisations' needs, and not seeing "practice-chock" either as a necessary evil or as something that should be avoided at all costs. It is evident that people learn different things in their professional training and at work (Skule and Reichborn, 2002). In actual practice, employees have to synthesise theoretical and practical knowledge to work proficiently (Grimen, 2008). Consequently, interaction between scholarly and experiential knowledge should be encouraged and not shunned.

At CHPS the tantalising idea of "attaining the best from both sides", i.e. exploring possibilities of conducting education in ways beneficial to both disciplinary development and

market demand, has been a shared foci of interest. A key feature has been not to approach “the market” in general, but to engage in long-term obliging collaboration with specific work organisations. From the vantage point of disciplinary development work organisations provide “testing grounds” for practical relevance of theoretical perspectives and methodological recommendations. This can be conducive to both theory and curricula development. On the other hand, work organisations have an interest in challenging their existing work practices because they want to improve them, motivating them to collaborate extensively with academic training institutions. Emphasising collaboration on continuing education does not, of course, resolve all tension between disciplinary autonomy and market demand. It does however suggest some interesting possibilities for developing knowledge in *intersections* between work and education, as opposed to attempts to separate the two making education a disciplinary prerogative, or merge the two by making market demand a prerogative for education. CHPS was therefore interested in doing research precisely on the intersections between education and work, and this thesis can be seen as one of several outcomes of this interest.

Ideals on adult learning

For many years now there has been increasing interest in how adults learn, much associated with the concept “lifelong learning”. The interest has been motivated in many ways, for instance by concern for rapid changes in social life in general, or by concern for competence development at work (NOU 1986:23). Continuous learning is typically seen as necessary because professional training does not make employees prepared for all the challenges they have to face in their careers.

CHPS was inspired by the approach to adult education known as “andragogy”, meaning “any intentional and professionally guided activity that aims at a change in adult persons” (Knowles, 1998: 60). Knowles argued that adult learning differed from learning in youths in the following ways:

1. *The need to know.* Adults want to know why they need to learn something before undertaking learning it. Facilitators of learning have to help learners become aware of their needs to know, for instance by way of “consciousness-raising” as advocated by Paulo Freire (1973).
2. *The learners’ self-concept.* Adults see themselves as responsible for own decisions and lives. Many adults experience a conflict between being dependent of a teacher on the one hand, and their needs for being self-directing on the other.
3. *The role of the learners’ experiences.* Adults are a more heterogeneous group than youths because they have accumulated more and different kinds of experience. Rejecting experience may be perceived as rejecting oneself as a person. On the one hand this means the richest resources for learning reside in the adult learners themselves, on the other hand experience may also be habits, biases and presuppositions that create barriers for new ideas and fresh perceptions.
4. *Readiness to learn.* Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with real-life situations. Hence, it is of critical importance to time learning experiences to coincide with developmental tasks, for instance at work.
5. *Orientation to learning.* Adults are task- or problem-centred, motivated to learn to the extent that they perceive learning will help them perform tasks or deal with problems they confront in their lives.
6. *Motivation.* The most potent motivators are internal pressures, like for instance desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, and quality of life. Impeding motivation are among other things negative self-concept as student, inaccessibility of opportunities or resources, and time constraints. (From Knowles, 1998: 64-70)

Somewhat simplified the adult learner is a person who needs to know why something specific should be learned, is convinced this learning will make a difference in performance in real-life situations, is allowed to build on previous experience, and whose self-concept is not threatened by dependency of facilitators or teachers. In other words: Self-determination is a key issue, and thus andragogy indicates a theory-base for how to facilitate learning in ways compatible with empowerment, organisation learning and action research. To CHPS

this meant among other things that competencies of employees had to be recognised as complementary to those of CHPS-employees, and furthermore that the TMA had to build on employees' previous experiences at work.

The ideas in andragogy have been investigated empirically, and research in Nordic and European countries indicate that adult learners emphasise self-developed needs for learning, own formulation of problems and solutions, physical as well as mental activities in learning, talking instead of listening, and own structuring of learning experiences (Bjørger, 2000), furthermore that they emphasise independence and self-determination in learning processes (Ingebretsen and Lindbom, 2000), and that they learn new technology more task-oriented than younger employees (Tikkanen et al., 2001). Taken together there seems to be considerable support for the assumptions in andragogy summarised above. However, differences between how adults and youths learn should not be overemphasised. Bjørger (2000) asserts that competence, interests, habits and personal characteristics matter more than age, and that in practice educators have a responsibility to check the relevance of their assumptions about learners in any given situation. Andragogy thus provided CHPS with a sense of direction, but not a blueprint to learning activities in the TMA. In particular, as will become evident in chapters 6 and 7, characteristics of the setting in which learning takes place may have a considerable impact on learning processes as well.

The TMA compared with “traditional” approaches to continuing education

CHPS had some previous experience with tailor-making continuing education (Hem, 1998, Andvig, 2000), and there was growing interest in detailing how such approaches differed from more traditional approaches to continuing education. As part of the collaboration between CHPS and DOAS an account of differences was made, and subsequently included in a textbook on health promotion (Ausland et al., 2003). In the table below key features of CHPS' approach are compared with “traditional approaches” to continuing education. It is important to note that “traditional” in this context does not mean “this is how other training institutions of today typically conduct continuing education”. Such a claim would be absurd, given the extreme variation in approaches currently in use at different institutions. Instead it

means “this was how continuing education typically was conducted only some years ago”, i.e. this is what many of DOAS’ employees have experienced previously and may have expected to occur in the TMA as well. Hence, it was important for CHPS to clarify differences not only to be reflexive on own approach, but – even more so – to provide DOAS-employees with the opportunity of reframing their expectations to the course component of the TMA.

Table 5.1 Comparison of tailor-made and “traditional” approaches to continuing education

	CHPS’ tailor-made approach to continuing education	“Traditional” approach to continuing education
Access	Closed, students enter on basis of being colleagues	Open to all who meets the learning institution’s admittance criteria
Perspective on competence	Complementary competencies learning institution and learners	Competencies residing predominantly with learning institution
Curriculum development	Collaborative effort	Learning institution
Place conducted	In work organisation	At learning institution
Responsibilities	Learning institution for quality and integrity of course. Commissioning work organisation for relevance of learning to ongoing work processes	Learning institution for quality and integrity of course. No designated responsibility for relevance to ongoing work processes
Orientation	“Generalist” competencies for communication and organisation skills	“Specialist” competencies for professional or disciplinary skills
Supervision	On interplay work and education	On curriculum requirements
Flexibility	Considerable; continuous adaptations of learning activities depending on ongoing experiences	Marginal
Methodological tools	Tried out in ongoing work processes	Lectured or simulated

(Adjusted from Ausland et al., 2003)

It can be inferred from table 5.1 that the tailor-made approach is intended to be compatible with andragogy’s emphasis on self-determination, relevance for real-life situations, and previous (here also ongoing) experiences. Participants are both students and employees;

they take part in developing curriculum and share responsibility for on the job relevance; they follow lectures, engage in guidance and try out methods in their work organisation, and learning activities are adapted to ongoing work experiences. The approach thus differs considerably from many employees' experiences of continuing education as an individual enterprise detached from work. In the TMA they have to integrate education in ongoing work practices with colleagues.

Of course, the differences are here presented in an "ideal-type" manner (see chapter 2.2), allowing deviations and variations in actual practice. For instance, as will become evident in subsequent chapters, supervision in DOAS was also given on curriculum requirements specifically, not all learning activities were flexible, and several methodological tools were only lectured or simulated. It is also important to note that the comparison in table 5.1 is not normative in the sense of privileging the tailor-made over the "traditional" approach irrespective of circumstances. On the contrary, it is evident that for training in specialist competencies detachment from work (hence a "traditional" approach) can be preferable. In this particular case though, with emphasis on facilitating employee empowerment in relation to ongoing work practices, CHPS assumed that the tailor-made approach would be preferable. The TMA developed in collaboration between CHPS and DOAS was thus developed as much as possible in accordance with the first column in table 5.1.

Several possible advantages and disadvantages with CHPS' tailor-made approach can be inferred from the above table. Among the advantages are consistency with principles for adult education, increased likelihood of practical relevance of education, mutual learning for the work organisation and the training institution from the work-education intersection, and – probably most important – that the tailor-made approach establishes a structure for organisation learning. Lectures and supervision require that employees meet at regular intervals and address issues of relevance to ongoing work processes, thereby also sharing experiences, stimulating reflexivity and collaborative learning.

Possible disadvantages with the specific TMA that CHPS and DOAS collaborated on will be discussed at the end of this chapter, but in general a number of risks associated with the tailor-made approach can be identified. For instance, there is risk of compromising the

integrity of an educational program by allowing continuous adaptations; of undermining specialist competencies by emphasising methodology for collaboration; of having to use much time on reframing participants' expectations to what it means to take continuing education; and perhaps most importantly there is risk of diminishing education's potential for critique and individual self-fulfilment by addressing colleagues (as opposed to individual students) in a setting where the work organisation's demands (as opposed to autonomy of discipline or profession) is point of departure. As described in chapter 1 CHPS had a constructive approach to such tensions, not seeing either desired or undesired outcomes as foregone conclusions, but as dependant of what the partners chose to do. Precisely what CHPS and DOAS chose to do in the planning period is highlighted in the remainder of this chapter.

5.2 Planning of the TMA

All aspects of CHPS' rationale for engaging in tailor-making of continuing education – explored at relative depth in chapter 5.1 – were discussed openly with the top-management group (TMG) in DOAS. These discussions established a mutual understanding between CHPS and the TMG on how DOAS could be understood as a setting, and what actions could be undertaken to facilitate employee empowerment.

To CHPS it was important to make it clear that although the tailor-made approach (TMA) was not “just a theory”, it had not been investigated systematically in practice. CHPS therefore emphasised that the TMA would be a learning experience also for CHPS, and that unanticipated challenges could – and most probably would – occur. On the other hand, CHPS-employees had extensive experience with carrying out continuing education, and the course component of the TMA would provide a fairly stable structure for the organisation learning initiatives. Unanticipated challenges would most likely occur in the intersection between education and work, i.e. in how the course and the workplace development components of the TMA interacted.

To CHPS it was vital for the TMG to see the TMA not as “a tool to be implemented”, but as a framework for supporting organisation learning from ongoing work practice in DOAS. The TMA was intended as a framework for *generating* solutions to work practice challenges, but not to be a solution in itself. The TMA would cease to exist after less than one year, and it would be up to DOAS-employees to *make* it conducive to overall objectives of employee empowerment, employee health and organisation performance. CHPS could not accomplish these objectives for DOAS. These points were certainly understood by the TMG. They concurred, and stated that this approach was consistent with employee empowerment as they envisioned it (see chapter 1.2). The TMG and CHPS agreed that DOAS would have full discretion over *what* work challenges to address with the TMA, whereas CHPS' mandate would be to provide training and a framework for *how to* address them.

CHPS and DOAS thus quickly agreed on the main principles for the TMA. The climate in the meetings was amicable, and there was considerable energy and enthusiasm in the discussions. Members in the TMG expressed that CHPS' take on DOAS' challenges (as described in chapters 1.2 and 5.1) were spot on, and that the TMA was an interesting way forward. As is often the case in partnerships the first phase could be characterised as "honeymooning" (Bitsch Olsen and Pedersen, 1999). Strengthening these sentiments was the fact that DOAS and CHPS had some prior knowledge of each other. One of CHPS' employees was an expert on day-care centres and child care, and had given lectures on these topics in the municipality. Several of the members in the TMG had attended these lectures, and therefore knew about CHPS and had confidence in the centre's competencies. Both TMG and CHPS were interested in quickly establishing a partnership; CHPS for reasons explained in chapter 5.1, and TMG because DOAS' employees expected initiatives to improve collaboration between its units. As mentioned in chapter 1.3 the TMG was also highly interested in developing public services in ways compatible with CHPS' ideas on health promotion.

The amicable atmosphere did not mean that the collaboration between the TMG and CHPS was completely without tension. Especially on one issue tension was evident: Although both partners saw TMG's involvement in the TMA as critical for its success, there was still the issue of how and to what extent such involvement should be manifest. Particularly one of the CHPS-employees advocated that DOAS-employees should be allowed to make decisions "bottom-up" with minimal "interference" (only support) from managers, using words much in line with ideals for community development. To the TMG this was unacceptable. They argued that such an approach would be an abdication from management responsibilities. Employee empowerment had to be within boundaries, and those boundaries had to be determined by the top-management if they were to be accountable towards DOAS' owners and clients. They saw the challenge as clarifying what mandates employees should have, not how to give them full decision making authority. The controversy was surprising, as CHPS fundamentally agreed with TMG's position, and more generally saw employee empowerment as a consequence of collaboration between managers and service workers. As such the differences were more apparent than real, and could probably be attributed to an unfortunate choice of words by CHPS. Still, the small controversy proved to be useful

because it made the TMG more aware of what they saw as important in employee empowerment. On the other hand, as will become evident in later chapters the issue of TMG's involvement in the TMA was not resolved once and for all.

The TMG and CHPS decided on making the autumn of 1999 a planning period. The partners took on different responsibilities, consistent with their intended contributions to the TMA. Concretely, the TMG's responsibility was to recruit employees to the TMA and negotiate the terms under which they participated (amount of time to participate, and securing access to course material and other resources). Furthermore, the TMG was responsible for carrying out a process determining organisational objectives to be pursued in the TMA. CHPS' responsibility was to develop curriculum for the 15 ECTS course in "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice", and to detail how the course and DOAS' work practices should be related to each other (gatherings for all participants, and supervision in groups).

The partners were to meet regularly to secure compatibility between their separate planning activities. In particular it was important for CHPS to get access to and understand what objectives and issues DOAS wanted to pursue through the TMA, so as to make the course content as relevant to DOAS as possible. In practice it proved difficult to meet as often as the partners wanted, and both parties expressed concerns about consequences for the quality of the planning process. Some of these concerns were justified, as will be returned to below.

The budget process

The TMG took an important initiative in early autumn 1999, by starting what was referred to as "the budget process". This initiative was not part of the collaboration on TMA per se, but it both influenced and was influenced by DOAS' collaboration with CHPS. As will become evident in chapter 8 the budget process was important also as a first example of TMG's willingness to take initiatives outside of, yet related to, the TMA.

The budget document did not only include facts and figures on allocation of resources, but also overall objectives for DOAS. In previous years these objectives had been formulated by

top-managers, and they were more seen as a rhetorical device in communication with external stakeholders than as a common platform for all employees. The TMG wanted to change this practice for two reasons. Firstly, it was generally unfortunate to have objectives employees did not relate to, and hence could not be expected to feel committed towards. It was particularly unfortunate given the ambition of employee empowerment, as it was evident to the TMG that employees had to be committed to overall objectives if they were to have increased control over work practices. Secondly, the TMG wanted to engage in genuine collaboration with employees, and this was especially important because DOAS was a new organisation entity where many employees were new to each other. Scarce experience with collaboration between employees also meant that the basis for mutual trust between managers and service workers was unclear. In collaboration with CHPS the TMG designed a procedure for the budget process intending it to be as transparent as possible.

1. The first step was to inform approximately 50 middle managers and key personnel in DOAS about the process, and offer them training in methodology for brainstorming and organising dialog. The training was conducted by a CHPS-employee. The TMG informed participating employees about how objectives would be decided upon and what they were intended to contribute to, in line with points 2. to 6. below.
2. The middle managers were to involve their employees in providing feedback on what objectives they would like DOAS to have.
3. Subsequently, the middle managers would meet to exchange suggestions for objectives, with the TMG participating.
4. The TMG would take all the suggestions and make a preliminary list of objectives.
5. The TMG's preliminary list of objectives would then be available to and commented on by (potentially) all employees, leading to
6. The TMG's final decision on DOAS' objectives, accompanied by information to employees about why these objectives were chosen and what consequences they would have.

This process was fairly straight-forward, and DOAS carried it out as intended within three months. Important dates were set at the start of the process, and all deadlines were met. To

CHPS it was interesting to note that initial scepticism among employees about participating in the process – herein explicit concerns by some on the possibility of the process being a charade – was turned into considerable enthusiasm about being able to influence decisions. They appreciated learning more about what employees in other units saw as important, and they appreciated learning more about methods for brainstorming and decision making. Employees also became attentive to how top-down decision making could be combined efficiently and meaningfully with bottom-up participation, and many expressed more trust in how the department was managed. In the aftermath no serious disagreement with the objectives was registered. Taken together what occurred was consistent with a typical experience in organisation development: when the decision making process is seen as fair decisions are typically seen as legitimate (Levin and Klev, 2002). Employees did not become disheartened when their suggestions were not chosen. Instead they were satisfied with the top-management making decisions, because that would increase likelihood of objectives being backed by resources. It should also be noted that the overall objectives were (and had to be) general, and as such vague enough to allow most employees to see their interests reflected in them. Concretely the budget process ended up with seven overall objectives for DOAS, which the TMA was to contribute to (my translation):

1. Secure adolescents with deviant behaviour and adolescents experiencing failure of care the services they need and are entitled to.
2. Secure competence building of employees, particularly related to substance abuse and mental health issues in families.
3. Maternal and school health services shall conduct adequate screening, expedient referral to specialist functions, guidance of parents and pupils, and public health education.
4. Day-care centres are to develop quality indicators for clients and employees, in order to address challenges resulting from having more and younger children in day care.
5. Youth relief measures shall be diversified and involve adolescents in planning activities, with the aim of preventing recruitment to groups exposed for hazards.
6. Routines for providing integrated services to adolescents and parents shall be developed.

7. From the vantage point of existing daily work practices and in collaboration with Vestfold University College (CHPS), to develop employees' competencies in conducting interdisciplinary efforts for the benefit of adolescents most in need of services.

Four of these objectives (1, 3, 4 and 5) referred to core activities at units for child care, maternal and school health services, day care centres, and youth relief measures respectively, i.e. to each of the four types of services in DOAS. Objectives 2 and 6 refer to issues that span across units, and to some extent also across departments in the municipality, and would thus require collaboration. Objective 7 was directly related to the collaboration between DOAS and CHPS, and in essence provided a mandate – interdisciplinary collaboration for the benefit of adolescents most in need of services – for the upcoming “workplace development projects” in the TMA.

Employees' contribution to workplace development issues

The same group of employees that took part in the budget process – approximately 50 middle managers and key personnel in DOAS – also took part in a process of developing content in the TMA, providing input to both the course and the workplace development project components. They did so in meetings held immediately after those on the budget process, and it was thus easy for them to make connections between DOAS' overall objectives and the TMA. Concretely they made and ranked suggestions for course content on the one hand, and issues for workplace development projects on the other, in separate meetings. The process followed procedures specified in nominal group technique (Green and Kreuter, 1991). This is a method for decision making where all participants first make their individual suggestions, then duplicate suggestions are removed, and then suggestions are ranked through a voting process where each participant has a number of points to be distributed at own discretion among his or her preferences. Although fairly rigid this approach increases likelihood of everyone coming forward with their suggestions, and likelihood of suggestions having equal opportunities for being prioritised through the voting

process. It was important both to CHPS and TMG to have a process where everyone was heard, yet efficient in the sense of quickly establishing consensus on what issues to address in the TMA, so as to be able to start at the beginning of 2000.

Concerning the workplace development component of the TMA the participants were instructed to make suggestions for development issues addressing the needs of DOAS' most vulnerable clients. The TMG wanted to prioritise these clients, who typically experience public services as fragmented. They have to go through various screening and decision making processes in various units in order to get the services they are entitled to, and often report feelings of having to "battle the system", i.e. bureaucratic procedures. Being able to provide high quality services by means of – if necessary – bypassing bureaucratic procedures was very much in line with what the TMG envisioned as a positive organisation performance outcome of employee empowerment.

The middle managers and key personnel in DOAS made a total of 36 suggestions on workplace development issues. When sorted and grouped together the following five emerged as consistent with prioritising vulnerable clients:

- Substance abuse
- Mental health
- Deviant behaviour
- Adolescents in need of integrated services
- Multicultural issues

Neither of these issues could be attributed to one type of unit, and as such they constituted "grey areas" in which responsibilities for provision of services could be unclear. It was evident to participants that these issues could require collaboration not only across units, but also across departments in the municipality, and also to some extent collaboration with specialist services at county or national levels.

A total of 15 of the 36 suggestions were related to the five development issues listed above. Nine of the other 21 suggestions were too general to be associated with any particular development issue (like “collaborating with parents”, “knowing when not to interfere with peoples’ responsibilities for their own lives”, or “collaborating with schools”), seven were too specific (most of which related to challenges specific either to day-care centres or to the unit for child care), and five referred to procedures used in interaction with clients (like “developing individual plans for clients” or “developing meeting places where clients can interact”). Although all of these issues are important in their own right, it was decided that they would have to be followed up on by other means than the TMA. Because the decision making process ended up with only five development issues it was decided not to rank them, but to include all of them in the TMA.

Suggestions for course content

The nominal group technique was then used for generating and ranking suggestions for the curriculum in the course component of the TMA. Participants were instructed to make suggestions on issues that would be useful for them in improving collaboration both within and between units, and with clients. A total of 117 suggestions emerged, and they were grouped by CHPS into 7 categories. They were subsequently ranked by participants in the following order (my translation):

1. *Organisation learning and project work* (herein also solution-focused organisation development, management and leadership issues, project organising, and increasing awareness of existing organisational resources).
2. *Interdisciplinary collaboration* (herein collaboration or coordination both between units, departments and sectors).
3. *Evaluation and survey methodology* (with emphasis on “how to do it?”).
4. *Multi-cultural issues* (with particular emphasis on prerequisites for meaningful collaboration with clients from other cultural backgrounds than the Norwegian).
5. *Dialog methodology and communication skills* (predominantly requests for methods or techniques for improving communication with colleagues and clients).

6. *Guidance and supervision* (including both managers, colleagues, and clients).
7. *Health promotion and public health issues* (with particular emphasis on developing mutual understanding of key constructs and approaches).

In addition there were nine other suggestions, among them judicial issues concerning clause of confidentiality, occupational health and safety, and specialist competencies in working with substance abuse, mental health, complex needs, and deviant behaviour.

Consequently, the vast majority of suggestions (108 of 117) were related to “generalist competencies”, cutting across professions and other socially constructed barriers. Interestingly enough “interdisciplinary collaboration” was identified as just one area of competence in that respect. To CHPS this was a clear indication that the challenge observed in other public service organisations – complementing specialist with generalist competencies – was relevant also in DOAS.

As will be seen below all seven competence areas were reflected in the course literature. The nine “other” suggestions were not to be catered for within the TMA. Instead they were used as examples of how DOAS could utilise existing competencies within the department or the municipality. For instance, the unit for child care had expertise in clause of confidentiality, and employees in expert and coordinating positions were highly competent in complex needs and deviant behaviour. In this way existing competencies could be made explicit and utilised within DOAS.

Interdisciplinary collaboration (in practice)

The TMG and CHPS extensively discussed the name for the course component of the TMA. CHPS typically used the term “generalist competencies”, as previously noted predominantly to signal that these were competencies relevant to all when collaborating, and not to be associated with any particular profession or discipline. Discussions between the TMG and CHPS revolved around whether or not “interdisciplinary collaboration” could be used as a

common denominator for the course part of the TMA. The discussion was important for several reasons. From TMG's perspective it was vital to specify what they wanted DOAS-employees to accomplish through the TMA. From CHPS' perspective it was vital to develop a course that made sense and had integrity academically. For both TMG and CHPS it was important to use a term that was recognisable and interesting to DOAS-employees. Through the discussions the TMG and CHPS gained greater understanding of each other's ambitions with the TMA. It thus became a discussion on much more than the name of the course.

Both CHPS and TMG had several pragmatic reasons for sticking with "interdisciplinary collaboration". It was a well known concept to employees, and also used in DOAS' overall objectives. Furthermore, "interdisciplinary collaboration" was a popular construct at national and municipal levels, and therefore legitimate for DOAS to emphasise. It was highlighted in government green and white papers, strategic plans at municipal levels, and in education. It was also expected not to be a fad, i.e. easily replaceable with other concepts, because continuous emphasis on flexibility necessitates collaboration.

There were also two fairly strong substantial arguments for using "interdisciplinary collaboration". One argument was that the competence areas identified by DOAS-participants could be seen as prerequisites for doing interdisciplinary collaboration proficiently *in practice*, hence the course title "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice". When so to speak "looking behind" the concept it was evident that a number of competencies were required in order to practice interdisciplinary collaboration proficiently, and the list made by middle managers and key personnel in DOAS was a reasonable place to start.

The other substantial argument had its point of departure in the fact that interdisciplinary collaboration is defined and used differently by different contributors in different contexts. The term is "loose enough" to allow various specifications. Across different types of literature (empirical, prescriptive, political) "interdisciplinary" is typically not used in a strict sense, but instead what is highlighted is seeing and approaching differences between employees as a resource, and these differences can arise for instance from being employed in various positions and parts of the organisation, having different work tasks, competencies,

access to resources, experiences with clients, or having different value based preferences on how to provide services. Furthermore the idea is generally, as it was in DOAS, to generate fruitful meetings between employees not interacting regularly, but whose interaction may yield improved work practice. Hence, “interdisciplinary” tends to be used as a common denominator for interaction between employees differing not only (or even mainly) in disciplinary affiliation, but on many other variables as well.

On the other hand “collaboration” typically has a more confined meaning, and is contrasted for instance with coordination, communication or partnership (Glavin and Erdal, 2000). Collaboration is not about simply dividing tasks and responsibilities as in coordination, nor about communicating in general like for instance in social gatherings, nor about conflating differences and “partner up” to address a specified task. Collaboration indicates processes where understanding of an issue and how to address it is generated through interaction between employees with differing viewpoints. For instance, what is seen as problematic by some may be unproblematic to others, and what is seen as a viable solution to some may not be that to others. As such an important rationale for interdisciplinary collaboration is to improve rationality in all phases of a work process, from decision making to evaluation, i.e. an interpersonal process leading to achievement of objectives that cannot be reached by individual professionals on their own (Bruner, 1991). Because of the emphasis on achieving objectives it is also different from team-building or “organisation climate” initiatives.

In retrospect it seemed even more reasonable than it did at the time to use “interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” as a common term for the course component in the TMA. In an extensive review of the literature on social work two years after the TMA ended, Bronstein (2003) identified five common components in interdisciplinary collaboration. These components were 1) interdependence between participants 2) collective ownership of goals, 3) newly created professional activities, 4) flexibility, and 5) reflection on process. The TMA-framework addressed objectives employees had been instrumental in developing, that would require new practices, that could only be catered for through collaboration between employees, that allowed flexibility in determining what issues to address, and that secured reflection on process by integrating formal education and workplace development projects.

Seen like this the TMA could certainly substantiate its claim of being relevant to interdisciplinary collaboration in practice.

Some reservations to use of “interdisciplinary collaboration”

Although using the term “interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” for the course component in the TMA makes sense conceptually, it was not embraced without reservations. One immediate concern was, as shown in chapters 1 and 4, that many of the employees in DOAS did not have professional training and as such did not represent any specific discipline, and among those with professional training the vast majority had affiliations with educational sciences. There was scarce potential for “inter-disciplinary” collaboration in a strict sense, and this had to be communicated clearly to TMA-participants. Hence, the concept could be confusing and require time to sort out; time that could have been used for more productive purposes. To the TMG and CHPS a reasonable solution in the planning process was to invite participants to the same type of discussions on “interdisciplinary collaboration” as the TMG and CHPS had. For practical reasons this could only be accomplished once the TMA started.

Another reservation towards “interdisciplinary collaboration” was related to the reorganising that led to the creation of DOAS. In 1998 the TMG had reassured each unit that there would be no new reorganisations in the foreseeable future. They also stated that each unit should give priority to strengthening their professional competencies, and as each unit was dominated by one profession (for instance pre-school teachers at day-care centres; nurses at maternal and school health services), it was in effect a signal to strengthen specialist competencies. The TMG was thus concerned that too strong an emphasis on collaboration across units could be seen as a marked change of course. The TMG made it clear that they did not want to reorganise, but only to strengthen collaboration across units when that was called for, typically for developing services in “grey areas”. They also argued that interdisciplinary collaboration could be a contribution to developing strong professional units, e.g. by units becoming more aware of their own competencies, and gaining a clearer understanding of own relative strengths and weaknesses, through collaboration. This notion

is also supported in the literature (Bronstein, 2003). Too strong allegiance to either own profession or to interdisciplinary collaboration can be counterproductive (Abramson, 1990). The TMG reasonably assumed that interdisciplinary collaboration could be a solution to some of DOAS' challenges, but not all of them.

In the literature a number of potential drawbacks with interdisciplinary collaboration have been identified, for instance conflicts of interest between layers in an organisation, resistance when participants experience being forced into interdisciplinary collaboration, not having adequate resources, or lacking mutual trust, respect and openness (Glavin and Erdal, 2000). More specifically it can be noted that positive and negative assertions of interdisciplinary collaboration often relate to the same variables. Theoretically it is possible to argue either side convincingly, e.g. that interdisciplinary collaboration

- Saves time by avoiding double-tasking, or alternatively takes time that could be used more efficiently in ongoing work practices.
- Strengthens competence of all involved by providing access to others' perspectives, or alternatively undermines competence development because participants tend to focus on what they have in common.
- Increases social support among colleagues, or alternatively increases conflict between colleagues.
- Organises services around client needs as opposed to organising services around what professionals can and want to do, or alternatively leads to organised paternalism by developing "one size fits all clients" services determined by what members of an interdisciplinary group can agree on.
- Increases creativity in best interest of clients, or alternatively increases group thinking where participants reinforce each others' understandings of a concrete challenge or situation.
- Strengthens accountability through shared responsibilities, or alternatively weakens accountability because "nobody is responsible when everybody is responsible".

Seen like this potential benefits with interdisciplinary collaboration are closely associated with potential risks, and to the TMG and CHPS this underlined the importance of having a constructive approach, highlighting questions like “under what circumstances are interdisciplinary collaboration useful?” and “how can we increase likelihood of desirable outcomes of interdisciplinary collaboration?” Such questions could not be adequately answered theoretically prior to the start of the TMA, but answers could be developed for instance through the action research type of organisation learning participants were to engage in.

5.3 The TMA-framework DOAS and CHPS decided on

As mentioned earlier in this chapter the TMG was to take responsibility for recruiting participants to the TMA, whereas CHPS was to take responsibility for developing curriculum for the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. The curriculum was to specify course activities that could be integrated in the workplace development projects. For instance, gatherings in the TMA would not only provide lectures on topics in the curriculum, but also serve as a meeting place for participants to share experiences from their workplace development projects. Furthermore, the exam assignment made it mandatory for participants to conduct research on own work practices associated with their WDPs, and the course literature was selected on basis of relevance both to the learning objectives in the course, and to the participants’ work practices. In essence the curriculum therefore (also) specified how the TMA would serve as a framework for supporting organisation learning.

Recruiting participants and deciding on curriculum were activities that partially overlapped chronologically. In the following paragraphs the recruitment process is addressed first, and then attention is directed towards the main elements in the curriculum. CHPS’ and TMG’s assessment of risks and opportunities following the planning of the TMA are presented at the end of this chapter.

Recruitment of participants to the TMA

Recruiting DOAS-employees to the TMA was the TMG’s responsibility, but it was discussed in the meetings between TMG and CHPS. The recruitment started after the middle managers and key personnel had provided feedback on workplace development issues and course content as described earlier in this chapter. Although all details in the TMA-framework were not clarified before the recruitment started – for instance the curriculum and the schedule had not been fixed – it was sufficiently clear to approach potential participants. The TMG could inform them as follows:

- The TMA would exist for approximately one year and be comprised of a course component and a workplace development project component.
- There would be a combination of project work in groups and gatherings for all participants with lectures and group activities.
- CHPS would supervise the workplace development projects.
- The ambition was – by means of interdisciplinary collaboration across units – to develop new practice to improve services to clients within the five development issues or “grey areas” employees had identified.
- The ambition was also to engage in organisation learning by providing employees wider decision making latitude and increased control over work processes.
- Solution-focus, client-participation and DOAS’ objectives (as developed through the “budget process”) would be guiding values and principles.

More generally the TMA was presented as a means for improving both employee health and organisation performance. More specifically participants were to register themselves in writing, herein also specifying which development issue (substance abuse; mental health; deviant behaviour; adolescents in need of integrated services; and multicultural issues respectively) they would like to address.

Both TMG and CHPS vested much more energy in determining *what* to invite to than *whom* among the approximately 350 employees to invite. The assumption was that if the invitation was clear employees – due to the positive framing of the TMA as a framework addressing issues employees had participated in developing, for the anticipated benefit of both clients and employees – would be highly motivated to register. In discussions between the TMG and CHPS the challenge was more seen as “how do we address those who cannot participate because too many have registered?” than “how do we get enough employees to register?”. This proved to be a miscalculation.

When first mentioning the possibility of a tailor-made approach just prior to the summer holidays in 1999, CHPS indicated that the TMA could be developed specifically for employees with long tenure and little formal education. CHPS had carried out such a tailor-made

approach in 1998 (Andvig, 2000). Then, in conjunction with the budget process, CHPS suggested that the TMG should recruit TMA-participants not only from various units but also from various levels in the organisation. The idea was to get as much diversity as possible, for the intended benefit of interdisciplinary collaboration. Then, unfortunately, the issue was hardly discussed at all before the recruitment process started. It surfaced again in a meeting where the TMG talked about how difficult it proved to be to recruit participants. Many of those they had invited, particularly in middle management positions, had decided not to participate in the TMA. Data on why this happened are not extensive, but many had quoted lack of individual motivation or opportunities to study as a reason not to participate. This was somewhat surprising to both the TMG and CHPS, because it had been clearly stated that the course component was to be integrated in work practice. In the following discussion between the TMG and CHPS several important issues surfaced. It started with CHPS' suggestion of a strategic approach to recruiting participants, i.e. those employees having positions allowing them to promote or impede interdisciplinary collaboration in their units should be prioritised. Participation in organisation learning and workplace development projects was to be expected by middle-managers and key personnel, and not an issue to be decided upon by individual motivation to "study". The TMG agreed in principle but also expressed frustration over CHPS' shifting advice. If this had been clarified earlier the recruitment process would have been more targeted. Now the TMG was in the middle of recruiting, information had been presented to employees, and many had already registered.

The situation was unfortunate, and CHPS quickly acknowledged that the TMG was right in blaming CHPS for not giving clearer advice on whom to recruit. The partners then turned their attention to "how to make the best out of the situation". There were still a number of vacant spots in the TMA, and the TMG had to decide on how to fill them. One idea was to make participation mandatory, thus not allowing employees they would like to participate not to register. This idea was quickly abandoned because it would clearly contradict self-determination as a basis for employee empowerment. The TMG instead decided to talk once more with those not wanting to participate, so as to explain the rationale behind the TMA in more detail, and thereby hopefully make it more desirable to register after all.

One avenue still open to the TMG was to specify how many participants they wanted from each of the four types of units (day-care centres, child care, maternal and school health services, youth relief measures). The idea was that a pro rata distribution would increase likelihood of adequate interdisciplinary collaboration, as each group would have at least one member from each unit type. Concretely they wanted 29 participants from day-care centres, 6 from child care, 5 from maternal and school health services, and 5 from youth relief measure (45 in all), and with the 6 regular members of the TMG making it a total of 51 employees. In practice, though, it proved especially difficult to get enough participants from the units for child care and maternal and school health services. Again data are scarce as to reasons why, but the feedback that surfaced was that these units found it difficult to prioritise participation in the TMA due to work overload.

Irrespective of reasons why a consequence of the recruitment process was that the ambition to have at least one participant from each of the four types of units in each WDP-group had to be abandoned. This, in combination with having relatively few middle-managers among the participants, made it less realistic that the WDP-groups could address the “grey areas” associated with the five workplace development issues proficiently. The WDP-groups would be less able than intended to mobilise organisational resources, and find it more challenging to engage all types of units. The TMG therefore decided to abandon the idea of organising the WDP-groups around the development areas, and instead organised groups according to other ideas. They decided there would be six WDP-groups, each having participants from either two or three of the unit types. Three of the WDP-groups had a majority of members employed in day-care centres, whereas the three other groups were fairly balanced. In four of the groups there were employees who mainly provided services to children younger than seven years of age, whereas the other two groups had employees mainly providing services to youths.

Participants were informed by the TMG about these alterations and the reasons why at the first gathering in the TMA. Some of the participants expressed slight disappointment by the alterations, because the groups became less “interdisciplinary” than expected. The TMG acknowledged the disappointment, but also underlined that the changes would give the WDP-groups wider decision making latitude. They could still choose to highlight grey areas,

or they could take on other development issues of particular relevance for instance to one type of unit (like day-care centres), or to an age group (children under six or youths).

Workplace development groups

A description of the WDP-groups' mandate is provided in chapter 6, but important in this (planning) context was to be as precise as possible on what they were supposed to do. The term "workplace development groups" is used repeatedly throughout this thesis as a name for the employee project groups established as part of the TMA, of which there were six in all. This name was no accident. By highlighting "projects" it was emphasised that the groups were to develop something new that might or might not (depending on effects) be sustained. Furthermore, the term "workplace development" is not widely used in the literature, but it has been used in the context of balancing productivity and quality of working life in Finland (Alasoini, 2004). Although this usage is fairly compatible with the issues highlighted in DOAS, no direct connection with this or other existing usages of the term is intended. The term is meant to be descriptive in the sense of highlighting what the groups were supposed to do, i.e. engage in workplace development issues.

What was important at the time was to differentiate these groups from traditional organisation development (because it was expected that many employees would associate that concept with problem-focused management tools) and "development organisation", which is a term used by the Norwegian Work Research Institute (WRI) on systematic attempts to engage the whole work organisation in incremental changes of existing practices (see chapter 2.3). In contrast the TMA involved not all but approximately one in seven of DOAS-employees, and highlighted projects more than organisation-wide decision making processes. Similar to WRI's approach though, CHPS emphasised the importance of establishing structures for organisation learning complementary to the formal organisation for daily work practices.

In planning the TMA as a support structure for the WDP-groups it was important to think specifically about what they were to do. It was clear that many of the participants would

have little or no prior knowledge of each other, and that they were to initiate (in one way or another) “new” work practices. These features had several consequences: Most of them would not have much prior knowledge of each other. They would have to highlight mutual ongoing activities; hence it was important that they got off to a good start and quickly gained experiences. Because of the novelty factor and few previous experiences to build on they would participate on fairly equal terms, irrespective of differences in position, tenure or education. It was also evident to CHPS that the WDP-groups’ activities would be a “testing-ground” for developing new practices. This strengthened the idea of using a “tool-box perspective” (see below), meaning that employees themselves had to decide on what perspectives and methodologies were relevant to them, because the challenges they addressed were not clearly defined from the outset.

Whether or not the WDP-groups experienced their increased manoeuvrable space as beneficial or problematic is addressed in the next chapter, as this issue is related to how groups made decisions on what practices to initiate, i.e. the Enable-Explore phase of the employee empowerment processes as depicted in chapter 1.4. Neither the TMG nor CHPS were particularly pleased with the recruitment process, but on the other hand no opportunities were blocked. Precisely what the consequences would be could not be determined in advance, and consistent with the constructive approach the partners were optimistic about the possibilities of *making* the best of it.

The curriculum and the TMA as framework for supporting organisation learning

To CHPS the challenge was to make the TMA an overall framework in which all relevant concerns for organisation learning were combined purposefully. DOAS had specified what workplace development issues to highlight in project groups, and they had provided input on competencies they wanted highlighted in a course that was to be centred on interdisciplinary collaboration in practice. CHPS had to develop a curriculum for the course that was consistent with formal requirements at Vestfold University College (i.e. the integrity of the course as 15 ECTS continuing education), as well as compatible with DOAS’

expectations and the ambitions with the TMA. CHPS was concerned that some of DOAS' requests could get "lost in translation" on the way from their intentions to the formally sanctioned curriculum. Data do not allow a detailed analysis of what might have been lost in this way, but as documented in the summary of the course literature below all seven competence categories DOAS-employees wanted highlighted (see chapter 5.2) were covered. CHPS was prepared to discuss outlines to the curriculum with DOAS, but the univocal feedback both from managers and service workers was that "you know what is best here". Consequently, the level of DOAS participation in the actual making of the curriculum was low, as could be expected given the (above described) division of labour between CHPS and the TMG. This was not a major concern to CHPS in this (planning) phase of the TMA, because adjustments were to be expected irrespective of amount of energy vested in planning, simply because it was impossible to anticipate what would prove to be important once the TMA got underway. Whether or not the curriculum was flexible enough to cater for needs not anticipated from the outset is an empirical question that will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

The least flexible part of a curriculum is its learning objectives. These were related to competencies seen as important in order to improve interdisciplinary collaboration in practice. Concretely the learning objectives were related to (my translation): 1) understanding of public service organisations as settings, 2) organising for development work (hence organisation learning), 3) guidance and communication with colleagues and clients, 4) client participation, and 5) multi-cultural understanding and ethical reflections in practice. (See curriculum in Appendix 1.) The course "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice" could be flexible in how to realise these objectives, but the objectives could not be altered without compromising the integrity of the course.

The greatest practical challenge to CHPS was to devise a structure for the course that simultaneously strengthened theoretical learning (by encouraging testing of perspectives and methods in ongoing work practices), and practice learning (by using perspectives and methods to inform and analyse practice). CHPS wanted to facilitate both types of learning by using working methods consistent with action research. This was to be accomplished by

- Training participants in research methodology (working with research issues and questions; the research process and products; qualitative and quantitative survey methodology, etc). This was further stimulated by exam requirements, which specified that each WDP-group had to write a report documenting their projects in ways compatible with mainstream social science standards (see below for details and Appendix 2 for the full set of exam requirements).
- A tool-box perspective; providing participants with a surplus of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches related to planning, practice and evaluation, that TMA-participants themselves had to choose between and apply in their ongoing work processes, based on what they deemed relevant to succeed in realising their objectives.
- Supervision of WDP-groups; roughly separated as described in chapter 3 between supervision of WDP-activities on the one hand, and meta-reflections on the relationship between participants' daily work practices and the TMA on the other.
- Using gatherings as meeting places for all TMA-participants (WDP, TMG, CHPS); divided between lectures on course content (before lunch) and group work related to workplace development issues (after lunch).

As mentioned above CHPS felt reasonably confident that the seven competence categories DOAS-employees wanted emphasised in the course were covered in the literature. The literature was predominantly centred on book sections (the following are my summaries of the content in each of the texts):

Solution-Focused approach to organisation development (Langslet, 1999)

This text-book has its point of departure in a critique of organisation development that starts with diagnosing causes of problems and deficits. The author's experience is that a linear step-by-step approach starting with diagnosis and ending with implementation of a solution provides "accounts of misery", provoking suspicion and antagonism in a work organisation. Instead an approach highlighting existing resources for realising desired outcomes in the future is advocated. Inspired by solution-focused family therapy the author launches eight credos for solution-focused organisation development: 1) What we believe affects what we

search for and talk about; 2) There is always both a Problem and a Non-Problem (not a case of either-or); 3) You do not have to understand the problem in order to solve it – instead find the key to solutions; 4) Behaviour given attention becomes reinforced (emphasising problems or opportunities leads to more emphasis on problems or opportunities respectively); 5) Language creates realities; 6) Small changes make bigger changes; 7) Change is unavoidable and stability an illusion; and 8) Those affected by an issue knows best how it should be dealt with. Strengths and weaknesses of the solution-focused approach are discussed in relation to workplace environment, conflict resolution, management training and development, and planned change.

Scientific inquiry in project work (Bitsch Olsen and Pedersen, 1999)

This text-book provides detailed accounts of various types of research issues and questions, different methodological underpinnings and practices, and alternative ways of writing project reports. Its target audience is students groups conducting empirical investigations into a subject matter. Differences between product- and process-logic is stressed, with the former characterised by coherent and logical structure, and the latter characterised by loose ends, fragments and intuition. The authors argue that both logics are required to accomplish scientific inquiry. Suggestions provided are detailed and concrete.

Participation and learning in organisations (Berg and Eikeland, 1997)

This text-book highlights employee participation and organisational learning in processes of planned change. The first half provides theoretical and practical justifications for participation and organisation learning, whereas the second half describes 17 concrete methods suitable for one or several phases in a change process (these phases being 1) problem identification, 2) surveying, 3) generating alternative solutions, 4) decision-making, 5) implementation, and 6) evaluation). Emphasis is on what a work organisation can accomplish on its own without assistance of external consultants. Organisation learning is determined as a phenomenon occurring when “frontstage” daily operations are reflected on “backstage” in dialog between all employees, resulting in new organisational practice, for instance improvements in existing production (“do the things right”) or change of production (“do the right things”).

Conducting surveys of clients' needs and satisfaction with services (Dag Ingvar Jacobsen, 1999)

This text-book advocates use of surveys to increase accountability of public service's use of resources. A detailed account of steps in conducting surveys for clarifying client needs and assessing client satisfaction is provided. Emphasis is on determining typical issues and questions that emerge in the process, using terminology not requiring previous knowledge of survey methodology. As such, the book is a tool for those wanting to conduct surveys, and for those commissioning surveys who want a quick overview of pros and cons.

Professional guidance (Gjems, 1995)

Professionals experience tension between adapting to changing circumstances (in society, clients, colleagues) and maintaining stability by following tenets of a profession. "Systemic guidance" is recommended to deal with such tension. "Systemic" in this context means emphasis on relationships between different agents at individual and organisation levels. Agents influence each other mutually, thus creating circular relations between cause and effect of change. Emphasis in systemic guidance is on consequences of action, as opposed to approaches to guidance emphasising clarification of intentions behind actions (as for instance in Lauvås and Handal, 1990). Consequently, it is stressed that change is initiated by agents consciously modifying their actions so as to improve performance of a system of relationships. As with other approaches to guidance participants' self-determined needs and voluntary participation is seen as paramount. The text-book also provides hands-on recommendations for conducting "systemic guidance".

Articles on empowerment (Ingun Stang, 1998a), interdisciplinary collaboration (Larsen, 1994, 1995, Aanderaa and Tveiten, 1994), and multi-cultural issues (Myhra, 1998, Eide, 1997)

These articles and book sections provides accounts of definitions and central issues within their respective subjective matters.

Taken together the literature covered all competence categories middle-managers and key personnel identified as important for improving services to DOAS' clients (organisation learning and project work, interdisciplinary collaboration, evaluation and survey methodology, multi-cultural issues, dialog methodology and communication skills, guidance,

and health promotion). Except from the articles all texts combined theoretical perspectives and methodological recipes or suggestions. CHPS found it reasonable to assume that the literature would assist in developing competencies necessary not only for accomplishing interdisciplinary collaboration in practice, but also for doing the research component of action research competently.

Opportunities and risks as envisioned after the planning process

At the end of the planning process the TMG and CHPS saw a number of opportunities and risks with the planned TMA. The partners anticipated that some of the opportunities and risks would be intertwined, i.e. depending on how events unfolded there would be outcomes either conducive or detrimental to overall objectives. This seemed likely for instance in the case of interdisciplinary collaboration, or in the case of what workplace development issues WDP-groups would highlight, as described earlier. More generally though, it was reasonable to contemplate risks that the TMA would not unfold as planned. The idea was that the more potential problems were anticipated the more competently they could be dealt with if and when they emerged.

It is reasonable to separate between risks associated with the TMA-framework itself, and risk associated with outcomes from practices initiated by the TMA. The latter type of risk is addressed theoretically previously in the thesis and empirically later in the thesis, with emphasis on possible adverse effects on employee health and organisation performance. Concerning the type of risk associated with the framework itself, it was clear that DOAS-participants would experience role confusion. They were invited to participate as employees, yet also expected to be students in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. They were “student-employees” or “employee-students”, and how they would manage this tension was not a foregone conclusion. Ideally they would use the curriculum to analyse and improve own work practices, and experiences from work practices would stimulate scholarly learning, hence mutual reinforcement between the two components of the TMA. On the other hand they could become “too much students”, for instance be absorbed by theoretical learning, or acting strategically in WDP-groups to pass exams. Alternatively they could become “too

much employees”, for instance be absorbed by work practices without challenging them systematically with theoretical knowledge and critique. In the first case the integrity of the workplace development projects would be jeopardised, while in the second case the integrity of the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” would be jeopardised.

To CHPS it seemed evident that a lot would come down to how participants defined the situation, and so it was planned to address opportunities and risks with being “employee-students” explicitly with the participants in the first gathering. Consistent with the overall constructive approach this was CHPS’ general approach to tensions TMA-participants in a sense “owned” themselves. It was up to participants to decide how they would manoeuvre in the tension between student and employee. Similarly, to a large extent it was up to participants whether positive or negative consequences of interdisciplinary collaboration (as described in chapter 5.1) would materialise; whether enabling activities would be experienced as increasing scope for self-determination or not, or whether they would use increased control over work processes to practice in ways conducive to employee health and organisation performance or not. CHPS saw it as vital to the employee empowerment processes that participants became aware of the opportunities they had and the choices they could make, and so making tensions explicit was a major concern.

In addition there were risks and opportunities that the TMA-participants had only partial or marginal influence over. For instance, CHPS made several decisions concerning the course that the participants had to accept as given. CHPS in effect decided what participants were to read and discuss, and how (the working methods) they were to analyse and document their projects. Potentially one of the most contestable decisions CHPS made was that the groups’ project reports were to be exam assignments in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. For one, documenting the projects in ways conforming to course requirements could divert attention from important aspects of the workplace development projects. Furthermore, as it was the groups that were to write the reports all participants had to take the exam, and the risk of some acting as free-riders was problematic not only to the integrity of the course, but also to the relationships between group participants. Taken together there was a risk that the TMA-framework CHPS devised could be just as much or more constraining than enabling. There were also issues the TMG decided which TMA-participants

had to take as given. For instance how much time and resources they were expected to devote to workplace development and course activities, and how WDP-initiatives would be sustained in DOAS.

With the research questions presented at the start of this chapter as a point of departure, this chapter can briefly be summarised as follows: CHPS developed its tailor-made approach (TMA) as a response to challenges in reorienting public services towards ideals for health promotion. CHPS experienced that professionals' specialist competencies had to be complemented with "generalist" competencies. CHPS also experienced that formal training was not sufficient, and that new practice had to be developed by means of organisation learning. The TMA therefore consists of both course and workplace development components. In DOAS employees participated in planning the TMA by suggesting content in the course component, and issues to address in the workplace development component. The competence challenges they identified were compatible with CHPS' emphasis on generalist competencies, in this case organisation learning, project work, interdisciplinary collaboration, evaluation and survey methodology, multi-cultural issues, dialog methodology and communication skills, guidance and supervision, and health promotion and public health issues. CHPS developed a curriculum addressing these issues, and applied a "tool-box perspective", in which the use of perspectives and methods in work practices were up to employees' discretion. Recruitment of employees to the TMA was confusing due to mixed messages. As a consequence, it was unclear how the employees could address identified workplace development issues (substance abuse, mental health, deviant behaviour, adolescents in need of integrated services, multicultural issues). Furthermore, it was noted that although the TMA was intended to be enabling, there was risk it could be constraining. More generally risks and opportunities with the TMA were seen as intertwined, for instance on roles (employee-student), interdisciplinary collaboration, and consequences of having increased control.

It was evident to CHPS that the relative success or failure of the TMA as a framework for supporting organisation learning, employee empowerment processes and employee health and organisation performance, had to be analysed with attention to three different sources of influence: What the participants chose to do, how the TMA-framework influenced their

practices, and how the TMG (and in a wider sense DOAS as a setting) influenced their practices. These three lines of investigation are followed up on in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6 The “Workplace development projects” decision making processes

The first gathering in the tailor-made approach (TMA) was conducted over two full days in February 2000, and marked the beginning of the first employee empowerment sub-process depicted and commented in chapter 1.4, the one between Enable and Explore. All the planning activities examined in chapter 5 were intended to enable the “workplace development projects” (WDPs) to explore ways of increasing their control over work practices, for the intended benefit of both employee health and organisation performance. As described in chapter 5 there were a total of six WDP-groups, and in addition the top-management group (TMG) constituted a seventh group participating in the TMA. The participants were to be lectured and supervised by a team of five employees from the Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS). The TMA was intended as a framework supporting organisation learning in DOAS, and the working methods were consistent with action research emphasising systematic (research-based) and repeated cycles of planning, practice and evaluation.

This chapter starts with examining compatibility between the TMA-framework and what the participants wanted to see happen in DOAS, and examining participants’ previous experiences with organisation changes in the municipality. Attention is then directed towards the groups’ initial project ideas, and how these ideas were met with feedback from the TMG and CHPS, leading up to an overview of what the six WDP-groups concretely decided to do in their projects. The analyses ends with the reflections CHPS did after decisions were made, which can be understood as a discussion on issues CHPS wanted to pursue in the next phases of the employee empowerment process.

Taken together this chapter addresses research questions raised in chapter 1.5, on: What mandates were the “workplace development projects” (WDP-groups) given? What did participants in the WDP-groups want to accomplish by participating in the TMA? What did they see as important for realising their objectives? How did their previous experiences with organisation change in the municipality influence their expectations? What were their initial

project ideas? How were these ideas modified after feedback from the TMG and CHPS? What were their final project decisions? How did they arrive at these decisions? What could be learned from this sub-process with relevance for the next sub-process? Answers to these questions are summarised in conjunction with the discussion at the end of this chapter.

As described in chapter 3 the data from this sub-process are quite rich, comprising both taped and transcribed conversations with the WDP-groups, the TMG, and the CHPS-supervisors. Furthermore there are extensive notes from gatherings and various meetings to build on. Still, as will be commented later in this chapter, data are somewhat scarce on some important aspects, giving rise to questions that will be readdressed in chapters 7 and 8.

6.1 WDP-groups' mandates, initial responses and previous experiences

Prior to the first gathering participants received written information on the purpose of the TMA, the curriculum and literature, the schedule and related practical issues, and lists on workplace development issues, participants and WDP-groups. This information conveyed the essence of what the TMG and CHPS had planned for the TMA. The first major challenge was to clarify if participants understood the information as intended, and whether or not they concurred with the plans. The information was therefore repeated and elaborated on verbally in the gathering, and participants were encouraged to ask questions and make comments to clarify ambiguities and misunderstandings, thereby allowing modifications of plans based on their input. The first gathering thus marked both the ending of the planning period and the start of the TMA.

Although much information had been provided prior to the start of the TMA it was only at the first gathering that participants were presented with a mandate for their workplace development projects. The WDP-groups were instructed to develop project activities that would support a) development of new work practice, b) DOAS' objectives and the development issues or "grey areas" identified in the planning process, c) client participation, d) interdisciplinary collaboration, and e) using existing or developing new resources (solution-focus).

The TMG elaborated on the mandate by stating their ambitions with the TMA, and pointed to DOAS' overall objectives and the workplace development issues (both of which employees had participated in developing, see chapter 5), the importance of applying solution-focus and involve clients so as to offer services facilitating adolescents' and parents' empowerment, and that employees should apply a "it's better to ask for forgiveness than for permission from managers" attitude when contemplating what work practices to alter as part of the TMA. Furthermore, the TMG underlined the importance of replacing existing work practices with new ones, as opposed to simply doing more than before. They argued that their participation in the TMA was important for the likelihood of new practice being sustained ("anchored") in DOAS, and they informed that the TMA would be on the agenda in

all existing meetings. The TMG also expected that a need to develop existing or altogether new meeting places would emerge, particularly to enable interdisciplinary collaboration. Finally, they insisted that participants should give stern feedback if the TMG did not follow up on their intentions.

CHPS emphasised the importance of organisation learning to achieve objectives with the TMA, herein particularly the “back-stage” metaphor on how employees can learn collaboratively from reflecting on their work experiences and what they would like to occur in the future, as opposed to only discussing ongoing work practices. CHPS underlined that it was more important that DOAS through trial and error developed process competence in how to address ongoing and emerging challenges, than to implement specific solutions or changes in the formal organisation. Furthermore, CHPS also highly emphasised the possibility of working with improvements in ongoing work practices, instead of initiating something altogether new. In order to realise objectives the participants were encouraged both to apply a solution-focus, and to “explore boundaries” of three kinds; external expectations to the services they provided, formal organisational structures in DOAS and the municipality, and their own values and competencies. In addition the rationale for the TMA was presented, along with working methods, literature and exam requirements as described in chapter 5.

Concerning perspectives and methodological approaches for the WDP-groups, CHPS stressed the difference between attention to process and attention to product, in order to “balance chaos and order”. In conjunction with this they were also told that it is important to develop a project plan, yet be prepared to modify it based on experiences. Groups were also lectured on the topic of solution-focus, and given hand-outs on communication and decision making in groups.

In the gathering the WDP-groups tried out some of the methods CHPS suggested, particularly on how to establish a group as proficiently as possible both in relation to process and product. Group participants also shared their positive experiences with collaboration, and discussed what each participant saw as important for establishing collaboration. The groups also developed their first project ideas under the supervision of CHPS, leading CHPS

to comment in a plenary session that the groups were abstract in their ideas, and that they fairly quickly had to become more concrete on what actions to undertake. The groups were given the assignment to present their project ideas in writing to the TMG five weeks after the first gathering, after first having been supervised by CHPS.

As described in chapter 1 CHPS expected ambiguity towards employee empowerment; on the one hand temptation to take more control over work processes, on the other concern about possible disadvantages of attaining such control. CHPS wanted to address this ambiguity not by lengthy abstract contemplation on empowerment, but by stimulating groups to start out with generating and trying out ideas, thereby gaining own experiences with what, if anything, they wanted to explore.

The amount of information received at the first gathering was quite considerable, maybe even overwhelming, and the groups also met for the first time. It was thus not to be expected that much dissuasiveness with the TMA-framework would emerge there and then. In general a plenary session is not suitable for everybody to voice their concerns, and here in particular with the TMG and CHPS setting the agenda it was even less so. However, the general impression was that participants were enthused about the plans for the TMA, and many expressed that it was important to them that the TMG participated in and had clear ambitions with the TMA. As described in chapter 5 though some voiced concerns about composition of groups, i.e. that they were less “interdisciplinary” than intended. Other concerns with the TMA would more likely emerge in supervision or in participants’ meetings with members of the TMG.

Participants’ initial responses to the TMA-framework

In chapter 3.1 it was commented that the “meta-reflections” I had with WDP-groups could best be described as “conversations”. Furthermore, it was commented that much of the data used in this thesis are transcripts from such conversations. My own statements in such conversations are consistently marked with a “Q.”, simply indicating “question”. In my first conversations with the WDP-groups I asked participants what they saw as most important in

their jobs. The answers were strikingly similar across WDP-groups, albeit with a notable difference between participants having and not having managerial responsibilities. Typical statements – here taken from comments made in various WDP-groups – among those without managerial responsibilities were:

- ... to have the best possible services to the children we are providing services to, using resources optimally so that children and their families get the most of the services they are entitled to.

- ...to provide services as early as possible in relation to parents and children, and that they get the help they need.

- I work all the time with the intention that my clients shall gain trust in me and use me, and I work all the time for leading clients to others if I can't give them everything because of the demands I have to fulfil, but also if they need more, so all the time my objective is to make clients as content as possible.

Whereas participants without managerial responsibilities more or less exclusively highlighted best interests of their clients as most important, participants with managerial responsibilities had a dual focus on employees and clients (here too comments made in conversations in various WDP-groups):

- What I'm particularly interested in..., yes working with the staff, collaboration, that a good work environment is created. That is time consuming but also important for doing a good job with the children. And then of course I'm interested in doing a good job with the children. That we are there for them and provide good services.

- I believe it is important... that staff finds out what it takes for them to be satisfied because that is important for the children's wellbeing.

- What I am especially interested in is what I've always been interested in, and that is separated in two parts. It is this about the staff and what makes adults perform (...) In relation to the children I'm very engaged in interaction skills, and I try to make the staff engaged in this as well.

All statements on this issue in all groups shared some similarities: They highlighted what was in the best interest of clients (and colleagues), and they were general in the sense of not

giving concrete examples. The answers could be interpreted as expressing “politically correct” values in the setting. There was obvious risk of participants communicating strategically (not speaking their true minds), not only because I as a CHPS-employee asked the questions, but also because they responded in newly created groups. They were at an early stage of collaborating with colleagues they had not worked with previously. In the context they responded any deviations from what could be seen as generally acceptable would have been strong statements indeed.

On the other hand they answered with considerable enthusiasm, and there was no particular reason to doubt their sincerity. Many of them had completed higher education in social work, education or health sciences. They had opted for careers working with adolescents and their families. They had chosen to participate in the TMA, and could therefore be expected to find the stated objectives with the TMA motivating. In addition the job market was good at the time for these professionals. If they wanted they could take up positions in other municipalities, or positions for instance in schools, social security or health care sectors. Taken together it seemed reasonable to assume that they expressed their sincere opinions. The first impression that participants were highly committed but not very concrete on how to realise their commitments was also strengthened by subsequent events, as will be returned to later.

“Getting to know each other”, and overview of services provided

The value congruence between employees’ preferences and the intentions with the TMA was reassuring, but what do participants see as important to realise values in work practices? In the planning process it was established that particularly middle managers were interested in (interdisciplinary) collaboration, and this was highlighted time and again in conversations with the WDP-groups as well. More fundamentally though, the conversations made it clear that participants were unaware of what services their colleagues in other units were providing. The following excerpt from a conversation in a WDP-group is taken from a discussion on what they saw as the major challenges for workplace development in DOAS.

1. I almost said..., I think somewhat that we should have a clear overview eventually, of what services there are in this department. There are so many projects, many are involved here and there, this thing about looking at the totality of services, and unify them or build on them, and that everyone working at the grassroots level are given a proper overview of what services we (as a department) can use really. Individually there are very many good services, but they are scattered in a way, and are they used correctly, and are everybody familiar with existing services?

Q. Provide an overview?

1. Yes, there is something there.

2. Not only provide an overview, but stitch it together.

1. Stitch it together and make it visible.

2. There's no glue now, to use such an expression, holding it together.

3. I'm also thinking that the municipality has an enormous amount of information, they know a lot, and can use it to prevent that something becomes a problem, I'm thinking about those getting in contact with families early, and like we talked about earlier, we know which families are at great risk for something going wrong, and if we can make a sequential build-up of services, but of course this also has to do with information to clients, of course it does, but I believe that we maybe have to steer them a bit, because there is a lot of information in the municipality, and (we need to) have greater collaboration between the activities for children, youths and so on.

2. It doesn't take much to do it either. It didn't have to cost as much, it is just that it isn't organised. So what happens is more dependent on persons.

The final comment here on "what happens is more dependent on persons" proved to be an important point and a recurring theme, and will be addressed several times in this chapter and the next. The tension between "person-dependent" and "collaboratively based" services was a concern in other WDP-groups too. The following two excerpts are from conversations in two different WDP-groups:

- What I wish for is that we can have better collaboration for instance with (one of the other units), that the road will be shortened, that it will be easier to make contact. Because right now that isn't so easy. We work very much individually, and have problems on each our patches. There is something about being able to stand a bit together as professionals and be of assistance to each other. That would be exciting I think, and that is something I hope we can get some way towards through this project.

- Collaboration between the units. That is what I wish for. That there will be much more open dialog between units, where meeting places and arenas are more defined and clear, we know what to talk about, know where to go when we have issues.

The importance of leadership for collaboration

The above quotations were just a few from conversations providing a similar picture throughout WDP-groups: Participants wanted to know more about each others' services so as to be able to collaborate more proficiently and "glue" services together in the best interests of DOAS' clients.

What did they see as important for that to happen? Again there were striking similarities between groups in their emphasis on the importance of leadership. Below are three excerpts from conversations in three different WDP-groups:

- What happens will have to be anchored in the top-management, you know. Because all we have tried to do and establish on our own, if it is not anchored and they (the top-management) work for it, it will boil away. We can invent great routines, but if we're not able to anchor it in our top-management it will boil away, we will not get it done. I've tried many times, so this I know.

- It is a challenge to make an organisation work properly with routines, training, who takes responsibility for what. Regarding other units and the totality of the department, and not just in relation to clients, but I'm also very concerned about the employees' point of view as well.

- I look at myself..., you know when I look at my role, you know I'm carrying out a job according to a mandate, right, and when that mandate is clear I think that is very nice you know. That there are clear priorities and directions making it easier for me. It becomes very wrong for me if I am to work for an employer completely at my own discretion.

Participants had experiences with change initiatives "boiling away" if they were not anchored in top-management, and this is certainly not an unusual experience in work organisations. It could be seen as a general concern being more or less relevant to DOAS in particular, but as the following excerpt from a conversation in a WDP-group shows, many of the participants saw it as particularly relevant to DOAS.

1. Yes, clear guidelines for what we ought to collaborate on.
2. I'm supporting the last thing you (1.) said there, that we find out something about the top-management's expectations to arenas and who should be responsible for what. We are talking about rules of conduct.

Q. So an explicit ambition in DOAS on...?

2. Yes because that should almost get first, so one has the boundaries before I start communicating about what I want with it, so I have to know within which boundaries I should in a way want something. It's sort of like that.

1. It is easy to make boundaries at the individual units, it sure is.

2. Yes, now there are no restrictions or, it's only floating freely this far in my opinion. Don't you (other group members) experience that as well, because we have laws that in a way prevent and promote and all that, but from the top-management in DOAS there is nothing determining what we shall or shall not collaborate on regarding anything.

1. (The different units) contact each other without the top-management knowing anything about it. It is something that unit managers do completely by themselves.

2. Yes, and that's something we've always done, so why, it's not that I'm against a department for adolescent services, but I mean why..., top-management has probably had some clever ideas when they organised the way they did, but we do what we always have done in a way.

3. Yes because as new (to the job) I experience that it is very much said from the top and everything that there is to be collaboration, but perhaps nothing said about how we should collaborate and what we should collaborate on, so there aren't any new meeting places for collaboration I suppose. So that it becomes a bit coincidental and dependant on persons who collaborates with whom.

As will be returned to later assertions similar to these were common in the WDP-groups, but they were not univocal. Perhaps particularly interesting in the above excerpt was the direct reference to how DOAS functioned as an organisational setting at the beginning of 2000, more than a year after the department had been established. Participants described a setting in which collaboration was initiated by unit managers at their own discretion without top-management knowing about it, leading collaboration to be "floating freely" in a negative or at least ambiguous sense, and "from the top-management in DOAS there is nothing determining what we shall or shall not collaborate on regarding anything". Consequently, employees at unit level could "do what we always have done in a way", threatening the rationale for establishing DOAS in the first place. Given this backdrop it also became clearer why employees often were making reference to "getting to know each other" and "collaboration" in a general sense, and not to interdisciplinary collaboration in particular. They were uncertain as to what they could collaborate on in practice.

WDP-participants' previous experiences with organisation change initiatives

It was also evident that the WDP-participants wanted to improve collaboration with top-management. For that to happen they had to initiate or at least participate in organisation change, but what were their experiences with organisation change? Were they optimistic about possibilities to make sustained changes, and if so how? It was reasonable to assume that participants' understanding of what DOAS was like, and what it could be possible to accomplish, would have consequences for what and how they wanted to explore ways of increasing own control over work practices.

When contemplating own experiences with organisation change the reorganising that led to the creation of DOAS in 1998-99 was just one of several changes participants referred to. Among those with tenure in the municipality preceding that reorganising, organisational change was experienced as an ongoing phenomenon, and not as isolated events with far-reaching consequences. As one participant said with understatement: "You could say the municipality has tried to change the organisation for several years..." This comment sparked considerable laughter in the group, as participants acknowledged the understatement. In the following conversation in this group and other groups there emerged similar views on how participants experienced change as being initiated, how it affected motivation, how it related to daily work processes, and what an employee should do if she or he wanted to accomplish changes in work practices. The following excerpts are from five different WDP-groups:

1. The experience is that change always comes from above, that it is economically motivated, and that there are many fair words revolving around up there but that it makes little difference. That is my experience. That it is extremely difficult to change practice.
2. We've been through changes in the municipality and what often happens is that information, you might say, it is not univocal and then you can experience that management retracts things once we've started because we haven't been coordinated, we don't have a common platform before we start the changes, and then there are

somebody at the top having a different image of how the changes are going to be, and we believe that we are working consistently with what they want, but then it turns out that might not be completely correct.

1. It is de-motivating.

- You know it's a bit of a trend in the municipality, I'm just thinking about the (many) years I've been working here, so one has been part of much and reorganising and development processes and education too, sort of (...) and then it almost makes one lose hope that something can be done. It is there burn-out, the source of burn-out lies. That you stop believing in anything, and then it becomes difficult in a way to have the energy to enter those processes and try and participate in developing something more.

1. Concerning our (unit's) reorganisation (in the process leading to DOAS) it was like, you may say, that I sometimes caught myself in, and we talked about it all of us too, that it is very easy to retreat and blame the reorganising because it takes time and all that, and then become a bit laid-back. I became tired of hearing the word reorganising, yes I caught myself in that, and we were pretty sick of the word all of us. But that was because there was too much to and from, but then there is something about that you're able to establish a group strong enough to pull together.

2. That (what you said) was some of what I tried to say earlier, that in such situations it is important to keep on doing what you're doing irrespective of for instance reorganising, because it is very easy as you say (1.) to sit down and yes let's wait and sort of see what happens, it can easily become like that.

1. I feel that we are doing so many projects and this and that, so when are you actually going to do the daily work? (Supporting laughter from group members) So much time away from the unit, in meetings and this and that, it's completely insane really.

2. Yes I can imagine that because I see that you (in your unit) among other things are attending different courses and jump on to what is on offer, whereas I simply do this (takes an imaginary sheet of paper in the air and tears it in two making a tearing sound) and throws it away.

3. How do you accomplish change then?

2. We don't have the time, I say. We have too many on sick leaves. (Strong laughter in the group) No, but I have experience with it not being wise to send people on lots of things willy-nilly. One does not get anything in return, never gets to use it. It can be nice for those who get it, and then it becomes more like a reward for putting in extra effort lately, and then it has to be something that is relevant to what we are doing.

3. There's a new course on communication skills coming up. Very concrete and good.

1. Another course we can attend... (Strong laughter in the group)

Q. One of you had an example of a lot coming from above, and then one is sitting in meetings and disapproving, yet have to relate...

1. In practice one often doesn't relate (to change initiatives), simple as that.

2. I have to relate to how many clients I have, but I have a lot of manoeuvrable space within that context, I sure have.
3. I feel I have a huge manoeuvrable space, I can very much influence my position, and like that a lot. I would like to have a job like this for many years.

It was striking that participants provided no positive experiences with organisation change initiated by the top layers in the municipality or department. Taken together organisation change initiatives were seen as frequent, initiated top-down with insufficient information and unpredictable chains of events, de-motivating and energy-consuming, not necessarily (typically not) relevant to the daily work situation, yet possible to avert by focusing on daily work activities with own clients. It is “important to keep on doing what you’re doing”, and also possible to do so by not relating to change initiatives. The same point was conveyed even more bluntly by middle-managers stating that they saw change initiatives as generating little else than more administrative chores for themselves. Generally participants experience “a huge manoeuvrable space” in their daily work practices and they appreciate it, yet at the same time – as established earlier in this chapter – would like to see more collaboration to cater for the best interests of clients. Part of the problem with organisation changes as they experienced them seemed to be lack of genuine participation.

1. Because there is something about people experiencing they are important and asked for advice, then I believe they are motivated for doing new things. (...) they get to develop and determine, yes, I believe just being asked for advice is incredibly important for changing things. It is a good place to start, I believe in that. (...) Yes, it means everything.
2. It means everything at all levels, you know I mean in this municipality where there are so many projects and where they come from above, you know, with a stack of papers with nice words on how you shall do things. You just feel how the entire staff gets hostile, you know. And where we’re not asked about our opinion at all, and where our meanings and how we see entirely different solutions, and things we don’t see as purposeful at all.
3. There are many things the administration wants us to take part in, things they have visions about, and then they follow up very poorly, because they don’t engage us in dialog as they say they do, don’t take sufficient consideration.

These assertions were no surprise to CHPS, not because of intimate knowledge of DOAS, but because of similar experiences from working with other public service organisations. Service workers often experience a cleavage between own daily work practices (over which they have much control) and top-management or administrative levels (making change initiatives often not experienced as relevant or purposeful at grassroots level in the organisations). To CHPS it was important to establish that the same constructive potential that had been observed in other public service organisations was present also in DOAS: Employees were motivated to improve public services, saw collaboration as necessary for that to happen, and wanted more direct engagement from and interaction with top-management. This constructive potential was of course vital to CHPS' ideas on facilitating employee empowerment by means of collaboration between employees and managers (see chapter 1).

How did the participants use the formal organisation for promoting own change initiatives?

It would nevertheless be a considerable challenge to unleash the potential for organisation learning and change that was more or less hidden in employees' motivation to collaborate. As the quotations above clearly indicate, employees had predominantly negative experiences with change initiatives from above. It was also somewhat discouraging to learn what employees typically experienced when taking change initiatives, as the following excerpt from a conversation illustrates.

1. But changes also take some psychological strength and it takes time. If you launch an idea that is taken up positively then suddenly you sit there with lots to write, document perhaps, elaborate on it, and it is limited how much opportunity you have to do that within working hours.

Q. So it's a bit like if one has a good idea then fine can you write something about it?

1. Yes, and you have to analyse and document and perhaps look at consequences and what resources are required.

2. It becomes a project of its own. If you are stupid enough to open your mouth and say perhaps we should to this then they say yes, great, and they are very good at sending the ball back to you, and usually it is sent further and further and further down the system. (...) I'm sitting here thinking that sometimes we're too focused on everyone having their say and participate in decisions, because then it runs out in the sand a bit.

(...) You have to wait, wait and wait on a small thing that just needs a decision. In my experience it is very much so that the system is used to waive responsibility. Was that a crass comment? But I mean it to some extent.

Q. Yes, using the system to waive responsibility, that there becomes so much bureaucracy around it that...?

2. Yes you don't have to do anything. You're holding yourself securely within the boundaries and yes it looks like you're doing a great job. You can do it in writing and it looks darned good on paper but in practice... My experience is that such an approach is much in use in organisations.

1. Yes because that's what we experience in relation to practical work with clients you know, that there is waiving of responsibility to avoid the difficult cases, and then we get back to start in the end. (...)

2. (On the other hand) if one really wants to one can accomplish the most incredible things.

Although participants see it as possible to accomplish things through bureaucratic channels, it was evident that the most efficient way to "get things done" was through acquaintances. Then "one can accomplish the most incredible things". On several occasions during conversations employees with long tenure informed their colleagues with short tenure on who to contact in order to get various tasks done. Such information was clearly welcomed. Taken together participants with long tenure had experienced that if you want something done then don't use the formal organisation, and conversely if you want to avoid doing something then use the formal organisation. They could exercise control over their work situations by influencing what issues entered formal procedures, i.e. exercising power by engaging in both decisions and non-decisions (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963). Such practices are of course detrimental to organisation learning, as will be discussed later. More fundamentally these practices gave strong indications that employees had few constructive experiences with working through the formal organisation.

Could the TMA make a difference?

When participants contemplated on whether or not the TMA could make a difference, many of their concerns related to organisation change in general emerged. Interestingly there also emerged some differences between participants on this issue. The following two excerpts are from conversations in two different WDP-groups.

- My expectations are really that what one in a way learns through the course (TMA) one should be allowed to do something about (...) So that is what I expect, to be allowed to use the knowledge we develop afterwards. But I believe perhaps that what is gained will be lost, not in the sense that we who are here don't get a lot out of it, but that we in a way will not be allowed to carry it out afterwards, I'm afraid of that.

Q. There has been a lot of talk about anchoring the TMA. What are your thoughts on that?

1. I believe it will be exciting to see. Now speaks an old lady who has been working here for a long time (laughs), but who still has her enthusiasm intact. Yes, it is important, but wait and see. But it is important. If this is not anchored (in the TMG) then we don't stand a chance.

Q. In relation to what do you think, chance in relation to...?

1. The whole idea with interdisciplinary collaboration in practice (and client participation).

2. I see that as waiving responsibility you know. Because if this is a good idea, and it is an idea worth spreading, then I believe it's down to us, whether or not that idea is spread, and whether or not others will adopt it. The top-management group has a minimum of impact on that, I believe, whether or not it will have transference value to others. What we are doing now is clearly within our manoeuvrable space, right?

3. I believe that too.

1. But it is exciting that we experience this differently. Yes, I truly mean that. I'm not thinking about it as waiving responsibility, but to me it is important that it is anchored in the administration, and that view is of course related to my previous experiences. I see that projects cannot be detached, they have to be attached to something. (...) Of course I hope that we can have greater opportunities to influence than previously.

4. Unfortunately I agree with you (1.). Because this is a way of collaborating, right? This is a way of working together, and if the municipality or the administration will think of something new after a short period of time, which we have experienced that they often do, then all the nice words end up at the bottom and we sort of start with something else. So this has to be implemented in how we work, in all joints (of the organisation).

As addressed at length in previous chapters emphasis in this thesis is on the relationships between employees engaged in work practices. As explained in chapter 3 no systematic account of participants' names, gender, age, tenure, profession or organisation unit affiliation was recorded, not only due to scarce relevance to research issues, but also due to concern for participants' anonymity. A brief description of the participants as a collective was included in chapter 3, noting some characteristics that cannot be attached to any particular individuals. It was noted that most of participants were women, more than half had professional training, they were employed in all four main types of units in DOAS, their mean age was around 40 years, and they varied considerably in tenure. While all these variables undoubtedly could shed some light on some of the occurrences in the TMA, the

number of participants were not large enough to allow meaningful comparisons between for instance men and women, or between participants having different professional training or unit affiliations. Still, as both participants as a collective and each of the WDP-groups were fairly balanced on tenure, it is possible to compare statements made by those with long and short tenure respectively, without jeopardising their anonymity. This variable was also the only “biographical” variable that proved to be of importance – not in general – but specifically on the issues of participants’ previous experiences with organisation change, and what they saw as important to sustain change initiatives. As already commented it proved important on one other issue as well, insofar as “seasoned” participants often informed their less experienced colleagues on who to contact if they wanted something specific done. As such they were, quite reasonably, more “organisation savvy”.

In the second of the two above excerpts participants 1 and 4 had long tenure, whereas 2 and 3 had short tenure. Those with short tenure were optimistic about sustaining change regardless of what the top-management chose to do, whereas those with long tenure were not. The issue here is of course not who is “right” concerning their expectations to the TMA specifically (that is an empirical question which neither of them could answer authoritatively at the time), but whether or not the disagreement generated conflict within this or other groups. The short answer is that it did not. On several occasions group members teased each other for being “old and cynical” or “young and green”, but the teasing was good-hearted and did not generate conflict, probably because the disagreement was not directly related to what they were actually collaborating on.

Although participants had similar concerns with the TMA as with other change initiatives, many expressed positive expectations to the TMA, particularly after having gained some experience with it. The following two excerpts are from conversations in two different WDP-groups.

- I also see the course as exciting, and that is partly because I’ve worked here for such a long time and I’m very frustrated by all the projects this municipality has had, being threaded over our heads with nice words, and page after page describing what we shall and shall not do. And many fancy words, and particularly this issue of interdisciplinary collaboration which doesn’t work in practice, or work poorly. So I see it as very exciting to

participate here, where we who are actually working at grassroots level are going to develop something by ourselves.

1. Learning by doing something concrete that is needed in the municipality is what motivates me to participate.

So I expect to make a product which is also a learning process.

Q. Other expectations?

2. I too hope there will be results and not only theory. So one can see this thing with interdisciplinarity, that we become more coordinated in what we do. What we have talked about a lot is what others actually do. I work under the same roof as many I don't know who are or what are doing. I mean the municipality in general, you know.

Q. So getting better acquainted with...?

2. With all units, for instance. What is it the unit for child care actually does, what are they doing those I'll collaborate with.

3. I think what we've already had (in the tailor-made approach) is very good, that we've had the time to immerse in concepts, for instance, I love doing that. So I hope there will be more of that as well. I'm thinking why haven't we done this before?

Q. Are you thinking about your own understanding or mutual understanding?

3. Yes on mutual understanding, and that there will be an outcome afterwards, that there will be a tradition for doing this. That it will be acceptable to ask what did you really mean with what you said.

4. Because what you should do... One never takes the time to do so at work.

1. Establish new rules of the game in a way, you know, it has something to do with that. More like maybe we can discuss more and...

3. Yes my experience is that we've tried to do so before, but no, it's not on the agenda you know. Finally it's on the agenda.

2. I very much agree with you.

To CHPS such statements on participants' first experiences with the TMA were uplifting. Participants were motivated to engage in collaboration, eager to get to know each other, and enjoying "backstage" reflections on "concepts" (i.e. theoretical perspectives) stimulating critique and development of mutual understanding, for the anticipated benefit of work practices. As will be addressed below though, there were other far more problematic experiences in the initial phase of the TMA.

For now it is reasonable to sum up some of the main points on compatibility between the intentions with the TMA and what the WDP-participants saw as important. First of all, there

was every reason to believe that participants in general were highly committed to develop services in the best interests of their clients. In addition middle-managers emphasised concern for their colleagues' well-being, which they saw as important not only to them but also to clients. Furthermore, participants saw more and improved collaboration between units, and between unit level and top-management, as important to improve services. The meanings they attributed to "collaboration" seemed to vary, and comprised the basic "know each other and each other's services", via "gluing" services together, to developing mutual understanding by means of reflection and critique. There was hardly any mention of *interdisciplinary* collaboration specifically, but much talk of collaboration between socially constructed barriers in the organisation like units and layers from top-management to grassroots levels. Participants had quite discouraging experiences with organisation change initiatives, often experiencing them as top-down and with scarce practical relevance. They also experienced that change initiatives (herein also competence development initiatives like courses) could "get in the way" of devoting time and energy to clients. Those with tenure had learned how not to relate to change initiatives, and how to use or not use the formal organisation (bureaucratic procedures) depending on whether or not they wanted something specific to occur. In general they were sceptical to the possibility of sustaining change initiatives, for instance there had been many projects previously that had not been sustained when the project period ended. Still, they seemed to be cautiously optimistic about opportunities to develop and sustain change initiatives by means of the TMA. Taken together CHPS' initial expectation (see chapter 1) of participants being ambiguous to increased control over work practices seemed warranted. They wanted more collaborative control to improve services, yet were anxious it would lead to nothing but strain and waste of time. Perhaps most worrying to CHPS at the time was that participants were not accustomed to use the organisation when they wanted things done, but more frequently got things done informally through acquaintances. Efficient as that may be, it does not provide much of a basis for organisation learning, hence efficient collaboration so as to utilise the organisation's resources in the best interest of all stakeholders. In addition there was obvious risk of haphazard distribution of services, for instance based on the networks of individual employees.

Some years later Amundsen and Kongsvik (2008) developed the concept “change cynicism” from extensive empirical research. They identified five attitudes as typical among employees who have experienced more or less continuous top-down organisation change initiatives. These attitudes are 1) seeing change as being initiated for its own sake, 2) seeing change ideas as recycled, and 3) as remote from practice concerns, without 4) visible consequences, and 5) with participation as apparent and not real. The authors concluded among other things that “change cynicism” may be disruptive to organisation commitment, this in turn having negative impact on organisation performance. While there certainly were elements of “change cynicism” among many of the TMA-participants, the most striking feature was ambiguity, maybe even ambivalence. The participants had not given up all hope of developing and sustaining desirable organisation change – if they had they would probably not have registered for the TMA at all – but they were in a danger zone of losing hope. To these employees succeeding with the TMA was probably more important than to their colleagues.

6.2 WDP-groups' development of project ideas

For several reasons CHPS expected the WDP-groups to have an abundance of project ideas. In the planning process employees had come up with a large number of suggestions for workplace development issues and competence areas to be addressed in the TMA, and thus proved capable of generating many ideas within a short period of time. Furthermore, as described in the above paragraphs, many were highly motivated to succeed in establishing collaboration. In addition it could be argued that participants, based on their work experience in DOAS, knew what could be done, i.e. they were given an opportunity to do what they saw would be useful, yet found difficult to accomplish because of lack of opportunities like the one provided by the TMA. Many participants also had extensive experience with project work, and based on their negative assessments of previous projects in DOAS it could be expected that they knew a lot about what to do and (especially) not do in projects. True, participants were hesitant and maybe ambivalent to what they could accomplish, and they did not have an exact overview of each other and the services they provided, but surely they would have many project ideas?

CHPS used methodology for generating, sorting and ranking ideas in the budget process and at the first gathering, and the employees were visibly enthused about it. CHPS therefore prepared to assist WDP-groups' use of such methodology in supervision, and planned to emphasise how multiple objectives could be realised through a single workplace development project. Such a project could – given careful planning – reasonably be expected to be relevant both to DOAS' objectives, one or more of the five identified workplace development issues addressing “grey areas”, interdisciplinary collaboration, solution-focus and client participation. A project could also lead to sustained changes, for instance by addressing ongoing work practices. Given what participants said they valued and wanted to see happen it seemed reasonable to expect that their project ideas would address daily work practices, and not revolve around abstract ideas or singular events. It also seemed reasonable to expect them to highlight how collaboration between units could improve daily work practices. Things did not go as expected though.

Following the first gathering in February 2000 there was a period of five weeks in which each of the six WDP-groups was expected to develop an outline for a project plan. The outline was to provide suggestions for workplace development projects relevant to the mandate they were given (see chapter 6.1), i.e. a) development of new work practice, b) DOAS' objectives and the development issues or "grey areas" identified in the planning process, c) client participation, d) interdisciplinary collaboration, and e) using existing or developing new resources (solution-focus). The groups were invited to contact CHPS-supervisors or members of the top-management group if they wanted assistance or there were issues needing clarification. There was also a scheduled supervision prior to the deadline. In order to lower the threshold for making progress in the decision making process the outline did not have to be more than one page. It was seen as more important to allow feedback from the TMG and CHPS than to have elaborate project outlines at this early stage of the TMA. The WDP-groups were informed that they had the authority to make decisions, and that CHPS' and TMG's feedback on project outlines was intended to improve the relevance and quality of their projects. The intention was not censorship but supervision.

Contrary to expectations there was hardly any contact between either of the WDP-groups and CHPS-supervisors or members of the TMG in the period groups were to make project outlines. After the scheduled five weeks only two groups (those who planned concrete activities, see below) were able to meet the deadline. The deadline was therefore prolonged with just over three weeks.

The first and for the TMA critical concern was if groups contemplated using their authority to decide *not* to take on more control over work processes, i.e. that they had concluded that empowerment was not a desirable option to them. If that was the case the TMA would have to be fundamentally redefined or ended. Instead the challenge to some extent seemed to be the opposite: Four of the WDP-groups were addressing too big issues, and found it difficult to generate ideas for own work practices. There simply was no abundance of ideas they needed assistance from CHPS to sort, and there were no concrete ideas with organisational impact of a magnitude that would require the TMG's approval. This – to CHPS at least – surprising feature can account for why hardly any contact was made between the three participant groups (WDP, TMG, CHPS) outside scheduled gatherings and supervision. Exactly

what had happened was of great interest to understand, and this issue is addressed below. First though a tentative description of what characterised the WDP-groups' initial ideals is in order. When comparing these ideas with the mandate they had been given the following became evident:

- Developing existing work practices: One group.
- Workplace development issues: Five of the six groups wanted to address "grey areas" in some way. The sixth group wanted to organise an event.
- Solution-focus: Two of the six groups highlighted solutions for the future; the other four groups were predominantly interested in analysing problems of the past.
- Client participation: None of the groups planned on involving clients in their decision making or planning processes, whereas all groups wanted to involve clients in one way or another in carrying out project activities.
- Collaboration between units: All groups had perspectives or general ideas, one group had concrete plans.

There were interesting similarities and dissimilarities between the groups on all the five mandate criteria. The most striking similarity was strong intentions of doing activities in the best interest of clients; an issue that will be returned to later. Four of the groups were quite similar in their interest for "grey areas", i.e. client needs that could not be catered for by one unit alone, thereby necessitating collaboration. They did not specify particular development issues within the grey area, such as substance abuse, mental health, deviant behaviour, adolescents in need of integrated services, or multicultural issues (see chapter 5.2), but more expressed a general interest. One of these groups took their point of departure in a rather gloomy world-view. They argued that the world is changing for the worse with more money-dependency, selfishness, indifference, and lack of care and humanity in societies. They asked themselves whether people in general are afraid of caring about each other, and whether public services primarily are crutches for parents' guilt from inadequacy in providing for their children. They called for managers to establish interdisciplinary collaboration so as to secure adequate services to disenfranchised children and families as early as possible. Two of the other of these four WDP-groups saw changes in employees'

values and attitudes respectively as necessary to succeed with interdisciplinary collaboration, and wanted to correct deficiencies. Finally, the fourth group with a general interest in “grey areas” was slightly more concrete on what they themselves could do. They highlighted how employees from different units within their WDP-group could learn from each other by sharing experiences, for instance from working with children with diverse needs. They presented no concrete ideas for changes in ongoing work practices in DOAS. Instead they wanted to disseminate their own experiences for the purpose of correcting undesirable attitudes and practice among other employees. Taken together these four groups shared an interest for highlighting problems they saw as necessary to overcome for collaboration to be fruitful, hence they were problem- as opposed to solution-focused. They were not concrete with regards to what they would do, how they would involve clients (or colleagues), or what consequences there would be for interdisciplinary collaboration in DOAS, but they were adamant about wanting to make changes in the best interests of clients.

A fifth WDP-group differed considerably from the four mentioned as they were highly concrete on what they wanted to do. They wanted to organise an event in which youths trained employees from all the four types of units in DOAS in various activities. The idea was to combine two interests: Let youths be in control over activities thus reversing the typical power relationship employee-client, and at the same time enable employees to socialise and get to know each other informally across units during “a day of fun”. The group’s point was that such an event would make it easier for employees and clients to contact each other later on, thus (indirectly) facilitating collaboration. The group could also build on previous experience on what they called “turning the flow of information” (from clients to employees as opposed to the other way around). Furthermore, the adolescents had previously been instructors for people outside DOAS, and so they too had experience to build on. Contrary to the other four WDP-groups this group explicitly wanted to develop existing resources with the intention of generating solutions for the future, albeit not directly related to “grey areas”. Similar to the other four WDP-groups this group did not address ongoing work activities or interdisciplinary collaboration directly.

Only one WDP-group presented project ideas that were relevant to all the five categories. They arrived at their project idea through contemplating a common concern:

1. And I believe we entered this idea because we in this group actually don't know what the others are doing. What do we know really? The information that we who work here don't have about services for adolescents.
2. And how will the clients know then?
 1. When we don't know, and hardly know what we do at our own units?
 3. I believe that was what I wrote in our last meeting, that clients don't understand what we are doing when we don't know ourselves.
 4. Then it becomes difficult.
 3. Then it becomes difficult, and one thing of course leads to another. Naturally.
 2. And (difficult to) provide the right services to clients.

In their project report they later recollected what they initially planned to do as their workplace development project (my translation):

As a target audience we from the outset primarily chose the municipality's parents, children and youth. By means of short video presentations on TV-screens strategically placed in the municipality, they would be able to see what the Department of Adolescent Services could offer. Information could be provided on places where people travel, wait, or stay for some time. Our objective was to change the municipality's practice from ordinary bureaucratic thinking to a more contemporary journalistic approach to information. Secondary this could be a means for informing new employees in the municipality about the municipality's holistic approach to children and youths. The effect of this would also be a better overview of the services and thereby increased knowledge on how to improve collaboration across disciplines and units.

Their project would not change ongoing work practices or initiate collaboration between units in DOAS per se, but could indirectly facilitate change because citizens and employees would get a better understanding of DOAS' services and organisation. The group was highly interested in the "journalistic challenges" of making an information video, and as will be returned to in chapter 7 used much time and energy on sorting different ideas for plot in their video. This WDP-group clearly wanted to build on existing resources and generate

solutions for the future, and they also had some ideas on how clients could be involved in the production of the video.

What characterised the initial phase, what had happened?

As already acknowledged the WDP-groups' initial ideas came as a surprise to CHPS. Employees had clearly stated that they wanted something concrete to come out of the TMA, that they were frustrated with projects and events that did not lead to sustained change, and that they wanted to do something for clients needing DOAS' services the most. So what had happened? What could explain the discrepancy between what they said they wanted and what they actually did? Had it something to do with the TMA-framework CHPS had developed, or perhaps with DOAS as a setting and participants' previous experiences with organisation change, or perhaps with the participants' competencies in project work and workplace development? Maybe even a combination of all these factors?

CHPS quickly decided not to stress the issue at this point in time. It could be a coincidence, for instance a misunderstanding of the WDP-groups' mandate. It could be that the WDP-groups had not had enough time to meet, and just reported some general reflections as a first step on their way to becoming more concrete on own work practices. It was too early to tell, and CHPS decided not to make it a problem but to wait and see how project ideas developed when the TMG and CHPS provided feedback to WDP-groups. The WDP-groups had not made their final decisions, and a lot could happen within a short period of time. Still, it was important to check out if there was something fundamentally wrong with group compositions, i.e. that the WDP-groups had fallen short of everybody's expectations (including their own) due to the way they were organised.

Group compositions as potential reason for lack of ideas

As described in chapter 5 the WDP-groups were composed by the top-management group in DOAS. Group compositions were motivated by their understanding of who might benefit

from collaborating; with four groups having participants predominantly working with children and two groups having participants predominantly working with youths. The first challenge for participants was thus “making sense” of being together in a group, i.e. identify issues they would like to collaborate on. If groups were composed in a way that made it difficult for them to engage in such communication then that could account for the scarcity of project ideas.

Data on the initial meetings in the WDP-groups are not plentiful, mostly because they did not interact much with the other two participant groups (TMG and CHPS) at this stage. They did however make some comments in own notes and in conversations that were taped, and these data seem to confirm the overall impression CHPS had at the time: The participants in the WDP-groups found it easy to communicate with each other, and there were no conflicts in either WDP-group. On the contrary they appreciated each others’ company, and as will be discussed in chapter 7 experienced that they learned a lot from each other. Thus, conflict between group members was not an explanation of what had occurred.

Three of the groups experienced a more fundamental challenge concerning group composition, as they all had participants who withdrew from the TMA either immediately prior to the first gathering or in the following weeks. Particularly one of these groups expressed uncertainty as to who was in their group, and contemplated postponing their decisions on project activity until they were certain. Fairly quickly though they decided that they could not wait.

None of the six participants that withdrew from the TMA at an early stage quoted group composition as a reason. Five of them stated that they were pressed for time, either because of workload or because of obligations outside work, and the sixth expressed discontent with the TMA as the reason for withdrawal. Common to all that withdrew was that they were explicit about their intentions from the outset, and never became de facto members of any WDP-group. Taken together there are no data to suggest that the discrepancy between what participants said they wanted in DOAS and what they suggested in their initial ideas can be accounted for by how the groups were composed.

More challenging to the WDP-groups was a more general problem; that of finding the time to meet and to deal with variable attendance. The WDP-groups typically had meetings every 2-4 weeks (most of them met more frequently at the beginning and the end of the TMA than in the interim period), but attendance varied. As one group member put it:

- There are legitimate reasons when someone doesn't attend group meetings, and such is life, such is everyday life. But it would have been fun too if the entire group could get together one time (laughter in the group). It would have been a plus, but it's just the way it is, so we just make the best out of it, and I also experience that we have a good group dynamic, so we function well together when we meet.

This statement seems to be fairly representative of participants' attitudes towards variable attendance. It would have been "fun" if all were able to attend, but still the group had to make the best of it when they did not. Variable attendance was a challenge that participants had considerable experience with from their everyday work practices, and it did not stop them from doing things. For instance, all groups quickly agreed on those attending a meeting having decision making authority on behalf of the group. When a decision was made a participant had to be loyal towards it even though he or she had not been at the meeting where the decision was made. Throughout the entire TMA there were no recorded instances of individual group members expressing discontent with group decisions, and this is a strong indication of the procedure (those attending have decision making authority) being generally accepted as legitimate.

As participants enjoyed each others' company and the WDP-groups were not seriously slowed down participants leaving the TMA, or by variable attendance in group meetings, there had to be other explanations for their difficulties in developing ideas. It was certainly possible that participants needed more time to get to know each other before developing project ideas, and as will be returned to in chapter 7 this was probably an issue, but at the time CHPS hoped that feedback from the TMG and CHPS (depicted with the feedback loop in model 1.4) would speed up the process.

Feedback from TMG and CHPS on WDP-groups' initial ideas

The planned feedback process from the top-management group (TMG) to the WDP-groups' project outlines became especially important because of the scarcity of initial ideas in WDP-groups. The plan was to have the TMG providing feedback on the content of the project outlines, i.e. comment on the projects' desirability in relation to DOAS' overall objectives and development issues, interdisciplinary collaboration, solution-focus, client participation, and potential to develop new sustainable work practices. CHPS had no mandate concerning the WDP-projects' content, but as explained earlier could supervise on how to develop the projects to make them compatible with the WDP-mandate. CHPS underlined that exam requirements – for instance developing a research question and deciding upon methodology to document the projects – was not a key concern at this point in time. It was necessary first to secure the projects' relevance to DOAS' objectives, and only then if necessary make adjustments to make the projects relevant to course requirements.

CHPS initially suggested that each WDP-group met at least one member of the TMG, preferably the whole TMG, with a CHPS-supervisor present. All three participant groups could then clarify their (preliminary) understandings of what each WDP-group wanted to do, so as to increase mutual understanding and provide relevant feedback to the groups' decision making processes. This suggestion was in line with what CHPS and the TMG had agreed on in the planning period leading up to the TMA. The reasons for the subsequent chain of events are not altogether clear, but it was evident that the TMG found it difficult to find the time to meet the WDP-groups within the scheduled time-frame of three weeks after they had received project outlines.

There were several concerns of importance in the feedback process. The TMG had to decide what to comment (content), how (written or verbally), when (inside or outside scheduled deadline), and with whom present (one or more members of a WDP-group and the TMG respectively). In practice the feedback process became problematic to WDP-participants on all these concerns, i.e. what, how, when and to whom.

1. Three WDP-groups received written feedback within the deadline commenting on the content in their project outlines being too loosely formulated. There was no meeting between these groups and the TMG. Participants in these groups felt that the TMG did not understand what they wanted to accomplish, and they felt that the TMG acted more as censors than as leaders.
2. Three WDP-groups got verbal feedback up to several weeks after the deadline, typically by one member of the WDP-group more or less accidentally meeting a member of the TMG, for instance in conjunction with meetings in DOAS not related to the TMA. That group member then became a messenger to his or her WDP-group. These groups were particularly uncertain as to what the TMG intended with their feedback.

One participant in one of the groups in the second category explained in a conversation the challenges with getting feedback individually:

- What I find a bit difficult is that the top-management group and their leadership towards us becomes very unclear, because we were to submit an outline, and then someone (in our WDP-group) hears something in the hallway here, and then someone meets someone else in a meeting there, and then one provides feedback in relation to one thing, and in the end we sat here and said 'well to me they said that...', you know, and that becomes completely crazy because then we are using a lot of time on defining and interpreting what different members in the top-management group has said to us on different occasions, and that is completely impossible (to relate to).

It was obvious to all that the feedback process had not been expedient. It led to more confusion than clarification, and delayed the progress of several WDP-groups. Concurrently with the feedback process attendance by the TMG in the TMA-gatherings was low; typically with only one top-manager attending lectures and other course activities. Many participants connected these occurrences, and interpreted them as lack of commitment on the part of the TMG towards the TMA. As one participant expressed in a conversation:

- To me it becomes comical, and it becomes repetitive, and nothing new under the sun, and then it has to go as it goes. And then we are on our own, we are self governed, and then we are far away from our administration again. I think it's a pity. Then they are sailing on their own, and they give directions and don't involve us in decisions. (...) And then you get the feeling what are we working towards again? And what projects are about to come next? And where in heavens are anchoring and sustaining. The continuation. There are many breaches.

This comment resonates clearly with participants' descriptions of how they understood the municipal organisation: A distant administration continuously taking new initiatives and making decisions not altogether clear to employees, with little genuine collaboration and scarce opportunities to sustain changes. On the other hand some participants saw this as too harsh, and emphasized that the top-managers were more visible and less distant than they had been previously. Nevertheless the prevailing sentiment in WDP-groups was that despite best intentions the TMA could become "business as usual", and from their reactions it was evident that they did not want that to happen.

The TMG's response to WDP-groups' initial project ideas

The WDP-groups' initial project ideas were discussed in meetings between the TMG and CHPS. Early on it became evident that the TMG was reluctant to providing detailed feedback on the initial ideas, and apparently there were several reasons why:

CHPS: What will the top-management group's role as facilitators be? How directing should you be? They (the WDP-groups) are coming with unfinished products, you get it on the table there and then, and have to decide what to do. It is a mirror image of what it's often like in organisations? What will you do?

(...)

1. I'm trying to lift my head a little above this. We have six groups, and we have to draw a line regarding how much our leader-group shall get involved in each (WDP-)group. We can provide feedback on some overarching points, and then I believe that CHPS and supervision has a role in making sure it is followed up on. We cannot use three hours on each group on every level. No, that doesn't work.

2. and 3. No, that doesn't work.

2. This is very unfinished, and the question then becomes if we shall return to them and ask them to define clients and target group, and define their projects all over again because we see that they have come a short

way, or is it so that we shall decide and say you have to concentrate on this and that. (...) So, what do we want, shall we play ball with them or shall we explicate the boundaries for them and then they have to do that?

CHPS: I believe you can be quite clear now. You're not their supervisors, you're their leaders. (...) Will you direct or suggest?

(...)

1. There's a somewhat different issue I'd like to address, which I think should be on the agenda in this meeting, and that is how much responsibility for coordination CHPS should have for (the TMA). How much should we (the TMG) take on ourselves. We have to draw some lines here. Because I feel that maybe a bit too much is laid on us, maybe you (CHPS) should take on more responsibility for coordinating, putting it together, and then send it to us. Maybe we should expect that from you?

4. I believe that is right.

(...)

2. To us it perhaps came as a chock that they (the WDPs) were so on scratch. That they didn't even say who their clients are. That was the immediate response. For this leader group to have any opinions on their projects, we should have seen their projects clearer. I believe so, and so we learned something from this. But it would probably be all right for them to get the feedback that you actually have to define these things, and then we can hope that the next round will be different.

3. But then it becomes supervision on the curricula. I perhaps don't think that we, that we should do that. I think we should rather write a letter about having seen their ideas, that they were interesting and go for it, but not respond as supervisors.

The TMG was thus reluctant to use the time needed to develop the WDPs, but even more pressing they saw the relationship between leadership and supervision as challenging. For one, they expressed uncertainty as to how to address the project ideas. As one of the members of the TMG said in a conversation: "I simply feel that this is something we don't know how to do." In addition they were concerned about being too directing as managers. As another member of the TMG succinctly put it: "I'm thinking that if we in the leader group are going to comment (their work) continuously, even though we don't know how, just because we're leaders, then we're supporting a type of organisation that we are trying to move away from." In effect they decided on a "hands off" strategy towards WDPs, so as not to interfere with their decision making processes, but instead of communicating this decision explicitly they gave feedback as described above, i.e. feedback that was confusing to the WDPs.

Most worrying to the ambitions with the WDPs though, was that the TMG saw them as of little relevance to developing and sustaining new work practices in DOAS. There were several reasons for this assertion: 1) The projects the WDPs developed had relatively little relevance to DOAS' objectives, 2) many of the employees collaborating in the WDPs did not have overlapping work practices, and so they would have little or nothing to collaborate on after the WDPs were completed, and 3) many of the unit managers and other key personnel with formal decision making authority in DOAS were not participating in WDPs, and had to be involved in organisation learning processes by other means.

The TMG clearly saw this development as a consequence of inadequate planning by CHPS, both in relation to recruitment of participants to the TMA, and in relation to developing project ideas in the WDPs. They certainly had justifiable reasons to "blame" CHPS for the unfortunate development, but consistent with the constructive (action research) approach CHPS' emphasis was more on "what can we learn from this?" and "how do we go on from here?" than "how could we do these mistakes?" As will become evident in chapter 8 the TMG reacted highly constructively to the situation. They concentrated their efforts on several other work processes in DOAS than the WDPs, and used ideas from the TMA in these processes. Following up the WDPs thus became much more CHPS' responsibility than was intended in the planning process.

The TMG did not, however, abandon the WDPs altogether. When the project ideas in the WDPs became clearer, the TMG and CHPS went back to the original plan of giving each of the WDP-groups an opportunity to discuss their projects in a meeting where both the TMG and CHPS had a member present. Two of the WDP-groups accepted this invitation. The most likely explanation as to why the four other WDP-groups did not, was that the invitation was given just prior to the summer holidays.

I participated on behalf of CHPS in both the meetings that were held. They were not taped because they were not part of scheduled conversations. Instead I took extensive notes and made a summary available to those participating in the meeting, thereby also making it possible for them to correct any mistakes in my understanding of what occurred. In practice the two meetings developed remarkably similar. Initially there was some tension related to

the context the meetings were held in, i.e. it was known to all that there was dissatisfaction with what had happened earlier in the process. The tension was dissolved in a matter of minutes as participants got immersed in discussing projects ideas and prerequisites for organisation learning. The discussions then turned to what the WDP-groups actually planned to do. To the WDP-participants this became an opportunity to clarify how their ideas were related to the mandate they had been given. To the TMG it became an opportunity both to show their support to the WDP-groups and to raise issues they saw as challenging in their project outlines. The meetings thus went a long way in accomplishing the type of communication that had been intended from the outset. Still, it was in a sense too little too late, as the two WDP-groups had made a number of decisions prior to their meetings with the TMG, and did not want to make major changes in their plans.

The second concrete outcome was that the TMG in the first gathering after the summer holidays clarified their position in relation to the TMA, in a plenary session where all WDP-participants were present. They informed participants that the TMG's workplace development project was to address the whole organisation; how to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, how to explore boundaries (also economic ones) to enable new work practices, and how to facilitate adequate meeting places in DOAS so as to stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration, allowing ideas to hatched and nurtured. The TMG also explicitly addressed the issue of management, and said there was a need to clarify what "manager" meant as 40 per cent of employees had managerial responsibilities in one way or another. On top of that decision making authority was often delegated also to employees without managerial responsibilities, thus providing many the opportunity to show leadership. The TMG said it recognised as a challenge that it is often unclear who decides what, e.g. what mandates various employees have. As a general solution to this challenge the TMG wanted the WDP-participants to take action and not wait for management approval to get things done.

The TMG also addressed the concern that there may be too many alternating expectations from top-management, and that daily work chores may take up too much time and energy, leaving little room for workplace development and organisation learning. In relation to these challenges the TMG emphasised its responsibility for setting up meeting places with

“backstage” issues on the agenda. The TMG underlined that they saw such meeting places as necessary to avoid getting stuck in routines and daily work practices. Taken together the TMG expressed strong support to the TMA and the WDP-groups, and also mentioned some of the initiatives the TMG took outside the TMG (to be addressed in chapter 8). As this second outcome of the discussion between the TMG and CHPS on the feedback process occurred after the summer holidays – thus after the WDP-groups had made their decisions on project activities – it did not serve as feedback to the WDP-groups’ decision making processes. It did however provide a positive start to the second half of the TMA.

CHPS’ experience of the feedback process

The project manager and I were the only two CHPS-employees that were participating extensively in the planning process. There were, however, meetings in which the three other CHPS-participants (two supervisors and the senior, see chapter 3) were informed about progress and asked about their opinions. One obvious challenge to CHPS was that its participants would have different knowledge of and “ownership” to the TMA, but due to the fact that everyone had experience with tailor-made approaches this turned out to be a manageable challenge. As one of the supervisors stated (the following excerpts are from my conversation with CHPS-supervisors just prior to the summer holidays):

- One of the things I’ve thought about is that it can be difficult to understand my mandate as supervisor considering this (the TMA) is a large and interwoven project, so that the groups’ own creativity and progress in this is one issue, and then it is to be connected to an overarching idea, a frame for the whole project, and that frame I’m not certain I always know well enough when I’m supervising. And so my opportunities for confirming and sanctioning what comes up, what directions I am to take in my supervision, that can sometimes be a bit problematic. But usually this is more problematic on the outside of the supervision than (inside it). So it’s more a reflection on what has been necessary. And I’ve had some conversations with (the project manager from CHPS) among others (...) that have been useful for me.

As previously noted there was uncertainty as to why the WDP-groups had used much time to come up with few and – in relation to their mandate – fairly irrelevant project ideas. It was

not unreasonable to assume that they were hesitant to take change initiatives because of their previous experiences with organisation change in the municipality. Alternatively, it was not unreasonable to assume that they were uncertain about what they could accomplish because of limited experience with (hence also competence in) collaboration across units and layers in the organisation. The scarcity of ideas could as such either be accounted for by DOAS as a setting, or alternatively by the WDP-participants' competence, or a combination of the two. The CHPS-supervisors highlighted a third likely explanation, namely the TMA-framework, and questioned if it was feasible within the given timeframe and with the resources it was allotted:

Q. What do you see as especially challenging for the groups you're supervising in DOAS?

1. I believe that perhaps the greatest challenge for the groups is to stay focused on the development work they are to carry out in their daily work situations, because of time, resources, focus on other things. And there are often piles of new things coming all the time. And to stay focused on one and the same change effort in the midst of everything else, that I see as perhaps the greatest danger. (...)I believe it's a challenge for the whole organisation, not just for the groups.

2. Well yes, I believe it's a challenge for the groups to catch the point, the overarching thinking. And I don't believe all... or I can only speak for my groups, they haven't integrated this, got the thinking under their skin at all. So because of that they struggle with how to angle their projects, because they haven't got real ownership to the constructs and the thinking behind it.

3. Then we enter the issue of how we look at this project. Is it a learning project in the sense of transferring knowledge, or is it a learning project where we actually want to go in other directions than the ones where we have our answers and understandings? (The issue seems to be) how we catch up and bring back (what they are interested in) so that we'll have a learning effect not only for participants or for us, but for all of us together. So the issue of learning I find very challenging.

4. But it's difficult to separate between what we see as challenging for them and challenging for us, because when we sit there with them we are part of it.

(Supporting noises in group)

The CHPS-supervisors saw the challenge for the WDP-groups as to "stay focused" and "catch the point", and they also had a sense of sharing their challenges. Furthermore, the issue of learning was experienced as challenging to the supervisors and time-consuming to the WDP-groups, and the following excerpt from the same conversation elaborates on this issue.

1. A course will have to have some clear answers and directions, and then we go with them in an area where there perhaps aren't that many answers, and then perhaps they'll end up finding their own answers, and their uneasiness I believe will continue long after we've disconnected. What was it really about?
2. I haven't been that uneasy myself (about this being a process) but what they are frustrated with is that things have to go so quickly, you know, they have to make quick decisions and narrow it down in a way and be very concrete and quickly make up their minds before they have integrated this thinking. And that makes me uneasy. (...) Because here I have to direct and determine and say you have to do this and that. I suggest you do this and that, and I have done that, but it contradicts my thinking that this actually should be a process where they walk by themselves and I can support. The gentle push as opposed to directing this and that. That's where I am.
3. If we go back to the question (Q.) gave us (on what do you see as especially challenging for the groups you're supervising in DOAS) then I believe precisely the meeting between supervisors who have ideals on the groups having to go their own ways, but who see that time pressure makes us cut some corners, and that we have to put a thumb screw on parts of these processes in order to make them go faster than normal, and then the question is if such processes can go faster, and I don't think so. I don't think they can go faster. But what we do in my opinion is to over-steer them in a way that doesn't make the process complete, and that I believe we have taken into account in the way we're talking to them, I believe I've said that no it cannot be (like that), there isn't room for that in the project, so that the time isn't there, the resources aren't there, we have to cut corners. (...) They (a WDP-group) took it very smoothly and said they were willing (to do it), that it wasn't difficult, but I believe it was interesting that it was said, and it was clarifying that they took part in the thinking. And that way I believe we can compensate for uncertainty in the groups by being very explicit on the relationship between boundaries and process.

The WDP-groups' limited progress made it necessary for CHPS to rethink its approach to supervision. If WDP-groups were to attain increased control in the sense of being able to do what they said they wanted to accomplish in DOAS, then it would probably be necessary with a more "hands-on" approach in supervision. Using the terminology in the ideal-type model of facilitation frames developed in chapter 2.2, CHPS had to consider if the "assistant" frame should be supplemented (particularly) with the "expert" frame, i.e. that CHPS should offer its expertise in project work to the WDP-groups. It was necessary to "cut corners" and the CHPS-supervisors could not apply the "gentle push as opposed to directing this and that" as consistent as they would have liked to do if deadlines were to be met. To the supervisors this was clearly undesirable, giving a sense of interfering with learning processes that could not be made to go quicker. Still, using more of own expertise in project work in supervision was in a sense the lesser of two evils. The WDP-participants' experiences with CHPS'

supervision will be returned to in chapter 7, but it can be noted already here that as the workplace development projects evolved, they explicitly asked for more of CHPS' expertise. This raises the issue of whether or not CHPS' preferred frame for facilitation in relation to WDP-groups (solution-focused assistants) was as relevant in a work organisation as it is in educational programs carried out at university college. Perhaps CHPS even should have engaged in WDP-groups' decision making processes to advocate practice consistent with what the groups said they valued ("politician" frame for facilitation).

These issues are further addressed in chapter 7, as they are most relevant to discuss after the WDP-groups' work was completed. What was clear to CHPS though already from the first stage in the TMA, was that CHPS with an "expert-frame" approach to facilitation, combined with little interaction between the TMG and the WDP-groups, would risk having more influence on *what* the WDP-groups did than planned from the outset. Concretely how CHPS influenced decision making processes is addressed below, and how CHPS influenced project activities and documentation of projects respectively is addressed in chapter 7.

6.3 WDP-groups' decisions on project activities

All the WDP-groups had decided on what activities to initiate in their projects just prior to the summer holidays. Some had decided more quickly than others, but no group had started with concrete project activities before the summer. As such they were on fairly equal footing, albeit at a much later date than CHPS and TMG had anticipated. As documented earlier in this chapter the WDP-groups' initial project ideas differed considerably from what was described in their mandates, and the feedback process did little to remedy this situation. The TMG decided it was more important that WDP-participants decided for themselves and did something they were interested in, than stressing their mandates with the risk of over-steering them and threaten their self-determination.

As a consequence, and contrary to what was intended, the WDP-groups' initial ideas were not discussed seriously between the three participant groups (the TMG, CHPS, and WDP-groups). Instead a different feature of the TMA-framework proved to be of importance for the WDP-groups' decision making processes. As described particularly in chapter 5 an important objective with the TMA was that WDP-groups should try out new work practices, hence they had to do something concrete. CHPS therefore instructed the WDP-groups to "think of an activity" they could carry out. This sparked considerable activity in the four groups that had expressed fairly abstract ideas on "grey areas". All of them ended up with specifying activities that could be carried out in a short period of time after the summer break. In the table below the first row provides a short description of what each of the six WDP-groups decided to do. Each of the following rows contains information on how their planned activities were related to the mandate they had been given. In addition there is a row providing information on whether or not WDP-groups used exam criteria in the course "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice" when making decisions. Each column represents a WDP-group, with the four groups initially addressing "grey areas" represented first.

Table 6.1 The WDP-groups' decisions on project activities

WDPs/ Decision making criteria	Reorganising interdisciplinary meeting place	Reorganising parent- teach. meeting	Children's photo exhibition	Educating employees in comm. skills	Employee- adolescent day of activity	Information video on one unit
Change work practices	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Relevance to dev. issues	Yes	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
Solution- focus	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Unclear
Client part. in deciding	No	No	No	No	No	No
Client part. in planning	Yes (colleagues)	Yes	No	No	No	No
Client part. in activity	Yes (colleagues)	Yes	Yes	Yes (colleagues)	Yes	Yes
Coll. betw. units	Active	Active	Passive	Passive	Passive	Passive
Concern for exam req.	No	No	No	No	No	No

At first sight the information provided in the table may seem a bit confusing, but some features nevertheless stand out. It is evident that two of the WDP-groups were considerably closer to making decisions compatible with the mandate than the other four. Both these groups wanted to change ongoing work practices they themselves were engaged in. One of them had clearly specified relevance to the development issues targeting the “grey areas”, they were solution-focused in the sense of wanting to build on and develop existing resources, they wanted to facilitate client participation in planning and carrying out activities, and they opted for active collaboration between units, i.e. employees from different units were supposed to develop the activity *together* with the WDP-group, as opposed to “passive” collaboration in the sense of WDP-groups organising activities *for* (not with) employees from different units.

The four remaining groups were strikingly similar to each other when compared according to the mandate. Although they decided on activities that one or some of the group participants could – but by no means had to – do in their daily work practices, they had no ambition to change these practices but to engage in “business as usual”. As employees they were

accustomed to being responsible for activities they decided upon for the anticipated (but as here often not asked about) best interest of clients. Arranging exhibitions based on children's projects in day-care centres, organising a course for colleagues, organising a "day of activity", or making a video with youths, are all examples of one-off activities employees have previous experience with and do more or less regularly. Although these activities enable people to meet and share experiences between units or layers in the organisation, no collaboration is necessary for developing them. On the other hand; depending on who is invited and attend these activities they can be beneficial for getting to know each other across units and layers. As shown in chapter 6.1 this was an important concern to participants, and something they evidently had given priority to in their decision making processes. It was more unclear how their decisions could be beneficial to other concerns they listed as important, like for instance improved services to clients in the "grey areas".

The only mandate requirement these four groups differed on was solution-focus. Two of the groups clearly wanted to build on and develop existing resources among clients; one group was clearly problem-focused and wanted to correct employees' undesirable communication with parents (hence employees and not clients were their target group); one group had elements of both solution-and problem focus. Still, taken together solution-focus was one of the criteria the WDP-groups' decisions were most compatible with. In conversations participants often made reference to "empowerment of clients", and expressed an ambition to replace "old" paternalistic approaches with "new" empowering ones, aiming at empowering clients. These intentions were consistent with putting the best interests of clients first on their agenda (see chapter 6.1), but how these intentions were followed up in practice was not a foregone conclusion.

There were also some similarities between all six WDP-groups. None of them involved clients in their decision making process, which can be accounted for by how they made decisions, as will be returned to shortly. Furthermore, none of the WDP-groups looked at exam requirements when they decided on what activities to undertake. CHPS had been concerned that exam requirements could thwart the workplace development projects, i.e. reduce their practical relevance in order to make them compatible with what was specified in the requirements. Instead the groups reported that they had not used the requirements when

deciding. Precisely what they had done when deciding was somewhat unclear at first, but as will be shown below there were interesting similarities and differences between the groups on this critical issue.

How did the WDP-groups make their decisions?

When looking more closely into the WDP-groups' decision making processes there were some notable similarities and dissimilarities between them. Two of the WDP-groups went from a general interest in "grey areas" to decisions that were fairly consistent with the mandate (wanting to reorganise an interdisciplinary meeting place and parent-teacher meetings respectively), two of the WDP-groups had early on decided on activities they wanted to do (information video and "day of activity" respectively); and two of the WDP-groups went from a general interest in "grey areas" to one-off activities (children's photo exhibition and course in communicating with parents respectively). The data suggests that each of these pairs of WDP-groups had similar decision making processes, and there were both differences and similarities between the pairs.

Despite of the generous time groups had used in making their decisions, CHPS nevertheless had the feeling that decisions were made suddenly. One possible explanation for this feeling was of course that CHPS only marginally participated in the decision making processes, and instead was informed in retrospect by the WDP-groups about their decisions. Nevertheless, when asking WDP-groups to reconstruct their decision making processes, the feeling was strengthened. The following two excerpts are from conversations in the two groups that went *from a general interest in "grey areas" to one-off activities*, and provide interesting accounts of how decisions were made.

Q. What was it you did to get to that (deciding on project)? Can you remember?

1. We had to (decide), simple as that.
2. We were asked to do something practical and describe an activity in a way.
 1. You know we had been way too much up there. It was too big and theoretical.
 3. But both the issues we had come up with earlier had to do with (the activity we have decided to do).
1. Yes.

Q. Okay. So you had something you held on to.

3. At least there was something that (a group member) had said all along that she wanted to work with. She's been burning intensely for this issue.

(...)

1. But it (our original idea) was just so big, now it's in a way gone in my head, but it was very..., it was very like...

2. It was more on grey areas.

4. Yes, that's right.

1. Work towards the grey areas and not like go into the role as helper too quickly, you know how could we...

2. Go from problem solver to releaser.

1. Yes, that's right.

Q. So in a way you didn't go through swarming ideas or brainstorming or whichever word one chooses to in a way generate ideas to activities?

3. It was just us sitting there with our issues and one of us said but why can't we simply make (this event)?

4. What surprises me a little when I look at this is sort of how very microscopic this is compared with what we started out with.

3. Yes and that was basically what we were told to do. But do you think it's nice or do you think it's...

4. I don't know exactly what I feel. I feel..., maybe I feel a bit cheated.

The group had felt compelled to quickly decide on doing something concrete, and they had decided more or less spontaneously on project activity. In doing so they lost track of both the "grey areas" and the mandate they had been given. They were surprised and some expressed disappointed with "how very microscopic" their project had become, and there certainly was a feeling of not knowing or understanding what had happened. In the other WDP-group that had gone from a general interest in "grey areas" to a one-off activity a similar development was evident.

1. Well yes there were several suggestions, I don't remember them but I've written them down. Having meetings with parents, collaborate on prevention of violence. We envisioned such things in the beginning, but then the suggestion on (the activity we have chosen) came up, and then there were many who liked it, and then we changed the issue accordingly.

2. But that was because it (the activity) sounded exciting.

3. Yes it was. It was.

2. That's what struck us, right, but maybe it would have been more natural..., you know, working with violence for instance, prevention of violence, but of course that would have meant more work, for sure.

3. Not only more work, but the way of working, that this was something completely new, as you said a bit fun, I remember that I thought oh yes.

Q. Fun, enjoyable, confined?

2 and 3. Yes

(...)

2. Yes that's how it is, we haven't been, none of us have been clear on, but that is so strange... because we were so clear all of us on children in grey areas, yes that is the big theme right, and then we end up in a completely different place. I'm not able to... There is not enough time, and we wanted something easy that was accomplishable, and not too up heaving, you know, in relation to what we are (already) doing. It was a bit like that, I believe.

Although it was true that the activity they chose was "new" to some of the group members it was well known to others, who had carried it out before. Both these groups made their decisions "spontaneously without us reflecting much about it" as one participant put it, and the second group (also) experienced their decision making process as "strange", taking them to "a completely different place" from where they started. Instead of using criteria from the WDP-mandate or their own ideals for provision of services in the best interests of clients, they seemed to have based their decision on the criteria "we wanted something easy that was accomplishable".

The decision making process was similar yet different in the two groups that *early on had decided on what they would do*. As described in the paragraphs on the WDP-groups' initial ideas earlier in this chapter, the group that planned making an information video had the most promising idea in relation to the mandate. When they started detailed planning of the project though, they saw that realising their initial ideas would be too laborious, and so they entered a second decision making process. They decided to make an information video on one particular unit. Neither of the group-participants had prior knowledge of this unit. As one of the participants said in one of the conversations:

- We discussed quite a lot to and from, certainly, but I sort of believe in that with neutral ground, so that we don't have any own interests in this. (Several group participants support.) That is important when we don't know each other from earlier, could be.(...) The point concerning how we reached (that particular unit) was something else than wanting to do something for the municipality, but, for instance, as you (one of the other

group members) said, yes because no one should know about (the unit we make the video on)... This has something to do with the course, the motive has something to do with the course and that we should develop ourselves, it had nothing to do with us being..., say professionals, then we would have other motives. Then we wouldn't have thought about developing a process, we just would have thought that we should do a job.

This statement is interesting also because it was the only one in the whole data-set where "the course" was explicitly used as an explanation for decisions. It was certainly a misunderstanding of the intentions with the TMA, but it was one of the misunderstandings CHPS feared and addressed openly with the TMA-participants in gatherings: That of the TMA (particularly the exam requirements) thwarting their decision making processes, thereby reducing the likelihood of developing sustainable changes in DOAS' work practices. The statement was not supported by other group members, but similar to what had happened in the two WDP-groups addressed above (where they felt compelled to decide quickly when instructed by CHPS to "think of an activity") it made CHPS uneasy about unintended consequences of the TMA-framework.

Interestingly this group emphasised the WDP as a learning opportunity, and as such they wanted to do something new, but not in relation to their daily work practices. Instead they addressed a unit they had little or no prior knowledge of. It was also important to this group to reach "neutral ground", in the sense that none of the group members had "any own interests in this". This group seemed to have reframed their WDP-mandate from workplace development to education, i.e. had decided to act as students more than as employees.

Somewhat striking both in this group and in the other WDP-group in this pair was their emphasis on making decisions based on consensus. The other WDP-group that had decided on project activity early on experienced a minor crisis when they later considered changing their project activity altogether. They thought about the possibility of linking up to an existing project that was clearly more relevant to the WDP-mandate, but decided against it because some of the group members felt they knew less about this project than about how to organise a "day of activity". When they decided to "stay the course" with their original

decision it was because that was most agreeable to them, and this proved to be more important than their mandate.

The last of the pairs of WDP-groups was the one where groups made *decisions most compatible with the mandate* (aiming at reorganisation of interdisciplinary meeting place and parent-teacher meetings respectively). These groups also shared some similarities, and one in particular: These were the groups that experienced most uncertainty as to how they were composed, partly because some of the participants dropped out at an early stage, but mostly because they had participants who were to and from due to leave of absence. These groups experienced a higher level of frustration than the other four groups due to reasons beyond their control. As one of the participants in one of these groups commented in a conversation:

- Well, you know a lot went on, and that (our decision making process) is where we have vested most of our work, because what we experienced in that process was that we were looking so hard for an activity, we struggled intensely. We were way off, and then suddenly it was there right in front of us. It was actually the unit (some of us were working at), so in a way it was..., what we first and foremost... What happened to us underway as a group, we went in all directions before we understood that we could settle there, and that was the process we (had).

Similar to the two WDP-groups that went from general interest in “grey areas” to one-off activities these two groups struggled to come up with ideas on what to do, but due to reasons beyond their control they struggled longer and harder, until they “suddenly” saw what they could do by taking ongoing work practices as a point of departure. The fact that they made decisions compatible with the mandate thus seemed to be a lucky accident; an unintended benign consequence of an unintended source of frustration. Particularly in one of these groups they emphasised that the frustration they experienced made them “look at themselves”, and highlight what they themselves could do to make the best of it – hence they ended up being highly constructive by means of being critical about their own ideas on what they could do to improve work practices in DOAS. In a nutshell: They became more aware of and attentive to the fact that they were in a decision making process, and in this

way they also showed – contrary to what CHPS had expected – that generating viable workplace development ideas was a task the participants found very challenging.

Apart from the level of frustration there seemed to be no other major differences between these two groups and the other four. For instance, none of the six WDP-groups used the tools for decision making that CHPS had lectured on in gatherings, also described in the course literature in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. Similar to the other four groups these two also ended up choosing activities that some of the group participants could do as part of their jobs, albeit with the notable difference that they addressed ongoing work practices and not singular events.

The importance of “time”

In the context of deciding upon project activities the issue of “time” was important. Several of the WDP-groups felt pressed for time, and as previously shown the CHPS-supervisors had picked up on that. As one of the supervisors said (quoted earlier in this chapter): “...perhaps the greatest challenge for the groups is to stay focused on the development work they are to carry out in their daily work situations, because of time, resources, focus on other things.” This assertion was a far cry off one of the key ambitions with the TMA – emphasised by both the TMG and CHPS in gatherings – that “old” work practices were to be replaced with “new” ones, in ways diminishing and not increasing employees’ workload. As four of the WDP-groups had decided on doing what could only be described as (confined yet) extra activities, and had decided to engage in activities they were familiar with (hence “old” and not “new”), there was certainly reason to question the feasibility of this ambition. The following excerpt from a WDP-group conversation illustrates how time affected several of the groups.

1. But it has something to do with the managerial position. You have to do the job either way, because it is clear that if..., well like in an earlier period where I got (partial leave of absence) then that was irreconcilable with being a manager. Because the job had to be done no matter what. I had (a reduced) position but discovered that this was just giving the municipality (a percentage) of my salary. Perhaps you can work (part-time) in other positions, but here you have to be standby, there are just as many children and families no matter what. That is not going to change.

2. Not even if you're participating in the tailor-made approach (laughter in group).
1. You know we get time off to participate in gatherings, but in practice this just means that we have to catch up another day.
3. Nobody is doing the work for you when you're away.

It was easy to sympathise with the fact that employees who were caught up in daily work practices found it be extremely difficult to secure enough time to development work and organisation learning, and the many middle-managers in the WDP-groups were perhaps especially exposed to being caught up in everyday work practices. They found it difficult enough to secure time to participate in TMA-activities like gatherings, supervision and WDP-group work. This could clearly account for why some decided to withdraw at an early stage of the TMA, or why they later on preferred to do what they already were familiar with, and emphasised what they found to be "fun", "accomplishable" and "not too up heaving". Such decision making criteria made sense if employees experienced doing WDPs on top of a full work schedule. This issue was also critical to CHPS' ideas on organisation learning presented in chapter 1: Organisation learning prerequisites time to meet and be systematic in planning, practice and evaluation. If employees could not "find the time" due to daily work chores then organisation learning could not be expected to occur.

On the other hand, in the two WDP-groups making decisions most consistent with the mandate, it was participants who were middle-managers who initiated the activities and carried them out as part of their daily work practices. This is not so surprising, as the middle-managers had better opportunities than employees without formal authority to make sustained changes in their daily work practices (see the discussion on recruitment of TMA-participants in chapter 5). They were probably just as pressed for time as their colleagues, but opted for "doing what they normally do differently". This was by all accounts a strong indication of it being possible for middle-managers to secure time for workplace development if they knew how, and saw how they could benefit from it.

At the time (after the decision making) the challenge seemed to be one of "securing enough time" to reflect systematically on own work practices, so as to identify how "time" prevents

or promotes development of desirable changes in ongoing work activities, hence it was regarded as an issue for organisation learning. This point will be further examined in chapter 8, where the top-management group's TMA-inspired activities are described. Still, it was reasonable to assume that participants' opportunities to integrate TMA-activities in their daily work practices were unevenly distributed, but not necessarily so that middle-managers had fewer opportunities to do so than other employees. Securing time could be seen mostly as an organisational – as opposed to individual – challenge, in which increasing control over workload was a first step towards securing time for workplace development, which in turn could generate better and “time-saving” work practices.

CHPS' reflections after the WDP-groups had decided

Although the WDP-groups seemed reasonably content with their decisions, at CHPS we nevertheless had a sense of disappointment both in relation to how the WDP-groups decided and what they had decided. Why had four of the groups decided to do something else than they said they wanted? Why had they decided on singular events, on not clarifying relevance to the “grey areas”, or on deciding on behalf of clients? Why had the remaining two groups more or less by accident arrived at reasonable decisions? It was certainly reasonable to reflect on some of the classics within decision making theory, for instance Cohen et. al (1972) and their “garbage can model”, in which organisations are understood as independent yet intertwined streams of problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities. How these streams interact is ambiguous and complicated, but a major feature is partial uncoupling of problems and choices. In the “garbage can model” decision making is not necessarily about making optimal choices to address problems, but an outcome of an amalgam of who happen to be where when with what interests and competencies. It was possible to think of the WDP-groups as comprised of employees who – by way of the TMA – got the opportunity to make decisions consistent with their particular interests and competencies. Another classic that sprung to mind was Lindblom's (1959) theory of “muddling through”. Lindblom found that policy makers did not apply a “Rational-Comprehensive” approach to decision making, but instead used “Successive Limited Comparisons” in which they selected only a few goals where means and ends were partially

integrated, where “good” decisions equalled agreement between stakeholders, and where important alternatives were overlooked or ignored. There was a scarcity of addressed goals and alternatives in all the WDP-groups, and agreement seemed to be more important than quality of decisions, at least in some of the groups.

Data did not allow an in-depth analysis of similarities and differences between the WDP-groups’ decision making and the ideal-type models of “garbage can” or “muddling through”, and such an analysis would also be beside the point to CHPS. Both Cohen et al and Lindblom emphasised that decision making behaviour of the kind they identified was not irrational, but not necessarily yielding desirable outcomes either. Their major point was that participants in a decision making process should become aware of how they make decisions, so as to be able to modify their actions. As addressed repeatedly throughout this thesis such a “constructive intent” was central to CHPS. It was therefore more important to CHPS to contemplate how the WDP-participants could become aware of their processes than to analyse what had happened in depth. As will be addressed in chapter 7 such awareness-raising did occur in the WDP-groups in the last stage of their project work.

Although CHPS championed a constructive approach it was – but only in CHPS’ own backstage meetings – time for sharing some frustrations and doubts about the TMA altogether after seeing the WDP-groups’ decisions. The following excerpts are from conversations in CHPS at the time. CHPS’ concern was not confined to the decision making processes; they were seen as a possible indicator of TMA being detrimental to workplace development in public services altogether. The feeling was that the very foundation of the TMA was at stake.

1. Darn if it easy to supervise, and darn if it is easy to help others.

2. No, and maybe it’s best not to do it.

(3. laughs)

1. ... but when we are talking about these projects one is supposed to go into and describe some experiences with, then it easily becomes a controlling and know-it-all relationship if we in advance say to them that I know you are going to (do this and that), but it’s so stupid and daft and bureaucratic the way you’re going to do it that CHPS would never recommend it, and we’re not giving you permission to do as you plan. Stop it. Such is the answer. I know. Slap yourself on your fingers. Then I get that..., that leads back to myself and I have not

changed a culture at all. On the contrary, we have legitimised a directing culture of authority who says that here comes the university college with its great mother and say we know too well what the outcome will be, and it will lead to great misery.

(3. laughs)

1. And then..., I meet myself in the door.

4. Yes.

1. ... and so I see what you (2.) say when you say we cannot allow mothers to become unhappy and the poor children and so on, yes, I agree completely, the worst thing I know is such help... organisations that run around and will tell the others (what to do). So I'm all there (with you), but at the same time I see the similarity with what we're doing to them....

CHPS' concern was that employees would continue their "old" practices with deciding on clients' behalf with a "new" understanding of what they actually did. In effect this could lead to development of ideological (in the sense of glossing over) "newspeak" (Danielsen, 1998), where continued paternalistic practice would be talked about and understood by employees as (for instance) empowering practice. In order to prevent that from happening one alternative was, as described by 1. in the above quotation, to intervene and stop WDP-participants in their project activities. That would, however, contradict employee empowerment as self-determination and (if anything) strengthen an organisation culture in which public service workers do not participate in decision making on development issues, but await instructions from their managers. This was of course a critical issue to CHPS, and it raised doubts about the TMA altogether. The following excerpt is from a later stage in the same conversation.

1. My most pessimistic thoughts on the TMA (is that) sometimes I wonder if it is ethically justifiable what we do. Is it just a thing that we ourselves are enjoying, and then we're talking about liberating people, but who has had the fine discussions and lifted ourselves on our own little thing, and we do that at expense of them maybe, that's what I'm thinking in my darkest moments. And we have a 15 ECTS course, and it shall cost so and so little, and they are not going to use additional resources, and they enter with happiness these people and jump into it, right.

2. And it's part of our employment.

1. And it's part of our employment and our personal development, I think, in my darkest periods I think like that. That it is completely unethical going into such an approach, and before we're done they're probably

someplace else already, and it's a bit..., and someone knows each other and so there is something left behind, and then everyone has passed their exams.

(...)

1. Then I also think when I have my darkest moments that we cannot take ourselves that seriously. We are probably not as important to these people as we think. We're not sitting and putting in and they're not gaping and receiving, far from it. Basically they do what they want, and maybe we can turn this image on its head and ask who's being used? (...) We're the ones getting used, they're sitting there quite comfortably and can quit if they want to, fine, and several have done just that you know, because they don't want to. They use us.

2. (...) but we're letting them lose on clients...

1. But the clients have always been there. We're not letting them lose.

3. They are lose.

1. We don't have that kind of power (2.) that we can let anyone lose.

4. They are lose.

1. It's their job.

(...)

1. We cannot hold back and say no, we're sorry, come back, no, don't do that.

2. No come on, I don't agree. We let them lose on clients on new premises.

(...)

1. Yes okay, we give them an unnatural or unfounded self-confidence. Or we give them nothing. Who's giving and who's taking here?

When taking these excerpts together there were some interesting tensions in what CHPS was concerned about. For instance, on the one hand reluctance towards directing the WDP-participants, and on the other a concern for "letting them lose" with new constructs and unfounded self-confidence in continuing "old" practice (i.e. the "newspeak" challenge). On the one hand a sense of using the TMA-participants to stimulate own learning processes, and on the other a sense of being used and discarded if CHPS' suggestions were not to their liking. It was important for CHPS to become aware of these tensions. It was evident that the TMA could not simultaneously be both directing and letting people lose, and CHPS could not simultaneously be used by and using participants. Most likely either side of each of the two tensions could materialise, but how and under what circumstances was not a foregone conclusion. It would depend on what participants chose to do, and if anything the tensions highlighted how DOAS- and CHPS-employees were intertwined in the same practices. What one participant group did affected the other, and vice versa. Seen like this the real issue to

address following the decision making processes was – as previously commented – the type and intensity of interaction between participant groups, i.e. facilitation frames.

Summary and discussion: What could be learned and what would be wise to do in the next stage of the TMA?

A number of issues have been raised in this chapter based on the activities that took place in the first stage of the TMA, i.e. participants' exploration of what they were enabled to do. These activities entered as premises for the discussion CHPS had on its "backstage", in meetings where CHPS-participants contemplated what had happened and how to go on. As explained in the introduction to chapter 5 the discussion here is confined to issues that were addressed at the time, because these discussions had consequences for subsequent events.

Taken together, and as a summary of answers to the research questions raised at the beginning of this chapter, the point of departure was the TMG's and CHPS' plans (with input from public service workers at DOAS) for the TMA, elaborated upon in chapter 5. These plans in effect determined the mandate for the WDP-groups, which was to develop project activities supporting new work practices, DOAS' objectives, client participation, interdisciplinary collaboration and solution-focus. Compatibility between the mandate and what the public service workers participating in the TMA wanted in their work practices was established, but it was also noted that the public service workers emphasised learning more about each other's services, and – especially employees with long tenure – wanted top-management to commit to sustaining change initiatives. Furthermore, it was established that many employees had de-motivating experiences with organisation change initiatives in the municipality, seeing them as top-down and shifting with unclear relevance to ongoing work practices. They also described their work organisation as a setting where "bureaucracy" (i.e. the formal organisation) typically was used if one did not want to do something, whereas informal acquaintances were used to get things done. They experienced considerable autonomy over daily work practices at unit level, but due to the divide between unit and top-management level they in effect had little control over priorities and organising in DOAS. When the WDP-groups started developing their project ideas it was noted that they

had few and – in several groups – quite unrealistic or peripheral ideas. The feedback process where TMG and CHPS responded to the initial ideas was not executed as planned, leading the TMG more or less to retract from the WDP's activities. When CHPS emphasised that WDP-groups had to plan concrete activities they made rather hasty decisions without contemplating alternatives or relevance to their mandate. Four of the WDP-groups decided on activities that were almost the exact opposite of what they initially said they wanted, whereas two of the WDP-groups more or less by accident ended up deciding on project activities that were fairly compatible with the mandate. The decision making processes among other things resulted in considerable insecurity in CHPS as to the usability of the TMA altogether.

In discussing the experiences this far it was evident that things had not gone according to plan. Despite of what seemed to be a good plan which all the three participant groups (WDP, TMG, CHPS) were enthusiastic about, there had been major discrepancies between plans and practice. CHPS' somewhat pessimistic and not entirely coherent first reactions – as described above – must be understood as a consequence of disappointment. It was of course not an option to remain in a state of disappointment. It was necessary to reflect and discuss systematically so as to formulate a revised plan for the subsequent stage, i.e. the sub-process Explore-Effect as depicted in chapter 1.4.

A necessary first step was to acknowledge that simplistic explanations were not credible, i.e. the outcome of this stage in the process (Enable-Explore) could not solely be accounted for either by deficiencies in the TMA, by how the TMG managed DOAS as a whole, or by competence and interests in the WDP-groups. As shown throughout this chapter none of the three participant groups followed up on their intentions consistently and it was likely that all – directly or indirectly – had contributed to the outcome. Still, as it was the WDP-groups that had actually made the decisions, they were certainly at risk of becoming scapegoats. Their lack of ideas could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to shield themselves from the challenges of developing change initiatives, so as to be able to continue doing what they were already doing with minimal management interference. Alternatively they could be seen as incompetent in decision making and collaboration, and “not to be trusted” on issues of organisation change. Hence, they could be seen as offering “irrational” resistance to change,

which often has been suggested (and contested) as an explanation as to why organisation change initiatives (typically) do not go according to plan (Jacobsen, 1998).

However, when taking the setting they were making their choices in into account there seemed to be no justification for presupposing either irrationality or covert intentions on behalf of the WDP-participants. On the contrary, their actions could be regarded as a rational response to characteristics of the setting they were in, at least when "rational" is denoted as "having good reasons". From the outset they had stated clearly that they did not have an overview of DOAS, and that they wanted to learn about the various services and get to know their colleagues in other units. Because they did not have such an overview from the outset it was difficult for them to know whom to collaborate with on what. Furthermore, especially employees with long tenure saw management involvement as crucial for making sustained changes in organisation practices. When the TMG did not follow up the feedback process as the WDP-groups expected, it was reasonable for the groups not to opt for potentially "up heaving" (as one participant put it) change initiatives. They would then run the risk of involving others in change initiatives that could not be sustained. Hence, it could be seen as rational to initiate activities they were not dependant on others to execute. Then there was the issue of rushing into decisions without assessing alternatives or checking how relevant decisions were in relation to the mandate. Well, given that they felt pressed for time it was in a sense rational to decide quickly on activities they knew they were competent in, and given that many experienced doing this on top of full-day schedules it was certainly reasonable that they wanted activities that were accomplishable, enjoyable and fun, as one of the WDP-groups explained.

Although only one third of the entire employee empowerment process had been covered this far, it was nevertheless reasonable to think about preliminary consequences for "the big issues" the TMA was intended to address, i.e. organisation learning, employee empowerment, employee health and organisation performance. True, there was hardly any reason to believe that the TMA had stimulated organisation learning in any meaningful sense this far, but it was still early in the process and difficult to overview what could be learned when the WDP-groups engaged in externally directed project activities.

As to employee empowerment the critical issue – as determined in chapters 1 and 2 – was self-determination. At least one thing that could be inferred from the decision making process, was that the decisions were made by the WDP-groups themselves. Except indirect influence from CHPS' insistence on groups having to specify activities, neither the TMG nor CHPS had influenced the decisions in any major way, and the discrepancy between decisions and mandate is a case in point. However, highly important and contrary to what was intended; their decisions were not empowered in the sense of being mutually binding between layers and units in DOAS. As described in chapter 1 CHPS' idea was that employee empowerment should emanate from collaboration (especially) between top-managers and public service workers, because no individual or group alone has control over all aspects of work in a setting characterised by flexible production. In effect what had happened seemed to be more a case of delegation, in which the WDP-groups were authorised to make decisions in isolation; hence with minimal opportunities to make changes on behalf of DOAS as a work organisation. Somewhat simplified: The WDP-groups had decided for themselves but had not become empowered.

Concerning employee health and organisation performance two interrelated features seemed to stand out. When confronted with the stress of experiencing having to decide quickly, all groups had transformed the mandate into project activities that were comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to them, i.e. they decided on activities they understood how to do, that were manageable within the timeframe (and that some of the group members could do as part of their daily work activities), and that were perceived as enjoyable and useful to clients or colleagues. This could account for a fact that CHPS found peculiar, namely that the WDP-groups described their projects as coherent with what they wanted, despite the fact that they were contradicting their initial motivation to participate in the TMA. Simultaneously, their capacity to deal with the stress also – in this case – seemed to contribute little to organisation performance. It was not likely that any of the projects would lead to sustained changes in organisation practices in and by themselves, but there was still the possibility that they would stimulate organisation learning, thereby indirectly contributing to organisation performance.

Of course the discussions at this point in time could only be tentative, and an assessment of the overall impact of the TMA on organisation learning, employee empowerment and employee health and organisation performance in DOAS is provided in chapter 8. More pressing to CHPS were two other concerns; should the TMA be continued, and if so how should CHPS' approach be? Concerning the continuation of the TMA all participant groups were in agreement to go on. None of the WDP-groups seriously contemplated terminating the TMA, and no individual WDP-participant withdrew from the TMA after decisions were made. As noted the WDP-participants seemed fairly content with the situation, and as will be explored in chapter 7 the groups had become fairly tightly knit socially. The TMG argued quite reasonably that terminating the TMA could be interpreted as a strong signal of mistrust from the TMG towards their employees. To CHPS there was still the possibility of WDPs becoming fruitful to organisation learning, which, as described particularly in chapters 1 and 2, was seen as the engine for employee empowerment processes, which in turn could be (or be made) conducive to employee health and organisation performance. The sub-process Explore-Effect was to be about *making* decisions relevant, and so there were still opportunities to accomplish the overall objectives with the TMA. Furthermore, although the WDPs were not as relevant as anticipated from the outset, the situation would have been much more dramatic for instance if the WDP-groups had decided on activities that could be detrimental to clients. Instead two of the WDP-groups had quite promising projects, and the other four groups had decided on activities that if anything most likely would be experienced as positive or fun by their clients and colleagues. As the WDP-groups had decided on activities they were used to doing, it was also reasonable to expect that they would carry them out proficiently. Consequently, the activities themselves did not warrant terminating the TMA.

Concerning the issue of how CHPS' approach in the remainder of the TMA should be, it was decided to collaborate more extensively with the WDP-groups, engage more in their project activities, offer advice, and ask questions – not to judge – but to enable all participants (CHPS included) to become more aware of all participant groups' activities and how they were intertwined. This was consistent with the emphasis on “systemic guidance” in the course literature (Gjems, 1995), and of course consistent with a settings approach to workplace health promotion as described in chapter 2. Hence, from CHPS' perspective the

problem identified in the first sub-process of the employee empowerment process was too little and too limited interaction between the participant groups. Employees had in effect been delegated decision making authority, and neither CHPS nor TMG had engaged seriously in the WDPs, for instance by taking part in their decision making processes. Seen like this the core ideas in CHPS' approach – employee empowerment by means of collaboration between layers and units in DOAS – had not really been developed yet. Part of the problem was CHPS' reluctance to use other frames for supervision than “solution-focus”. It was time to use more of CHPS' expertise in addressing typical problems in project work, and time to question the relationships between intentions and practice in the WDP-groups, hence engage in facilitation using frames consistent with “problem-focus” and “political” in addition to “solution-focus” (see chapter 2.2).

CHPS thus opted for more extensive collaboration. Of course this could be thought of as intervening to rectify mistakes in the WDP-groups, but this was certainly not the sentiment at the time. The first phase of the TMA had been a somewhat humbling experience, and the CHPS-employees did not feel confident they had the relevant answers for the next stage either. Instead there was another sentiment that grew stronger in CHPS, and that was the feeling of being on equal terms with the DOAS-participants in needing to become aware of discrepancies between intentions and practice. There were certainly comical aspects in the whole TMA-endeavour – for instance emanating from the uneasy relationship between ambitions and actual practice – and there was no justification for any participant group to be self-opinionated. The challenge was one of becoming aware of discrepancies between said and done and addressing them in ways that were not threatening to the integrity of either DOAS- or CHPS-participants, for instance be able to laugh together of the mistakes we all did so as to be able to acknowledge and learn from them. This idea was not new to CHPS, who at the time was in an entrepreneurial phase as a centre, and thus had extensive experience with the comical aspects of discrepancies between intentions and practice. CHPS thus approached the TMA with renewed energy after the summer break, which also marked the transition from the decision making processes to concrete project activities, and thereby also the transition from Enable-Explore to Explore-Effect as depicted in model 1.4.

Chapter 7 What the “Workplace development projects” did, and consequences thereof

The decisions the various WDP-groups made on what project activities to undertake were included in chapter 6. All groups decided on a confined set of activities that were accomplishable over a short period of time in the autumn of 2000. As will become evident shortly the big picture is that groups carried out their decisions more or less according to plan, with only minor modifications.

Taken together this chapter addresses research questions raised in chapter 1.5, on: What activities did the WDP-groups actually carry out after decisions were made? What did they accomplish relative to their own objectives and the mandates they had been given? How did they document and evaluate their projects? What did they learn from their projects? What did they learn from interacting in groups? What did they learn about their DOAS-colleagues? How did they use what they learned from WDPs or other elements in the TMA in their daily work practices? How did CHPS influence their learning processes? The chapter is structured around these questions, and their (tentative) answers provide the point of departure for the discussion at the end of this chapter. The first chapter section predominantly provides a descriptive account of the WDP-groups' activities. The second chapter section highlights the organisation learning values of the workplace development projects. The third and final chapter section is centred on a discussion on how the experiences from this second sub-process (Explore-Effect, see chapter 1.4) could be understood.

7.1 Workplace development project (WDP) activities

The data on the six WDP-groups' route from final decisions to finalising project reports are quite extensive, and include the groups' own project notes, report outlines and reports, as well as transcribed statements from conversations, observation of project activities, and extensive summaries of project related activities in the five full-day gatherings conducted in the autumn 2000 (see chapter 3 for a detailed overview). The task of documenting the project activities was quite reasonable, as they were confined and carried out over a short time span. The following paragraphs provide short but precise descriptive accounts of project activities in each of the six WDP-groups, mostly based on group participants' own accounts. This is followed by a preliminary assessment of the project activities, among other things revisiting the landscape metaphor presented in chapter 3.2.

WDP-group 1: Reorganising communication in a consultative board

This WDP had its point of departure in a project aimed at a "grey area" of public services; in this case parents who for various reasons (like psychiatric illness or substance abuse) find it difficult to nurture their children under the age of six. This project was based in a day-care centre, providing parents and children the opportunity to attend together. The project had exclusive access to one of the sections in the day-care centre, and no more than three families were offered the service simultaneously. It was thus both an exclusive and extensive service, in which DOAS-employees supervised parents in strengthening their nurturing skills. The project was funded for three years, and was in its second year when the TMA started. From the outset it was anticipated that more families could benefit from the service than the project could cater for. Identifying families in the target group and prioritising between them was determined as a task for the units for child care and maternal and school health services respectively, i.e. these units were to refer families to the project. However, much to the project employees' despair, there were not enough referrals, and the project literally operated at half speed.

The project had an interdisciplinary consultative board, with representatives from among others the units of child care and maternal and school health services. The board met once every month. The project employees had used the meetings to inform about their activities, and to try to motivate the board members to promote referral of families, but to relatively little avail. They also experienced highly variable attendance in board meetings, leaving the impression that these meetings were not prioritised by board members.

The day-care centre project thus had considerable challenges in fulfilling its mandate, and it was evident to the project members – some of which were also participating in a WDP-group in the TMA – that something had to be done. The situation was problematic and frustrating, but the WDP-group insisted on applying a solution-focus. Their train of thought was as follows: The underlying problem is that board members are not enthused about the project. They probably associate it with dreary meetings where they are presented detailed information about what we do, and experience scarce opportunities to participate and come forward with own initiatives. If the meetings were more interesting to them they would become more involved in the project, and thereby also in referring families.

After having struggled for some time the WDP-group more or less spontaneously decided on making this challenge their workplace development project, i.e. a project within (an existing) DOAS-project. In addition to solution-focus they addressed an existing interdisciplinary meeting place highlighting the grey area of public services, and they also opted for participation of (here:) board members in developing the board meetings as a interdisciplinary meeting place. They were thus able to respond constructively to several of the WDP-mandate criteria.

In order to accomplish their objectives the WDP-group did two concrete changes to the meetings. 1) They gave the meetings a clearer structure by dividing between information and development issues, based on the idea in organisation learning of separating between issues related to daily work activities on the one hand, and development of such activities on the other (see chapter 3). Instead of using most of the time on informing, they wanted to use most time on discussing development issues all could take an interest in. Accompanying this change was stricter adherence to time structure, more emphasis on informing

participants in advance about the meeting agenda, providing more detailed summaries from meetings, and more emphasis on the atmosphere in meetings (candles, fresh coffee, and so on). 2) They also invited the board members to participate in determining development issues to discuss in the meetings. Previously many discussions had been restricted because they had used concrete families as cases, and client confidentiality is a delicate issue. Instead they wanted to discuss more general issues that were known to be challenging to the families they worked with, but without having to go into details about any particular family's circumstances.

The WDP-group did more or less exactly as planned, and was uplifted by the experience. The board members participated in deciding issues to address (sleep deprivation among children and communication with parents respectively, in the first two meetings), and took part in discussions with enthusiasm and without fear of breaching confidentiality clauses. The group felt they succeeded in making the meetings a "backstage" opportunity to reflect on daily experiences. The board members were also enthused and wanted the meetings to continue in its new format. Attendance in subsequent meetings also became higher than before. The consultative board thus became an interdisciplinary meeting place the participants enjoyed, and the WDP-group had accomplished this by making inexpensive modifications to an existing meeting. As such this WDP accomplished precisely what (especially) CHPS had envisioned with the TMA. Unfortunately though, the day-care centre project entered its last year when these experiences were generated, and it was unclear if and how they would trickle down to ongoing work processes in DOAS. It was also unclear what impact the new structure of the consultative board meetings had on recruitment of clients in the projects final year.

WDP-group 2: Dialog conferences in parent-teacher meetings

This WDP-group started out with an interest in communication between parents and employees in day-care centres. They had observed that such communication often was problematic despite best intentions. They took particular interest in parent-teacher meetings, in which employees typically determine the agenda and speak most of the time,

often more or less instructing parents on rules and regulations in the day-care centres. The WDP-group stated in a conversation that they wanted “a good method for (parents’) viewpoints to emerge”.

Through the course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” they learned more about organising communication in groups, and they decided to adapt elements from dialog conference methodology in parent-teacher meetings. The WDP-group tried out their ideas in parent-teacher meetings at two different day-care centres. In collaboration with (some of the) parents they decided that the issue to be addressed in both meetings was: “Given that feeling safe is a prerequisite for both children’s, parents’ and employees’ thriving and development.... what challenges do we, parents and employees, face in generating feelings of safety?”

Altogether six parents were trained to function as group leaders in the two meetings. Concretely they were to uphold some fairly simple rules of communication in groups, like allotting the same amount of time to talk to all participants, disallowing interruptions, disallowing discussions in the initial stages of the conference (so as to allow everyone to state their opinions first), and encourage participants to relate own statements to other participants’ statements. They were also to take notes documenting the viewpoints that surfaced, and present them in plenary sessions to all participants in the meeting. The WDP-group made a considerable effort in planning the meetings, and methodologically they were carried out more or less exactly as planned. There were only minor modifications from the first to the second meeting; concretely the WDP-group reduced the time for their own introduction so as to provide more time for communication in groups.

The ad hoc groups established in the meetings were heterogeneous, in the sense that they comprised both parents and employees. Input from all participants was treated equally. Taken together, what participants saw as important for “generating feelings of safety” was stability in the workforce (reduce turnover and leaves of absence), the quality of the interaction between parents and employees when children come to or leave the day-care centre, employees’ abilities to see children’s individual needs, having a secure outdoor environment, good hygiene and clothing, tolerance for diversity (e.g. ethnic), good

pedagogical content throughout the day, and that all employees know the parents (“it seems easy to just get in here and walk away with a kid”, as one parent put it). The same or similar answers emerged in both day-care centres, and the WDP-group saw this as an indication that they were on to something important about factors generating feelings, of safety both for parents and employees across day-care centres.

The WDP-group also noted that the two meetings had a similar development; from parents’ initial expressions of frustrations over problems and deficits, via sharing viewpoints on what will be important to make improvements in the future, to considerable enthusiasm and interest in the issues they discussed. On evaluation forms handed out after the meetings parents expressed satisfaction with being able to say what was on their minds, and they wanted “more meetings like this” to follow up on ideas and initiatives taken.

However, the WDP-group was not in a position to sustain neither the new approach to meetings they had initiated, nor the concrete suggestions that had emerged. At the time none of the WDP-group members were employed in one of the day-care centres, and in the other day-care centre the manager (who was not participating in the TMA) decided for unknown reasons not to continue with this approach to parent-teacher meetings. On the other hand, this manager wanted to follow-up on the issues and suggestion that had been identified, concretely by integrating them in the policy for the day-care centre. Thus, similar to WDP-group 1, it was unclear if and how the experiences generated by WDP-groups 2 would trickle down to ongoing work processes in DOAS.

WDP-group 3: An exhibition of children’s photos

This WDP-group had the same overall idea as WDP-group 5, namely “to turn the flow of information” between employees and clients. They invited five-year old children in day-care centres to take photos of things or places they liked at home or in the municipality, and – given their parents’ consent – the WDP-group would then use these photos to make an exhibition of them. The outcome was literally images of what children appreciated. The WDP-group anticipated that children would appreciate other things than adults, thereby

provoking thoughts and discussions on how children's interests are catered for in general, and in public services.

The WDP-group initially planned to hand out 100 cameras with a roll of 24 pictures in each, but due to costs associated with processing the films they reduced the number of cameras to 20. The children were instructed to take the pictures over the course of a weekend. The WDP-group observed that children were enthused about the project, and in particular that they enjoyed being able to decide for themselves. All photos were taken as planned.

The WDP-group posted the photo exhibition in a day-care centre, and all employees in DOAS were invited. It was open both at daytime and at two evenings. Very few showed up in the evenings and only nearby day-care centres showed up at daytime. The group then decided to turn it into a "travelling exhibition", i.e. they posted it in various units in DOAS enabling more people to see it. It is unknown how many saw the exhibition, but the WDP-group received some feedback from colleagues on the photos being interesting and fun to watch.

The group wanted to use the exhibition to initiate dialog with parents on what could be learned by the photos, e.g. how to better cater for children's interests or more generally how to turn the flow of information more often. However, they forgot to inform parents about this idea in a parent-teacher meeting, and the idea petered out. Likewise the WDP-group did not initiate dialog with colleagues on what they could learn from the project or the exhibition.

WDP-group 4: A course for DOAS-employees in communicating with parents

This workplace development project had – similar to WDP group 2 – its point of departure in concern for how employees communicate with parents. From previous experience the group members knew that such communication could be challenging and that there was risk of parents experiencing lack of understanding and respect, with detrimental consequences for collaboration between parents and employees on how to provide services. The WDP-group

saw this as an issue of employee competence, and thus wanted to train employees in how to communicate proficiently.

The WDP-group decided on organising a course on communication. They asked one of their DOAS-colleagues to be responsible for the course content, while the WDP-group would take care of invitations, registrations, locale, beverages, and so on. To secure high attendance they considered making the course mandatory for all employees in some of the day-care centres, but they ended up inviting employees from all the four types of units in DOAS instead. In order not to make this a singular event they wanted some of the course participants to take responsibility for organising follow-up meetings in groups of 7-8 employees twice over the course of a year. Furthermore, they wanted the top-management group to take responsibility for organising the course on a yearly basis. Taken together the participants in the WDP-group did not see themselves as carrying out the course, as leading or participating in follow-up meetings, or as participating in sustaining training in communication skills for DOAS-employees. Instead they confined their contribution to initiating activities on an issue they saw as important to address.

The course was carried out in the evening on a weekday. The WDP-group made a considerable effort to create a warm atmosphere, for instance by welcoming everybody at the door, providing lots of food and beverages, decorating the locale with flowers and candles, playing easy listening music, and attaching ribbons with different colours in the ceiling as an illustration of the five dimensions in communication highlighted in the course (facts, cognition, feelings, values and practice, inspired by the work of the late family therapist Virginia Satir).

The lecturer engaged participants in various ways, for instance by providing items to touch or smell. Participants were taught how to identify and analyse dimensions in communication so as to become more aware of how it works, thereby enabling them to become better communicators with parents. It was underlined that the method was fairly complex and that a lot of training was required to practice it proficiently. This point was also (inadvertently) illustrated when it proved difficult to use the method to analyse examples participants presented from their everyday work practices.

After the lecture participants were divided into groups that were intended to have follow-up meetings, and those intended to be leading these meetings were instructed on what they were supposed to do. The participants were offered to sit down and discuss how to follow up on the course content, but the majority chose to stand and signalled that it was late in the evening and they wanted to go home.

The attendance was much lower than anticipated by the WDP-group. Only 18 of 49 invited attended, and most of the 31 that did not show gave no prior notice. This was in marked contrast with the WDP-group's previous experiences, with mandatory attendance typically yielding participant rates above 90 percent in meetings even after regular working hours. They did not know the reasons why employees chose not to attend, but speculated it was an illustration of "how difficult it is to get people to come to interdisciplinary meeting places".

The WDP-group also handed out evaluation forms to participants, and in a nutshell the feedback was that participants enjoyed the course, but would have preferred it being carried out within regular working hours. The WDP-group received little or no feedback (either verbal or written) from course participants on subsequent experiences with using the communication method, and there were no records of the intended follow-up meetings actually being carried out.

WDP-group 5: A day of fun activities for youths and employees

Similar to WDP-group 3 this WDP-group wanted to "turn the flow of information" in relationships between employees and clients. They chose to centre their project on a type of activity they had previous experience with, i.e. having youths instructing employees in areas where they were skilled and employees not. The group made an overview of the types of services DOAS-employees were providing, and an overview of activities youths were skilled in, and then planned to organise a day of fun activities for a large number of employees and youths. The activities were to be conducted outside the municipality.

During the planning period they decided to scale down from a full day to 2,5 hours, have fewer participants, and use an outdoor area in the municipality. Altogether 40 employees were invited, of which 16 came. In addition there were the WDP-group members and 10 youths. The activities employees were invited to participate in were trial (riding motorbikes in difficult terrains), break-dance and rap. The youths first demonstrated the activities, and impressed everyone with their skills. There was a disagreement between the youths supposed to instruct employees in break-dance, and so this activity was retracted. Some of the employees tried rap and trial (while the others cheered on), and the employees said they had a good time. There was no follow-up of the main intentions with the activity – turning the flow of information and enabling contact between employees from different units – in the aftermath.

WDP-group 6: An information video on youth health services

This WDP-group decided to make an information video about youth health services. These services were organised under one of the units for maternal and school health services. None of the group members were employed in or knew much about youth health services, as explained in chapter 6. They first carried out a journalistic interview with one of the employees working with youth health, so as to increase their understanding of the services provided. Through this interview they among other things learned that youth health services were already eagerly marketing their services towards youths, for instance with an abundance of written information and information meetings in schools, and therefore did not see the need for an information video.

Even after they started making the video the group found it difficult to determine what sort of video to produce. As they documented in their project report they considered several options (my translation):

Do we see ourselves first and foremost as journalists, scientists or bureaucrats? In retrospect we can also add cultural workers or social workers. We also talked a lot about the video as such; did we want to make a commercial video about a municipal service to youths or more of a municipal information video? Where is the

limit? We have moved from information video (PR-workers) about a municipal unit (bureaucrats) via reporting (journalists), to making an art film (cultural workers) about a sensitive issue (social workers).

The video was thus “in the making” throughout the project period. This was frustrating to the group, but they also found humoristic elements in their indecisiveness as the following excerpt from a conversation illustrates:

1. But I’m thinking that it takes a lot of planning to make a good video. That is the major part.
(...)
 2. And how big is it really going to be, I’m thinking a lot about that.
 3. We were thinking about a family and I don’t know all that was wrong with them.
 4. It was a family with a mentally ill mother.
 5. Pakistani mother and Norwegian father so as to cover all dimensions. Granny on the nursing home too.
 3. With a mentally retarded brother and...
 - Q. The new nucleus family?
 5. The new nucleus family.
- (laughter in the group)

In the end they had little time to make the actual video on youth health. They invited some of the clients at one of the youth relief measures to participate in making a video on unwanted pregnancy and use of contraceptives. The youths dramatised scenes that were presumed to be typical in unwanted pregnancies, and information from the journalistic interview with the employee in the youth health services was used as commentary. The relevance of the video for the services provided by DOAS was questionable, and the video was not seen by many.

Characteristics of the WDP-groups’ project activities

In chapter 6 a number of similarities between all the six the WDP-groups concerning their decision making processes were noted, for instance that they all had fairly few ideas on how to initiate interdisciplinary collaboration for improving services to clients with complex

needs (i.e. grey areas), they all used a lot of time for making (in the end: spontaneous) decisions on what project activities to undertake, they were all reticent with regards to interacting with the TMG or CHPS-supervisors during their decision making processes, and they all ended up with project activities that one or more group members had previous experience with and particular interest in, and could fit into their daily work practices. Given the above description of actual project activities two more similarities can be noted: All WDP-groups carried out their decisions more or less exactly as planned (except for adjusting scope of activities), and none of the groups were able to sustain new work practices in DOAS.

These similarities aside, there was no doubt that WDP-groups 1 and 2 carried out activities much more compatible with the mandate than the other groups. They both addressed ongoing work practices in DOAS, were able to organise communication differently so as to highlight development issues various participants (employees from various units in the first case; parents and employees in the other) could collaborate on meaningfully, and – most importantly – did so in ways allowing organisation learning, i.e. devised processes that could lead to continuous change based on learning from experience. The key to their relative success seemed to be genuine collaboration on issues all involved were interested in. Unfortunately they were not in a position to sustain their change initiatives. The other four WDP-groups experienced variable or outright disappointing attendance when inviting people to activities they organised for them, and little or no interest in following up on activities. These outcomes were of course no surprise given CHPS' previous experiences, yet it was interesting to note how conclusive they seemed to be.

An evaluation confined to the WDP-groups' success in fulfilling their mandates would undoubtedly be harsh. It was evident that WDP-groups were not a quick-fix solution to the challenges raised by the top-management group's (TMG) vision described in chapter 1. It was easy to point fingers at all three participant groups (CHPS, TMG, WDP) for shortcomings. For instance, CHPS had gravely underestimated the need for supervision of WDP-groups in their decision making process, the TMG had retracted from interaction with the WDPs at a critical point in time, and the WDP-participants did little to act in accordance with the mandates they were given.

Although the WDPs were not a success in realising overall objectives it was too early to call the TMA an outright failure. As described in previous chapters the TMA was intended to support repeated cycles of planning, practicing and evaluating experiences from attempts to change ongoing work practices, i.e. action research. From the descriptions of the WDP-groups in this chapter and chapter 6 it can be inferred that they had yet to complete one action research loop. They planned as described in chapter 6, they carried out activities consistent with their plans as described above, but they were yet to evaluate their activities. As will be addressed in the following paragraphs – in terms consistent with the landscape metaphor of action research in chapter – they had not ventured very far towards the objectives they saw as desirable, but it would nevertheless be interesting to see what they learned from their experiences. (The strides they made in the aftermath of the TMA is addressed in chapter 8.)

The landscape metaphor revisited

In chapter 3.2 action research was illustrated with a landscape metaphor, in which learning and generation of knowledge is seen as a consequence of trying to get from A to B in a partially unknown landscape, where obstacles and short-cuts present themselves, and where it is difficult to keep a party together, among other things because alternative destinations present themselves along the way. Metaphors bare resemblance to analytical models in the sense that they enable its user to see some aspects clearly whereas others become blurred. The account in the points list below of the hiking trip the three participant groups (WDP, TMG, CHPS) had taken this far is thus not without reservations. It highlights the relationship between activities and objectives agreed upon from the outset, but blurs some of what had been established underway, like for instance participants' previous experiences with change initiatives in DOAS. Still, the metaphor neatly illustrates the discrepancy between what was planned and what had taken place:

- From the outset everybody had agreed on a major hiking expedition towards a distant objective (the TMG's vision).

- The majority of the group was staying in camp for much longer than anticipated.
- The leader group in the party left for the woods and was on a hiking trip of its own.
- The supervisors were waiting some distance away from the main camp. They were commissioned to guide the party on the hiking trip, and waited courteously for the party to get started.
- It was somewhat unclear to the supervisors what participants had been talking about around their campfire, but from what they could gather four of the groups in the party had discussed how the world could be a better place “if only” (general interest in “grey areas”). Two of the groups early on decided to take routes of their own that they knew from before, yet for some reason they stayed on in camp as well.
- Suddenly all groups in the party had decided on where to go. Four of the groups took short routes they knew from before. Two groups took overnight trips and got a glimpse of the objective in the distance before returning to camp. All groups carried out their hiking trips more or less exactly as planned.

Although the WDP-groups were yet to reflect systematically on and document their experiences in project reports, there certainly seemed to be no reason to be overly optimistic about what could be learned from their “expeditions”. Most crucially; how could these experiences be relevant to organisation learning? And if there was no organisation learning, then how could there be (collaboratively based) employee empowerment? And without employee empowerment there would be no justification for examining how empowerment influences employee health and organisation performance concurrently. The very foundation for investigating the TMA as a framework for supporting organisation learning as described in previous chapters seemed threatened. True, the WDP-groups were only one component in the TMA, but it was an important component, and so a lot was at stake not only for DOAS, but also for CHPS.

7.2 Organisation learning value of the workplace development projects

CHPS had underlined from the outset that the organisation learning value of having carried out workplace development projects as part of the TMA, would not depend on the WDPs developing solutions that could be implemented throughout DOAS. CHPS posited that it would be of much greater value to DOAS to establish an organisation for workplace development issues. Such an organisation would require “meeting places” that could function as “backstages”, where employees across units and layers in DOAS discussed what they should give priority to, how they should organise, and how they should make changes in daily work practices. After the completion of the WDPs there were particularly three factors of importance to organisation learning that were not well known or understood by CHPS. One factor was of course what participants had learned from having carried out their project activities. Another factor was what the participants had experienced when staying on in the camp for so long. What had they talked about, and what had they learned from this? CHPS only had a rudimentary understanding of this; mostly confined to seeing that the participants wanted to get to know each other and the totality of services in DOAS better. The third factor was what participants would learn from thinking about their WDP-experiences in retrospect. They had ambitiously agreed on hiking towards an objective that was distant and difficult to reach, but had decided on staying safe close to camp. What had happened, and could anything be learned from that? Although the participants had not spent day in and day out on repeated cycles of planning, acting and reflecting, at least they were in the process of completing one cycle.

As it turned out the participants experienced having learned quite a lot, some of which had interesting implications for CHPS’ understanding of organisation learning. First though, the WDP-groups’ foundation (data) and framework (the project reports) for explicating their learning have to be examined, before attention is directed towards the three factors 1) learning from project activities, 2) from interacting in groups, and 3) from reflecting on the relationship between their WDP-experiences and daily work practices.

Foundations and framework for WDP-groups' learning

Consistent with the action research approach the WDP-groups were to evaluate their own projects, and so they had to explicate the learning value of their experiences. As described in chapter 5 they had to do so in project reports which also were to be assessed as exam assignments in the course "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice". The reports had to be based on documentation of what they did and a systematic approach to analysing their experiences. On these counts there were several features that warranted optimism. For instance, all groups had been thorough in documenting their projects, taking summaries from meetings, gatherings, supervision and project activities. Making such notes was prioritised in groups, so as to inform participants unable to attend a particular meeting or event. The notes would be highly useful not only for reconstructing their work processes, but also for identifying "decision points", i.e. points in time where groups more or less consciously made small or large decisions with consequences for subsequent project activities. Another feature warranting optimism was that over time participants grew more accustomed to ideas of organisation learning and action research in general, and the idea of exercising constructive criticism towards own practices in particular. Such qualities were highlighted both in gatherings and supervision, as will be addressed later in this chapter. A third feature, also addressed again later in this chapter, was that the WDP-groups became much more interested in supervision when they were writing up their reports. As interaction between WDP-groups and CHPS-supervisors became more extensive the groups became more exposed to "outside perspectives", and that could be useful for them in evaluating own experiences.

The WDP-groups' own documentation – project reports

The criteria for project reports (see Appendix 2) were intended to stimulate the WDP-groups to reflect systematically on own experiences throughout the course of their projects. The most important criterion in the project report was that it had to be organised around a research question related to their project activities. They then had to use documentation of their experiences as data in an empirical investigation of the research question. In addition

the criteria specified a number of issues the project reports were to address, like the overall objectives with the WDPs (see above and chapter 5), how the group had explored boundaries they faced and the manoeuvrable space they had, descriptions of the rationale behind their most important decisions, assessments of what they had learned, and recommendations for future actions in DOAS. As such the WDP-groups were to do action research on their WDPs much in the same vain as CHPS did action research on the TMA; adhering to a mainstream ethos of social science (as described in chapters 1.5 and 2.2), and using generally acceptable social science research methodology to document own practice.

The participants were provided with basic training in social science research methodology, herein particularly survey methodology, which was also covered in one of the books in the curriculum. Four of the WDP-groups used questionnaires to get feedback from participants on their activities, and were supervised on what to ask about and how to phrase questions. None of the groups had samples of more than 15 questionnaires, and mostly asked open-ended questions inviting respondents to comment fairly extensively. The responses initiated considerable discussion in the WDP-groups on how the feedback should be interpreted, and were thus helpful not only for documenting how participants experienced the project activities, but also for developing perspectives on what had occurred. The two remaining WDP-groups received only informal feedback on their project activities. Still, by means of continuous documentation of activities all WDP-groups had reasonable data on their projects, and of course attaining such data was feasible given their relatively modest levels of activity.

As documented in chapter 6 the WDP-groups did not use the project report criteria when they made their decisions, and they were not actively used until the groups were to write their reports. The following excerpt from a conversation in one of the WDP-groups is representative for all groups:

1. (grinning) It's a bit funny because it (project report requirements) was something that was used at first, and when we were deciding what to do it was gone.
2. We had put it away, yes.
1. And then suddenly.

2. We took it up again now.
1. So we took it up again here.

The project report criteria gave the WDP-groups a structure and focus in the latter phase of the TMA, but not throughout, simply because they “put it away”. The project report criteria did however stimulate systematic reflections in WDP-groups towards the end of the TMA, as will be examined below.

A typical “student script”

Most striking though was how the participants approached the task of making reports. Despite CHPS’ emphasis (both in project criteria, gatherings and supervision) on using the report to stimulate organisation learning in DOAS, the participants invoked what could probably best be described as “a typical student script”, i.e. acted the same way as most students taking continuing education at university college. They became pragmatic in the sense of highlighting what they perceived would be necessary to write in order to pass the exams, and took for granted that the project reports would have the same structure and format that they were accustomed with from their previous educational experiences. They developed outlines so as to break the report into parts that could be divided between them and written individually. They wanted simplistic answers to questions like “how much theory do we have to include?” They did not write with a target audience in mind (like DOAS-colleagues), but for an anonymous censor. All WDP-groups wrote project reports mostly characterised by summaries of what they had experienced, and only marginally documented their reflections on how and why they chose as they did throughout the project period. They did not write about the relevance of their experiences for organisation learning in DOAS in particular. The reports contain little discussion of alternative explanations, and consequently there was little use of theory from the course literature to challenge their understandings. Of course there were some exceptions to these characteristics, but not as many as CHPS had expected given that the TMA was to be more than traditional continuing education.

The reports were pretty much what one would expect from students in traditional continuing education, suggesting that the connections between the workplace development and course components of the TMA were weaker than intended. On the other hand the participants' approach to project reports was certainly reasonable given that they were in a training situation. They were not professional researchers but trainees in need of considerable supervision. Furthermore, to CHPS it was obvious that the quality of the WDP-groups' work was a reflection of CHPS' own efforts in supervision, i.e. more could not be expected given the limited amount of supervision. CHPS did become more engaged as "experts" (as opposed to "assistants") in this phase of the TMA, but as the project report criteria had not been used throughout by the WDPs it became too little too late.

Still, *and this is highly important*, the challenge for participants seemed to be the exam situation more than making connections between workplace development and course. As will be shown below they made a number of such connections in conversations, suggesting that the TMA had accomplished one of its core objectives. The problem was that these connections were not explicated in reports, i.e. it was the project report format that was the problem and not lack of connections between the TMA and their daily work practices. As will be addressed in chapter 8 this motivated CHPS in subsequent tailor-made approaches to apply other text formats for participants to document their learning experiences.

Because participants' reflections in conversations were much more comprehensive and gave a clearer picture of the WDP-groups' experiences than their reports, there will be much more extensive use of data from conversations than from reports in the following pages. This does not mean, of course, that the project reports were without value. For instance, the reflections documented in conversations would probably not have occurred if it had not been mandatory for groups to write project reports. In addition the reports did include extensive documentation of the activities WDP-groups had engaged in.

As commented earlier there were particularly three dimensions in participants' learning experiences from the TMA that were expected to be relevant to organisation learning in DOAS; learning from project activity, from interacting in groups, and from reflecting on the relationship between their WDP-experiences and daily work practices. These dimensions are

addressed consecutively in the following pages. A discussion of the relevance of participants' various learning experiences for organisation learning in DOAS is included at the end of this chapter.

Participants' learning experiences from project activities; client participation, solution-focus and awareness-raising on organisation change

Concerning participants' learning from project activities, three issues emerged rather consistently in the WDP-groups. They were client participation, solution-focus, and perspectives on organisation change. Concerning client participation specifically, data from throughout the TMA strongly suggests that the DOAS-employees were highly committed to their clients' best interests. The project activities they initiated were all motivated by a desire to practice in the best interest of clients. The employees also strongly endorsed the principle of client participation. Most of the groups also stated in general terms that they wanted to facilitate empowerment of their clients. Given this backdrop – and the strong emphasis on methodology for involving clients in gatherings and course literature – it was surprising that only two of the WDP-groups (1 and 2) involved their clients (or colleagues) in planning project activities, as shown in table 6.1. The other four WDP-groups *invited* clients (or colleagues) to participate in events the WDP-group developed for them, and as such were passive recipients of. When asked in conversations about the relationship between intentions and practice on the issue of client participation, these four WDP-groups all had interesting reflections based on their experiences. The following excerpt is from a conversation in one of these WDP-groups:

1. Do you know what we haven't done (laughs), which would've been in line with the way we're thinking?

Q. No, what?

1. We haven't had the children participating in making the exhibition.

2. We were sitting there alone doing it.

1. We got that one straight in the...

2. And it was a bit funny you know, because another (WDP-)group came by while we were making it and they thought about it at once while we were sitting there pleased, extremely pleased. We had gotten the pictures and were about to make the exhibition quickly, you know, we had, quickly.

(Several group participants support)

2. But we didn't think about client participation in that context, you know... But that is perhaps a bit where we are, and we think quickly you know, and we are very good at talking about participation and client participation and, you know, include the children, but is it really like that (laughs).

(...)

2. I think it has to do with us being very much occupied with getting it quickly done...

1. And we were tired...

(...)

3. Yes or maybe it's about us being so very..., you know that we want to do it ourselves, that we are sort of taking over in so many areas that we are simply not aware of what we're doing. Because it wasn't a decision, it wasn't conscious like this is what we choose to do.

2. No we just realised afterwards you know.

3. And then it just struck all of us like help, you know.

2. Wow, we didn't think of that, that was strange.

The same experience of not being aware of the relationship between own intentions and practice on client participation was prevalent also in other WDP-groups at various stages of the TMA. The following two excerpts from conversations are from two other WDP-groups:

1. What perhaps is a bit scary too, with us, is that we haven't talked about it in the group. Or have I forgotten something? Have we talked about involving employees and...

2. No (laughs)

3. No, it hasn't been in our minds.

- What I suddenly realised is that we are really doing the same mistake, to call it that. It's not right, and what we're doing now is to take two long steps instead of small steps. Because now we have decided to interview the youths, then that is fed back into the group again, then one more interview. We have decided the rest of the phases (in our WDP). What we should have done if we were to do it properly was to interview the youths, and then move on depending on where that is taking us.

These three excerpts combined illustrate two important points: First of all not involving clients in developing project activities was not a conscious decision to be in control at expense of clients. The WDP-participants simply did what they were used to do, and knew to be efficient. Secondly, the participants did not become despondent by recognising what they

had done. On the contrary, as visible particularly in the first excerpt, they seemed euphoric about “getting caught in the act” of doing something other than they espoused. They saw themselves as comical, and laughed good-heartedly. To CHPS these were uplifting experiences, not only because of the awareness-raising the WDPs had stimulated, but also – as will be addressed by highlighting participants’ experiences from gatherings and supervision later on in this chapter – because the TMA seemed to have created a learning atmosphere in which it was not threatening to share one’s problematic learning experiences.

Solution-focus was one of the other issues emerging in conversations that participants experienced having learned more about. Participants generally found the idea of highlighting opportunities for the future as opposed to problems of the past appealing. Several individual participants stated during the TMA that the solution-focused approach developed by Langslet (1999; see chapter 5) was useful to them in their daily work practices. As one of the participants emphasised:

- I would like to add to how useful it (solution-focused approach) can be for motivation and engagement, because on many occasions I have experienced that people are very quick to comment on what they cannot accomplish, like “oh we can’t do that” or “it’s wrong” and..., but think of all we can do, and it’s not a given that one succeeds. To think about that as well, that is more motivating to me. Because I know all the negativity, it doesn’t motivate me, I get tired of it. But of course reflect on things and not accept everything as well, but there is a middle ground between all criticising and negativity and thinking about all one accomplishes.

The appeal was evident also in the decisions the WDP-groups made. As depicted in table solution-focus was one of the WDP-mandate criteria most groups followed up on. More specifically though, in one of the WDP-groups that experienced considerable frustration initially (and later went on to carry out one of the two projects most in concert with the WDP-mandate), applying a solution-focus was crucial to their group functioning. As they contemplated in a conversation:

1. What could be said is that at first we experienced it as a problem but then, then you actually have to... then it is actually quite clever with solution focus.
2. Mmmm

1. Because then that mind-set entered. At first we didn't like it at all, there wasn't much solution focus in this group at first (the other group members make supporting noises), and that is alright. But it was something that developed, well yes okay what are our options, perhaps we have to think in a smaller scale...
2. And we have learned something for next time, so then we will start a group differently, or not just a group, but to have a..., a different understanding when we start out on something.
 1. Yes.
 2. Yes.
 3. The way i define problem identification it was just all the work with finding out where the shoe is pressing, what is it we want to work with to improve. So I don't see it as negative just because it says problem identification.
 2. No, no, it doesn't have to be that.
 3. Actually.
 1. No, but at the same time it is a bit funny, because according to solution focus you don't have to think like diagnose, or you don't have to diagnose much in the start. It is a bit funny as well, because you think okay, let's get straight to solutions, because it is a bit like that they're thinking. And this is what I believe we suddenly did sometime in the process, that suddenly we chose okay because if we want to do it this way then we have to think what can we do.

This group turned a frustrating situation into a fruitful one by applying solution-focus. It was evidently an important learning experience to them; "we have learned something for next time" that was relevant "when we start out on something", hence not only confined to project work. Although it was probably not coincidental that applying a solution-focus became a turning point for the group, this could also be seen as an example of a more general phenomenon: When people become aware of frustrations stopping them from doing what they want to do – which in itself often is painful – they can become motivated to act in ways increasing their control over the situation (Freire, 1973). This seemed to be the case for this WDP-group, and it boosted their confidence and determination in carrying out project activities. As commented previously this group (and the other group deciding most in concert with the WDP-mandate) nevertheless made their decisions on project activity spontaneously and without explicitly clarifying relevance to their mandate, and so they "took control" in a rather encapsulated manner. This issue, central to empowerment, will of course be addressed again later in this thesis.

A third feature of learning in the WDP-groups was perhaps less explicit, yet notable: It became evident to participants that achieving organisation change was a formidable challenge. There are many ideas and much input on how to improve daily work practices, but how do you actually change them? The following excerpt from a conversation is a good illustration of how awareness-raising occurred on this issue:

1. I believe I'm attending a lot of great courses but still I find it difficult to use them in practice. I wish there was a way of doing it that made it, not a lecture, but that, that, that...
2. You know what you (1.) said the last time is very essential I believe, and that is that we already know a lot, both you in (your unit) and we and everybody, so I'm sure that very many knows a lot precisely about the (issue we want to address). But how, how to...
1. How do we do it in practice, or if there is something with the time or way or, that makes it difficult to carry out a new routine or way of being or...
2. And I believe it's important that we have that with us, because we don't have to build Rome, and if we say we know a lot already and our task is perhaps just to anchor all this.
1. That is easy to say, but how to do it, that is the problem in a way.

Becoming aware of challenges associated with organisation change among other things stimulated reflections on the scope of WDP-groups' project activities. As one participant noted in a conversation: "We've spent almost a year on a project we could have used two weeks on." This was certainly true when looking only at their externally directed project activities. To many WDP-participants becoming aware of "how little" they had done strengthened their view that top-management had to take a clear leadership role for change initiatives to be sustained (see chapter 6.1). There was, however, a notable twist in their call for top-management, as captured in the following statement from a conversation:

- I believe that here we can actually say something about what boundaries we want in our municipality. That's what I'm thinking. Even though we've found just a tiny fragment this is..., because there is something about getting some boundaries and some directions from above that I would like to see come out of this.

By trying to change organisation practice participants had become more aware of the interplay between themselves and top-management. The boundaries and directions – for

instance concerning establishing meeting places for interdisciplinary collaboration – had to be established by top-management. This is not the same as wanting to “follow the leader” or passively waiting for managers to take charge, but recognition of the necessity of collaboration between layers in the organisation to accomplish sustainable change. This issue will be further explored in chapter 8 when the top-management group’s activities are highlighted. In the following paragraphs emphasis is directed towards what participants learned from interacting in the WDP-groups.

Learning from interaction in WDPs; sharing frustrations, getting to know each other

Except for a minor skirmish between two participants over their project report at the end of the TMA, the data almost univocally supports the assertion that participants enjoyed being together both in the WDP-groups and in gatherings. Somewhat simplified two dimensions in their interaction were of particular interest to the overall ambitions with the TMA: The first dimension is related to “getting to know each other” across units and layers in DOAS. The other dimension is related to participants’ capacity for organisation learning, particularly whether the TMA stimulated development of meeting places for “backstage” reflections on work practices. These dimensions are addressed consecutively in the following paragraphs.

As described in chapter 6.1 participants had fairly high expectations of “getting to know each other” across units and layers through the TMA. They wanted to know their colleagues and the services they provided, and saw this as essential for collaboration in the best interests of clients. From the outset of the TMA it was clear to CHPS that the WDP-participants had considerable social skills. They were eloquent, provided constructive input in gatherings, took interest in what others said, were energetic, and enjoyed a good laugh, i.e. “easy-going” socially. This was no surprise given their choices of career, as social skills certainly are useful when working with adolescents and families. CHPS expected that participants’ social skills would be a considerable resource for organisation learning, for instance because they could be expected to relate constructively to each others’ differences.

To CHPS it was particularly interesting to gain a better understanding of what participants had talked about in the WDP-groups. They had spent considerable time deliberating, yet ended up making spontaneous decisions. They produced little and could thus be expected to be frustrated, yet seemed satisfied with their groups. As it turned out all WDP-groups stated openly (both in conversations and in gatherings) that they had spent considerable time on *sharing frustrations* from their everyday work lives. Two of the groups had even made “frustration rounds” a fixture on their group meeting agendas. The following excerpt provides some insight into why this was important to them:

1. And there’s one thing I’d like to say about the group now that I’ve started talking, and that is that it’s a very warm group to be a part of. We’ve had meetings starting with letting out steam on other subjects (laughs). Out with some dirt and then back to the agenda, and that is very okay since the education is called interdisciplinary collaboration in practice, and then it will actually be that way, since we’re from different units we will be on different places when we meet.

(...)

2, But like that time when you (1.) came totally frustrated, I believe it was healthy for the group’s progress that you had those few minutes to let off steam.

3. It wouldn’t have been healthy if (you) hadn’t done so.

(Laughter in group)

There can be a number of reasons why many WDP-participants evidently experienced strong needs to share frustrations from their everyday work practices. For one, employees in public services often experience emotionally charged challenges at work, with limited opportunities to talk openly about their emotions with clients and colleagues (Dahlgren and Starrin, 2004). It is “healthy for the group’s progress” that frustrations are ventilated, so as to enable participants to concentrate on the task at hand. On the more speculative side (speculative because none of the participants raised the issue explicitly) it seemed as if the WDP-groups became highly attractive settings precisely for sharing frustrations; participants were typically employed in different units (thus not mutually dependant of each other in daily work practices), they were employed in similar services and could therefore be expected to understand and relate adequately to each others’ frustrations, and participants could expect frustrations to be kept confidential in their group. This was of course not a

planned or intended feature of the WDPs, but it was evident that participants appreciated it. It was also quite likely that sharing frustrations could be at least part of the explanation why participants seemed to develop personal bonds. Frustrations are strong statements often portraying a person in a particular light; typically as someone having too much to do or experiencing too much pressure or unfair treatment. As such sharing frustrations can be seen as inviting intimacy.

On the other hand – and again this was evident in all WDP-groups – participants were wary of using too much time not only on frustrations, but also on the social processes within their groups. As one WDP-group explained in a conversation:

1. Yes I believe that..., you know, how much time is it we're having in this group. If we had been a student group and full time students we could have been sitting with this all day, right, and then we certainly would have to go much deeper into those processes. But this is something I do while working full time.

2. Yes.

1. And then of course if there are serious problems in collaborating and things like that and we sense that the group is not functioning, then we have to go into that, but as long as I feel this is functioning well for the most part, then I believe this is fine, you know.

3. And then this is a group you can expect to be quite qualified. Like you (Q.) say we have been involved in a lot of group work in the job previously too, right. You know, I believe it should really be quite unnecessary to talk together to agree that everyone should be able to finish what they are saying and not interrupting each other.

Q. Yes, can you?

3. In a group with fresh students without group experience you might not be able to expect that, but I believe that here one can expect that. And maybe the other way around too, like if someone has a problem with expressing oneself then one might expect that some of the others see that, and maybe that all see and, and then one can say hang on, I want to listen to what she has to say, right, you know, all of us correcting each other.

As indicated in the above excerpt participants had considerable confidence in their social capabilities. They simply expected everyone to adhere to basic courtesy, like "everyone should be able to finish what they are saying and not interrupting each other" or "if someone has a problem with expressing oneself then one might expect that some of the others see that". This confidence was evident also in gatherings and supervision, when

participants were presented ideas on how to organise communication in groups, and how to conduct decision making processes. As one participant said in a gathering in response to a lecture: “It seems like you’re trying to teach us good manners.” This comment sparked considerable laughter among participants, and it was evident that many of them felt there was no need for them with training in communication methodology. This may be part of the explanation why they did not apply any methodological tools in their decision making processes, i.e. they may have been (overly) confident in their social skills and equated “good” decisions with “consensus-based” decisions. As their workplace development projects testify this is not necessarily the case, especially when decisions are related to realisation of overall objectives.

Towards the end of the TMA participants became much more aware of and interested in *how* they communicated, and what they had chose to do as a consequence of that throughout their WDPs. Participants saw that they had used most of the time on the WDP-groups’ internal processes, and contemplated what the consequences could be. The following excerpt from a conversation is illustrative of the ambivalence some of the groups felt concerning what to write about in their reports:

1. Yes, now I get thoughts like actually our project has been an excuse to get a grip on the group process, if you see what I mean, to get the group process going. And it is almost a bit like (laughs), it’s ugly to say it but one can feel a bit like, because now I’m thinking, what happened with us when we should turn... We started with grey zone children and then we ended up with turning the flow of information. Now I’m sitting here with that sort of, what happened with us underway? Now suddenly I’m not sure, wow it happened a lot of things with us, don’t you agree, it’s...

2. Most of what we did was about ourselves as a group.

1. Yes, yes because much has been about us as a group, because actually our project, the practical project we had was rather limited, or very small. It was a happening.

2. Agree.

1. But maybe that doesn’t matter. You know I just need to get a grip on...

3. But hasn’t it, the actual course, it’s about interdisciplinary collaboration.

1. Yes, isn’t it.

3. That process, that’s how I think about it, that’s where the process enters. Because the process has happened between us. You know that could have happened in others groups as well, don’t you think.

1. Yes I think so as well, because in a way collaboration across has been in focus in the course as well.

3. Yes, certainly.

1. And then perhaps it isn't there..., then I'm thinking maybe we should focus on, or..., in the group process.

Suddenly I'm insecure as to where our emphasis (in the project report) should be.

Some of the groups seriously contemplated not writing about their workplace development project activities at all, as the following two excerpts from two other WDP-groups show:

- It is not so important if (our activity is completed), it is not so important that we carry out the survey we were thinking about, but more the reflection on how you do it, because that is sort of what can be transferred (to other activities), not the result itself.

1. Do we agree that our objective is the process itself, and the collaboration, collaboration in practice?

2. Yes.

1. That is the objective for the group. That is what we are working with and have been working with all the time. And then the activity is a means, a tool that we use underway, in the process.

2. You can see it in the time consumption as well, that (the process) is what has taken time, and what has demanded a lot from us is getting the collaboration going towards the activity. So there cannot be any doubt as to what has taken the most time.

3. No, but I understand what you are saying (4.) because we were just into that, and that is why I'm saying that maybe we have used (the clients). They are keen on activities we may have used for our own purposes, in relation to learning and improving on interdisciplinary collaboration in practice, if you see what I mean.

4. What I'm thinking is that it perhaps doesn't have to say (in the project report) more than... that (the clients) carried out the activity with a good result without any of us putting much work into it, sort of, you know.

3. Yes.

4. That's what I'm sort of wanting, because as (2.) talked about we haven't talked about the activity. (...) So if this (activity) works out fine that doesn't have to be our fault.

(Laughter and joking in the group)

This was an understandable reaction to becoming aware of what they had used most of their time on in their WDPs. Still, it was not a viable solution to more or less exclude project activities from their project reports. Although CHPS had emphasised that the organisation learning value of the TMA could exceed the value of organisation change as a direct consequence of WDPs, it was how their "internal" processes were influenced by having to do

something “external” together that could stimulate reflections most relevant to subsequent workplace development initiatives in DOAS. In the end all WDP-groups wrote fairly extensively about their “external” activities in their project reports. This notwithstanding, it was evident that all WDP-groups experienced learning most from collaboration in the groups. This was true even for the two WDP-groups that made decisions most in concert with the WDP-mandate. The following excerpt is from one of these groups:

1. So I believe that..., I've benefited more from the process we've had in the group than for instance the lectures we've had.

2. Yes, I agree with you.

1. Very much so, I believe. We've had this winding road and there has been a lot of learning in it.

2. Mmmm

1. Even though there was a lot we didn't need as well, of things that have been a bit troublesome and...

2. Well yes, but one can learn something from that as well.

1. Yes because I'm thinking about just listening, just sitting in the group and listen to how an ordinary workday is at (another unit) makes my relationship to (that unit) different, so for instance when they do not attend a meeting for instance, then I know, there is something about just knowing such things.

3. Yes and of course it has something to do with this way of working. It has helped us in achieving much less distance to each other.

1. Yes, I believe so too.

3. In the municipality in general.

2. Mmmm

3. When we meet the other participants (in the TMA) on the streets or anywhere we suddenly know each other, and nod and smile. You've known about these people from before, but you haven't had the feeling of having anything in common with them.

1. No.

3. Like that. So it has been a good start.

1. Mmmm, I think so too.

3. On the interdisciplinary collaboration, indeed it has. And maybe what I've learned theoretically from lectures and so on is stopping and making critical questions, and be aware not to think just by myself, simple as that, but, but to include all the other critical ideas from all the others to find the best (answers).

1. Yes.

3. And that is incredibly good learning I believe, in the municipality we're working, you know. So..., so it has definitely been positive.

Taken together the participants experienced learning from 1) getting to know their colleagues better, and 2) “stopping and making critical questions”. The first of these learning experiences could undoubtedly have been accomplished without the TMA, whereas the second most likely was a consequence of the TMA providing a framework for “backstage” reflections on own work practices. Similar comments were made in the other WDP-groups as well. The following three excerpts are from conversations in three different groups:

1. I believe the idea (of TMA) is very good, and basically I believe that the greatest dividend from this is that DOAS is together and one learns to know faces and talk to people. (...)

2. I (too) believe that the most important thing is that DOAS is together. Useful experiences of listening to each other. (...) We have different competencies, different viewpoints, and different things we have read and things like that. So the most important thing is that we walk that road together. We are starting something I believe is very important to DOAS.

1. I believe it (the TMA) has helped us in relation to being on a meta-level, you know in relation to that we have been on a meta level each time we’ve been on such..., yes, gatherings. That we have become more competent at that. That we in a way should be a bit there without in a way having to agree or quarrel to agree you know. Just ask a lot of questions and let it flow a bit and... it has been a long process hasn’t it.

2. It is not like you have to answer an assignment on a test, far from it..., one is supposed to in a way... now we are thinking a lot and then we shall write it down. Where do we start (grins)? It is a bit floating as well, isn’t it.

3. Yes. I believe that much of what the course has contained up until now, and now it is finished, I, at least I notice that I have gotten many small inputs here and there but you don’t notice them all the time.

1. No, no that’s it, you have to think about it.

1. This (group work) also has an element of self-development. I believe this has some importance for my job. (...)

2. And maybe some time to reflection. There is so little time to do that in our daily work activities. There are sort of tasks all the time you know.

3. One (task) kills the other, yes.

2. Yes, and sit down and think through what it is we are actually doing and why we are doing it and if we can do it in another way. I think that is very alright and interesting. Because it is so easy in this job to stay in the same tracks.

These excerpts indicate that the TMA did establish meeting places between employees in which they could learn collaboratively from reflecting on own work practices, i.e. the TMA had some merit as a framework for supporting organisation learning. As commented previously the TMA also seemed to nurture an amicable atmosphere between participants, making it possible to discuss and learn from shortcomings or mistakes in own work practices. An indication of this was that several of the WDP-groups became increasingly self-critical. For instance, when reflecting on how they had responded to having a “free leash” (having wide decision making latitude) in the WDPs one participant commented that “of course we should be able to deal with it, but (...) it shows that people have to have someone on top of them to perform, very often, that’s the way it is. (...) Well, bottom line, we’re the ones who have failed.” One of the other groups explicitly stated in their project report that they chose what they saw as the easiest workplace development project in terms of use of time and energy. They also commented on adverse effects of not having discussed choice of activity thoroughly. Many certainly experienced a sense of failure, but were able to turn such sentiments into positive learning experiences. As one of the WDP-groups stated in their project report (my translation):

Apparently we agreed, but when we started working with the subject matter and had supervision we experienced a lot of fogginess between us. This led to many frustrations we were unable to untangle and did not actively engage in either. A pseudo-agreement we did not see at the time, but that we see now in the aftermath. This is perhaps one of the reasons why we on several occasions were so open to new ideas.

It was of course difficult to assess all individual reactions to becoming aware of discrepancy between intention and practice in WDP-groups, but it was striking that none said they saw it as depressing, disheartening, or words to that effect. There was no sense of despair or despondency. On the contrary, participants seemed to be elevated by their experiences. It was certainly not clear to CHPS at the time why this was the prevailing sentiment, but it became somewhat clearer when relating WDP-participants’ experiences to those of the top-management group, and to subsequent (post-TMA) experiences in DOAS. Consequently this issue is readdressed in chapter 8.

WDP-participants' individual learning from the TMA

Emphasis in this thesis is on the relationships between participants, as opposed to on individual participants, as explained particularly in chapters 1 and 3. There was no systematic gathering of data on how individual participants used learning experiences from the TMA in their daily work practices. CHPS highlighted organisation learning, and thus how employees across layers and units could collaborate so as to enable sustained changes in work practices. Still, particularly in the late stage of the TMA, it became evident that many participants experienced individual learning from using perspectives or methods highlighted in the TMA in their daily work practices.

Most commonly commented were experiences with the solution-focused approach, which was covered in the course literature (Langslet, 1999). Some had used the CHPS-model described in chapter 2.3, for instance in addressing issues in child care; some had used dialog conference methodology or nominal group technique to initiate workplace development processes in their units; others saw the supervision they got from CHPS as exemplary and wanted to model their own supervision of colleagues and clients on those experiences. It could thus be established with certainty that individual employees made connections between the education component in the TMA and their daily work practices, but precisely how and with what consequences was unclear. To CHPS these occurrences were further indications of growing interest in workplace development. Some employees even seemed to have been "bitten by the bug" and invested much time and energy in workplace development, as the following excerpt from a conversation in a WDP-group illustrates.

1. I believe there is pretty much to do right now, so it is a bit more than I have the time for. A bit more than I feel like using on it. But at the same time it has given me very very much. If I hadn't attended gatherings and such then I wouldn't have had as much to do now. It is sort of organisational (at my unit) and things that...

Q. I don't quite understand..., your attendance in the course gives you more to do at work?

1. Yes I take on more work. It's not like I get it, but there are things I see that needs to be done which I do something about. So I take on more work, for instance at present we don't have a manager, so there are many things like that.

Q. So you take more initiative?

1. Yes.

Q. And you believe this has something to do with the course?

1. Yes it has. And the literature one has been reading and things like that as well, so it definitely has a direct impact on the workplace.

Q. I'm a bit curious about examples. You're lacking a manager. That means that you are taking over some of the (manager's) tasks now or what?

1. Yes, at least it gives me much greater opportunities to influence (...) And when it comes to preparing group work and planning and things like that there are many useful things I've learned that I'd like to learn others. And that I might have spent some time on.

Q. Yes, what things could that be for instance?

1. For instance group work, how to practically work in groups. What does it mean to have a dialog. On power sharing, that one has to be aware of that. And that..., maybe, well it is mostly, yes perhaps above all the group work.

Q. But is it the methods, use of methods?

1. Yes it is.

Q. But you also said something about being aware of power issues, is that something you tell your employees or is it something you're thinking about and are concerned about for yourself?

1. It is both something I..., you know when I started working (at my unit) I was very chocked, or not chocked, but I thought it was very hierarchical. It was the manager first and then everyone else and the one working at the kitchen was last in the line. And it was not like one took others' jobs into consideration and things like that. And to make people aware of that if something is not done then the totality doesn't work. To see the whole picture and things like that. And ways of telling people about it, I've learned a lot about that on the CHPS-course.

Q. So you are able to say or express things you see as important?

1. Yes, having words for it. And also theories for it, that what I see as important is not completely stupid, and others think that as well (grins). And that is somewhat good. (...) There is a direction in how things are developing, and I for one believe it's a good and positive development. But that is only how I experience it now, and then we see concretely on the staff that they are having a better time. There is no quiet talk in the hallways. We want to do more things together, we can even consider spending time together after working hours without talking negatively about each other. So I believe there has been a sort of positive development.

This excerpt by the way documents a rare instance of me asking a series of questions to one particular participant in a group conversation. I got "carried away" when realising that this participant was in a sense a "model student" for CHPS in making strong connections between the course and workplace development components in the TMA. By transforming CHPS' suggestions into practice that made sense in a concrete unit this participant demonstrated the constructive potential in the TMA. An enthusiastic individual would not

accomplish organisation learning by him- or herself. It was nevertheless interesting that the participant demonstrated the importance of leadership for organisation learning at unit level, i.e. a lot could be accomplished in terms of organisation learning by one person taking the lead. As such this example raised expectations of what could be accomplishable in the aftermath of the TMA, which is addressed in chapter 8.

How gatherings and supervision influenced WDP-groups' learning processes

Although not so visible in the WDP-groups' project activities or project reports, in conversations it became evident that the participants experienced learning from participating in the TMA. Their "aha-experiences" on client participation, solution-focus and why organisation change is difficult to develop and sustain were all examples of that, but most exciting was nevertheless their growing interest in backstage reflections, and growing interest in how they could use what they learned together with colleagues in the future. This indicated increased capacity to engage in organisation learning, and also a much more positive outlook on organisation change initiatives than they had prior to the TMA (see chapter 6.1). Data suggests that the gatherings and supervision played a part in these developments. In some of the excerpts from conversations quoted earlier in this chapter participants mention gatherings as a source of inspiration, for instance for engaging in meta-reflections. As described in chapter 5 gatherings were intended in part to give lectures on the curriculum in "Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice", and in part to establish meeting places for participants so as to enable "backstage" conversations on workplace development in DOAS in general, and in the WDPs in particular. Each full day gathering was divided between lecture before lunch, and various forms of group work and plenary sessions in the afternoon.

The topics for the lectures in the first five gatherings were determined from the outset. They were organisation learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, guidance, communication in groups, power and culture. The topics for the five gatherings in the autumn were not scheduled, because CHPS wanted the flexibility to introduce topics depending on what

proved to be challenging for WDP-groups. Consistent with the challenges documented in this chapter CHPS chose to highlight client participation and empowerment, and also added to perspectives on interdisciplinary collaboration and organisation learning raised in the lectures in spring.

In the afternoons there were a mixture of WDP-group work, ad hoc groups across units and layers in DOAS, and plenary sessions. For instance, in one of the spring gatherings one participant from each of the four types of unit (day-care centres, maternal and school health services, child care, and youth relief services) presented factual information about their units and the services they provided. There were also dialog conferences with ad hoc groups on what participants saw as desirable for DOAS in the future, and on the participants' various competencies and consequences thereof for collaboration. The WDP-groups also informed each other about their activities and plans. CHPS took the opportunity to organise group work and plenary sessions with methodology that was taught in lectures and in the course literature, thereby giving the participants some practical experience with various methods for organising communication in groups. In the final two gatherings, which were carried out just a couple of weeks prior to exams, the WDP-groups worked on their project reports in the afternoon sessions with CHPS' staff supervising.

I participated in all gatherings and took extensive notes. In essence the same points surfaced in gatherings as in conversations. For instance, participants emphasised having time to meet to get to know each other and identify relevant issues to collaborate on. The point here is therefore not to provide detailed accounts of the content of what was said either in lectures or in the afternoon sessions. The point here is that the gatherings most likely contributed to establishing an "atmosphere" or "climate" for learning characterised by systematic reflections on experiences, investigation of relationships between intentions and practice, and use of critique for constructive (as opposed to destructive) purposes. As shown previously in this chapter these qualities in gatherings were commented on by participants in conversations, and the participants most likely improved their skills in applying such an approach to learning during the course of the TMA. It is also quite likely that the practical experiences they got from gatherings – although limited in extent – were conducive to this development. There were also some indications that the working methods applied in the

gatherings to some extent compensated for limited time to read the course literature, at least this is what some of the participants seemed to indicate in a WDP-group conversation:

1. The lectures you sort of have in your head, but when it comes to the literature it is more difficult to get started, it is only when I really have to, like now.

2. You haven't read it you either?

1. No.

Q. So the group hasn't, in a way nobody in the group has been reading...?

3. No we have..., no together then we have...

(Several talk simultaneously, ends in agreement on only one of the group members having read the literature extensively.)

4. You know there is something about being on that theory level all the time. One gets a heck of a lot out of that anyway, and if one fails or not (at exams) then at least I personally believe I've got very much out of this. (Others support) Yes, and on the whole I mean it. And we've had good discussions. We've discussed on the basis of lectures.

The participants did not get time off to read the course material, and were thus supposed to do that after working hours. It was of course not ideal but still quite understandable that many postponed reading until "when I really have to, like now" when the project report was written. Limited reading from the outset of the TMA could also help explain the decision making processes in the WDP-groups, and help explain why there seemed to be a steep incline in the participants' learning curve towards the end. However, if the assertion that "(w)e've discussed on the basis of lectures" is fairly representative, then the assumption that gatherings were important for developing a constructive approach to learning is strengthened.

The data also suggests that CHPS in its approach to gatherings missed out on a golden opportunity to link the TMA stronger to participants' daily work practices. As was clarified in a WDP-group conversation:

1. And when we are reflecting on something in gatherings, then the group is supposed to discuss what it means for the group and so on. But the work we do in the group is a very small part of our job. There is not much

overlap. What could have been more interesting, or at least as interesting, is to reflect on how I can use it (the issues raised in gatherings) in my daily work situation. (...)

Q. Is this something you think can be useful, to have more theory guiding your daily work situations?

All. Yes.

The explanation why CHPS missed out on this opportunity is fairly basic: CHPS had from the outset anticipated that the WDPs would be directly relevant to participants' daily work practices. When they to a lesser degree proved to be relevant – as was evident after the decision making processes particularly in four of the WDP-groups – CHPS simply forgot to adjust for this fact. It would have been easy to give group assignments in afternoon sessions in gatherings on the relationship between learning in the TMA and participants' daily work practices, and so this omission was simply a mistake. The consequences may not have been grave though, as participants themselves became more interested in this issue, and – as previously shown – took their own initiatives.

Consequences of supervision for learning experiences

As described in chapter 6 CHPS decided to interact somewhat differently with the WDP-groups after they made their decisions, i.e. complement “assistant” with “expert” and to some extent also “advocate”. This shift in facilitation frame (see chapter 2.2) for supervision was clearly to the WDP-groups' liking. They clearly stated that they wanted more hands-on supervision, for instance by CHPS making recommendations on how to document project activities and write project reports, but also by challenging participants' understandings of own practices. The modifications in approach to supervision was not in conflict with the principles of andragogy as such (it was still participants' self-defined learning needs that dominated), but it had become less relevant to think of participants as being on a “bildung” type of journey in landscapes of their own choosing, and more relevant to think of them as in a training situation in which they were relative novices, and could make good use of guides leading the way. Somewhat paradoxically it was necessary to instruct participants to some extent to enable them to decide for themselves, i.e. increase their capacity to accomplish what they wanted to do. To CHPS the changes in supervision were thus not a

change in the overall ambition of increasing (collaboratively based) employee control over work practices. It was a change of means, not objectives.

Data from the WDP-groups suggest that CHPS-supervisors were competent in varying their approach to supervision. CHPS' expertise was particularly useful to WDP-groups when their activities seemed overwhelming. The following excerpts are from two different WDP-groups.

- From my point of view, prior to the supervision today I was thinking that this (project) could take a lot of time, and I was thinking about whether I really have the time and capacity to do this. But then I found it very clarifying the supervision we got today, because she angled it very practical and said that perhaps we should make it simpler, you know, that we shouldn't put so much into it as we had originally. Yes, it became a bit more concrete and easier and we have to restrict it more. And that is good for me, because then I don't feel like it's too much, because I felt like that before I came here today. Now I'm looking at it much more positively, and I believe this will be exciting.

1. She tidies up for us.

2. Yes, I think she does. Helps us tidying up and... yes. Because it is a bit limited how much we can accomplish in terms of group..., you know that we have time to meet. And I think she's good at tidying so as to make us get a bit further and, yes, not spend too much time on it.

Q. How is that tidying up? Is it starting with things you say or is she bringing up new subjects or...?

2. Yes, she starts out with what we send her in advance, and then maybe she has some questions concerning some things we haven't been crystal clear on, and what we think about it and... I guess that's how she does it. We have to think a bit, yes.

3. I think she's got a good balance between guiding and recommending. You know she gives us concrete advice sometimes and I think it's very good that she is..., at the same time as we are discussing at a more academic level she is also quite pragmatic. There is limited time for guidance and group meetings for instance, so I think it's very alright, that a lot of it is quite direct, and that she suggests short-cuts now and then.

1. And we ask for them too.

(Someone says "yes"; then laughter in the group)

2. There is something about seeing that we only have so much time.

1. You know if we ask for advice she can choose between the strategies you (3.) mention. Sometimes she gives us concrete advice, sometimes she hits the ball back into our court and asks.

Q. So it varies?

1. Yes, no, we don't get advice all the time.

(Laughter in the group).

As shown in the first excerpt the WDPs could be experienced as overwhelming, as they did not know how to reduce the complexity in their projects. The supervisor offered expert advice on how to “make it simpler (...) concrete and easier”, thereby motivating the participants to be “looking at it much more positively, and I believe this will be exciting”. In the second excerpt the participants start reflecting on what it is the supervisor actually does, and describe an expert-apprentice like relationship in which they ask for advice but do not always get it. They evidently found this mixture of responses gratifying. They acknowledged this as a balancing act, in which also the tension between being “academic” and “pragmatic” was a constitutive part. They probably saw both the supervisor’s and their own roles clearer as a consequence of the marked shifts between different frames, as indicated by seeing the humour in asking for advice but – for good reason – not always getting it.

What is much more difficult to see though is the actual practices of supervisors in the data. As explained in chapter 3 I do not have conversation data from the other CHPS-supervisors’ meetings with WDP-groups. I do have a multitude of data from my own supervision practices in conversations. Trying to assess own influence on the WDP-groups is of course difficult, but some characteristics of my practice can be established fairly conclusively. First of all there was a marked (and typical) development in my practice visible in the relationships with all the six WDP-groups: From the outset there was strong emphasis on understanding what the participants were interested in and what experiences they had, so as to examine if and how the TMA could be relevant to their everyday work practices. After the summer holidays I too became more directly engaged in their project activities. My mandate was altered in the sense that I too provided recommendations on what they should highlight in their reports, but the main emphasis was still on how they experienced the interplay between work and education.

When looking at what I actually said in conversations by far the most typical scenario was that I asked fairly simple and straight-forward questions, which was followed by long segments of discussion between group participants. As far as I could establish this had nothing to do with my questions being particularly clever or incisive. Instead it was a consequence of the WDP-group participants’ strong verbal and social skills. They were in a

sense “easy” to supervise, and I got the impression that whatever they got out of the supervision had to do with the interaction between them, not with what I said. On the other hand I probably had some influence by means of the issues I addressed.

It seemed reasonable to assume that how our meetings were organised was more important, i.e. it was a meeting place where participants could reflect openly and systematically on workplace development issues without having to make decisions. I was in a sense “in for the ride”, without being a full participant in their projects or work life. As it turned out relatively few of my recommendations for the project reports were taken up, and taken together I did not experience that I personally had much influence on their work processes. My experience was in concert with those of the other CHPS-supervisors, suggesting that participants had indeed decided for themselves and not been directed by CHPS or – for that matter – by the top-management group. Taken together the data suggests that CHPS had little influence on *what* the WDP-groups decided to do or did, but – by way of gatherings and supervision in particular – had some influence on *how* they did it, and more so towards the end of the TMA than at the beginning. This was more or less as CHPS planned it from the outset (see chapter 5), and so at least we accomplished one of the things we set out to do.

7.3 Discussion and preliminary conclusions towards the end of the TMA

This chapter has provided accounts for the activities the WDP-groups actually carried out, what they accomplished relative to their own objectives and the mandates they had been given, how they documented and evaluated their projects, what they learned from their projects, from interacting in groups, and from their DOAS-colleagues, (to some extent) how they used what they learned from WDPs and other elements in the TMA in their daily work practices, and how CHPS influenced their learning processes, i.e. the research questions highlighted in chapter 1.5 and at the beginning of this chapter.

When discussing the experiences after the WDPs had finished their project reports in December 2000, there were several points that stood out from CHPS' perspective. Most striking was that (especially four of) the WDP-groups had conducted projects that were far from realising the mandates they were given, particularly on developing sustainable new work practices for the benefit of clients most in need of services. There were apparently a number of reasons for this, and among them were certainly that CHPS had not provided the necessary support to decision making processes, and that the TMG had not engaged in developing the WDPs as planned.

In addition the WDP-participants had approached their projects in ways that were difficult to foresee. Contrary to expectations they had no abundance of ideas on what to collaborate on to improve services. They were either jumping into decisions (as two of the WDP-groups did) or presenting highly abstract ideas they could not address in their work practices (as the four WDP-groups who were concerned about "grey areas"). Contrary to what they said was important to them the majority of WDP-groups opted for happenings they themselves developed with little participation from clients. The burning issue at the time was of course why the WDP-groups chose to act as they did. Several plausible explanations emerged during the project period. For one, many participants had negative previous experiences with organisation change initiatives in the municipality – both those initiated top-down and through projects – and did not expect them to lead to sustained changes in practice. Furthermore, they had little experience from collaborating across layers and units in the

municipality in general, and in most cases did not know their colleagues in others units or what services they provided. If they wanted to accomplish something specific they tended to avoid the formal organisation (or “bureaucracy”) and use informal networks instead. The formal organisation was more likely to be used when they wanted to avoid doing something.

There were thus a number of characteristics with DOAS as a setting, i.e. how the organising of interactions influenced generation of resources, which made their actions understandable and even rational. They did not know what they could accomplish together concretely (because they knew little of each other from the outset) or what consequences it would have (because they had adverse experiences with previous attempts to generate sustainable changes in work practices).

On top of these features came some challenging and probably even problematic aspects with the TMA for the WDP-groups: They were artificially composed (employees who were not mutually dependent of each other in everyday work practices but joined together for the specific purposes of the TMA), had varying degrees of formal authority in DOAS (thus with unequal opportunities to initiate and sustain changes in their units), and experienced having little time for the TMA (many saw it as coming on top of their daily work chores).

When taking these factors taken into account, and adding the fact that the WDP-groups received little support by CHPS and the TMG particularly in the important initial stages, the WDP-groups’ choices of projects could be seen as constructive solutions to a difficult challenge. They had transformed the mandate into project activities that were comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to them, hence mastering the stress they experienced from not quite understanding, knowing, or believing in what they were intended to do. Seen like this their project activities could be seen as creating a shared “sense of coherence” (see chapter 2.2), despite their organisation performance being questionable.

Whereas CHPS during the project period thought of the TMA as offering “too little, too late”, in retrospect it seemed more reasonable to assert that it offered “too much, too soon”. The ambitions with the TMA had been much too high given what the participants realistically

could accomplish in a short period of time in DOAS as a setting, and the developments the TMA wanted to support could not be expected without participants first getting to know each other, or indeed without first understanding what they could accomplish together.

The fact that WDP-groups did not realise much of their mandate could thus be accounted for – at least in part – both by characteristics of DOAS as a setting, and with characteristics of the TMA. The problem was a mismatch between what was intended and planned on the one hand, and what could realistically be accomplished on the other. It was not a case of malign intent by any of the participant groups (WDP, TMG, CHPS), on the contrary, they basically did the best they could. This does not, of course, mean that the participant groups could not have acted differently. Characteristics of the setting and the TMA did not impose laws of nature determining their actions. It just means that without understanding how DOAS as an organisation and TMA as a framework influenced the relationships between the participants, a reasonable assessment of what could be learned from the experiences is difficult to establish. For instance, it would be difficult to see that part of the reason for failing was that CHPS initially approached supervision with the facilitation frame most prevalent in education (“assisting partner”), whereas the organisation setting required a more hands-on approach (“expert”) to decision making in order to increase likelihood of realising objectives. It would also be difficult to see that the WDP-participants’ reasons for (in many cases) doing almost the exact opposite of what they said they wanted was not stupidity or resistance to change, but a constructive way of getting at least something out of a tricky challenge.

On the other hand, part of the reason for failing to realise the WDP-mandates had little to do with DOAS as a setting or characteristics of the TMA. It was clearly documented that employees in fact had limited generalist competencies, i.e. were not particularly competent in decision making processes, in facilitating participation and collaboration across socially constructed barriers, in organisation learning, or in project work. The course “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” was based on this rationale, and certainly proved to be relevant. If anything the experiences with the TMA in DOAS documented that developing generalist competencies in public services is a considerable challenge, and that such competencies are required for increasing employee control over work practices.

Development of a communicative sphere

Returning back to the TMA in DOAS, the most pressing issue after the WDPs were completed was what – if anything – would come out of the experiences generated. For instance, there was concern that employees would be disheartened because they had not realised what they said they wanted to do or because top-managers had not provided more feedback on their projects, or vice versa that top-managers would see the WDP-groups activities as indicators of employee empowerment being futile and a directing managing style necessary. As will be returned to in the beginning of chapter 8 there was no despondency, but instead – to CHPS' surprise – an elevated atmosphere among DOAS-participants in the aftermath of the WDPs. One of the reasons for this seemed to be that the WDP-participants had a steep learning curve towards the end of the TMA. They were pleased with learning more about generalist competencies, about each other as colleagues, and about having the opportunity to engage in backstage reflections. They enjoyed detecting discrepancies between intentions and practice, and they learned more about what was necessary to sustain changes in work practices. Taken together they had developed a sense of community and an interest in organisation learning.

After the TMA was concluded an article that might shed some light of why the WDP-groups – to the participants at least – to some extent were successful despite of not realising agreed upon objectives was published by Stephen Kemmis (2001) in “Handbook of Action Research”. CHPS had presupposed – which is not uncommon in action research – that participants rather quickly would start producing rational and consensus-based decisions in the group context of WDPs. The fact that this did not happen may have a simple yet profound explanation:

“A previously unnoticed aspect of communicative action was that it *brings people together around shared topical concerns, problems and issues* with a shared orientation towards mutual understanding and consensus. (...) people must *constitute* a communicative space (in meetings, in the media, in conversations with friends and colleagues, etc.) before they can work together to achieve mutual understanding and consensus.” (Kemmis, 2001: 100, italics in original)

The (simple) point is that groups are not given as totalities or wholes “ready for action”, but constituted by actual persons who have to develop relationships at a personal level before committing to collaboration. To Kemnis a prerequisite for the formation of a communicative sphere is that issues are opened up for discussion, and that “participants experience their interaction as fostering the democratic expression of divergent views” (op.cit.). This seems to be a plausible explanation of what happened in the WDPs, and it would be strengthened if participants proved to be prepared to work more goal oriented in the aftermath of the TMA. Furthermore, it is only after examining what happened in the aftermath of the TMA that DOAS’ experiences on organisation learning (e.g. the vocabulary presented in chapter 2 which has only indirectly been addressed in this chapter), employee empowerment, and employee health and organisation performance can be fully assessed. This is because the aftermath presented new opportunities to continue the organisation learning that the TMA gave a modest start to. First though in the next and final chapter, the top-management group’s activities concurrently with the TMA are analysed.

Chapter 8 Activities outside the TMA, and conclusions

This final chapter addresses three issues; 1) the top-management group's (TMG) activities during the tailor-made approach (TMA) period, 2) workplace development initiatives in DOAS in the aftermath of the TMA, and 3) conclusions to the empirical investigations conducted in this thesis. These are all issues particularly relevant to the challenge of sustaining employee empowerment processes, i.e. the third sub-process in model 1.1.

The experiences with the workplace development projects (WDPs) raised concerns about the relevance of the TMA for employee empowerment processes altogether, because the WDP-groups hardly developed work practices that could be sustained. On the other hand, the WDP-participants learned much from the final period of their projects, and could be expected to have increased their capacity for workplace development in the aftermath of the TMA. There were also the activities the top-management group (TMG) had initiated outside and concurrently with the TMA. Concerning these activities, the TMG had repeatedly throughout the collaboration with CHPS emphasised that they used several of the perspectives and methodological approaches CHPS included in the TMA tool-box.

treacherus

It was therefore an ambiguous situation around the time of completion of the TMA: On the one hand the TMG could be expected to experience the WDPs as a failure, albeit much as a consequence of poor advice from CHPS on recruiting WDP-participants (see chapter 5.3), and poor supervision of decision making processes in the WDPs (see chapter 6.1). On the other hand the TMG had used elements from the TMA-framework outside the TMA, and seemed content with the outcomes thereof. Conversely, on the one hand the WDP-participants could be expected to be despondent about their projects not yielding changes they from the outset said they wanted (see chapter 6.1). On the other hand they experienced having learned a lot from the process (see chapter 7.2), and could just as well be expected to be motivated for more workplace development activities. Which of these somewhat contradictory experiences would carry the greatest weight for the TMG and the WDP-participants respectively?

One clear indication was given at a DOAS-seminar in November 2000, just a few weeks prior to the completion of the TMA. At a similar DOAS-seminar in June 1999 there had been if not animosity between layers in DOAS, then at least a subdued atmosphere, with people not speaking their minds, quietly talking in small groups in hallways, and so on. The November 2000 seminar offered a stark contrast. Most striking was the amicable atmosphere between employees across layers and units in DOAS. Employees were joking and laughing, and expressed optimism for the future. There was a distinct sense of direction to what was going on, as they all seemed to be talking about the same issues related to the future. Clearly “something” had changed over the course of 1.5 years. On several occasions in the seminar I asked participants how it could be that the TMA seemed to have stimulated “success despite failure”. The response I got from various employees – both top-managers and WDP-participants – was univocal in the sense that they did not understand what I meant with “failure”. It seemed as if the discrepancy between intentions and practice in the WDPs, as well as the shortcomings with the TMA and CHPS’ way of practicing it, had no bearings on their overall experiences, or – perhaps more correctly – their emotional responses to their overall experiences.

While these developments to some extent were pleasurable and “nice”, they were mostly bewildering. It was evident that the “niceties” could hardly be ascribed to something CHPS had said or done. Instead what seemed to have happened was that the employees – across layers and units in DOAS – had gotten to know each other better. They clearly enjoyed discussing workplace development issues and plans for the future. Certainly CHPS had influenced *how* they talked about workplace development issues, but the amicable atmosphere had to come down to experiences of interacting differently than before. As the interaction between top-management and WDP-participants within the TMA had been limited and to some extent strained, the explanation had to be sought outside the TMA, in DOAS’ daily work practices.

Suddenly the TMG’s activities outside the TMA looked much more important than CHPS had anticipated they would be. Fortunately, due to the “opportunistic and unfocused” approach to data gathering used to “document the TMA as completely as possible” (see chapter 3.1),

there were some interesting data on these activities. As it turned out, the TMG had in their activities outside the TMA engaged fully in other workplace development initiatives. They had engaged in decision making processes on what to explore, and had accomplished effects by means of their own work practices, by far exceeding what could have been accomplished within the TMA. Whether (and how) changed practices would be sustained though, would have to be examined in the aftermath of the TMA.

The first chapter section below highlights the TMG's activities outside the TMA, and the second chapter section highlights activities in the aftermath of the TMA. Taken together these sections provide answers to the research questions presented in chapter 1.5, on what activities did the top-management group in DOAS initiate outside the tailor-made approach; how did their collaboration with CHPS influence how they initiated and carried out such activities; what did the TMG-members learn from these experiences, and what would they seek to do in their future work practices; what activities did the TMG initiate in the aftermath of the TMA, and what was the relevance of these activities for employee empowerment processes?

The third and final chapter section provides answers to the research questions presented in chapter 1.5, on what would increase likelihood of employee empowerment strengthening both employee health and organisation performance. As shown in chapter 1.2 improved health *and* performance is just one of (at least) four possible combinations of empowerment outcomes on health and performance. Did power manifest in ways strengthening both employee health and organisation performance? Were CHPS' facilitation practices optimal for this purpose? What could be learned about how organisation learning should be carried out? How was the interplay between employee health and organisation performance? Taken together empirical investigations of these questions allow a tentative answer to the overarching research issue, on how employee empowerment processes can be *made* conducive to both employee health and organisation performance.

8.1 The top-management group's initiatives outside of TMA

- So that I will claim that the top-management has been very visible in the organisation, perhaps more visible than ever before in the organisation, so that we have participated intensely in production, in production of services, been out there and practiced leadership. And concerning the CHPS-course we haven't been as visible, and I don't think that matter one bit.

The above quotation is an excerpt from one of the conversations between TMG and CHPS in the autumn of 2000. In chapter 6 it was documented how the TMG retracted from the original plans of how to provide feedback to the workplace development projects (WDP). They also attended gatherings in the TMA to a limited degree. The TMG-members felt uncomfortable with several aspects of their participation in the TMA, not only insecurity as to what to provide feedback on and how to do it, but more generally frustration over what they saw as shortcomings in CHPS' approach to recruiting and supervision. As mentioned in chapter 6 they decided to focus on other workplace development issues in DOAS than the TMA. CHPS did not participate in either of these issues, but the TMG informed about and reflected on them in conversations with CHPS. In this chapter section emphasis is first on what workplace development issues the TMG addressed, and what they did to address them. Then attention is directed towards the TMG's reflections on what they learned from these experiences, and on what they learned from collaborating with CHPS.

The "budget process" in the autumn of 1999 had been a strong indication of the TMG's willingness to take action and learn by trial and error. The backdrop had then been that "something needed to be done" to address DOAS' overall objectives and initiate collaboration across units in DOAS. The same sense of urgency and willingness to try new approaches was evident in several other issues. Some of these issues emerged due to relatively dramatic challenges, whereas others were related to ongoing challenges with DOAS' organisation or practices. The TMG took them on at a case by case basis. At the end of 2000 the TMG had addressed workplace development issues in all four types of services in DOAS (day-care centres, child care, maternal and school health services, youth relief services) concurrently with the TMA. Concretely what they had done in each type of unit is not specified below. The reason for this is that the challenges documented below could

occur anywhere in a work organisation, and were not representative of any of DOAS' services.

Leadership crisis in units

One of the units had been struggling with internal conflicts for some time, culminating in the resignation of the unit manager and several middle-managers. Turnover and absenteeism rates were high, and there was a high level of frustration among employees. The TMG recognised that the usual thing to do would be to bring in external consultants in an attempt to "fix the problem". Instead they decided to address the situation themselves, with one of the TMG's members acting as unit manager for an interim period. As the top-manager explained; "I've chosen to try to turn it into a positive thing that someone resigns. When several resign simultaneously it becomes a unique opportunity to do something with the entire unit." The first month the top-manager attended all meetings in the unit, and was also in close contact with a union representative. The employees were asked to come up with suggestions for how they wanted the unit to be organised in the future. The top-manager was highly concrete on what they could and could not decide for themselves, and devised a procedure with meeting places and deadlines. Within three weeks the employees came up with a solution they agreed on. They reduced the number of managers, and reorganised the unit's sections. Their solution was rational and within the mandate they had been given. Because there was univocal agreement between the TMG, the employees, and the union, the solution was quickly approved by relevant bodies and implemented. In their project report the TMG reflected on what had happened (my translation):

This event was not directly connected to the TMA. Still it shows with all clarity the dilemmas that arise when having to prioritise between daily work practices and workplace development issues. The focus the TMA had on multi-disciplinarity, clear boundaries and dialog methodology made the changes (in the unit) possible, and restored trust in top-management. (...) Use of dialog methodology in the change process made everyone experience being heard, and the outcome was that everyone agreed on the model (the solution they themselves developed). The significance of all participants approving with the outcome was invaluable for further democratisation processes and their willingness to take on more responsibility themselves.

A similar chain of events took place in another unit, in which there were conflicts related to management practices. When the unit manager resigned one of the other members of the TMG acted as unit manager for an interim period, and started processes allowing employees to specify how they would like their unit to operate in the future.

What is certainly striking in these examples is that the TMG practiced more or less exactly as CHPS had hoped they would do towards the workplace development projects: The point of departure was employees' motivation to improve existing work practices. The TMG then developed a clear mandate for the employees and a transparent decision making process, then interacted with and provided feedback to the employees on a regular basis, and backed up decisions with their formal authority. As a consequence trust between the layers in DOAS was developed, "everyone experienced being heard", and employees wanted to take on more responsibility, i.e. increase their control over work practices.

This chain of events can analytically be positioned in the "Enable-Explore" nexus of model 1.1. Whether or not the outcomes or "effects" of increased employee control would be desirable and sustainable are different issues. Data are scarce on these issues, but the solutions employees developed were not reversed or considerably altered, suggesting that they were adequate to realise objectives. My impression from meeting employees in these units was that they were invigorated and optimistic. In one of these units there was a significant decrease in turnover (from app. 40 to 14 percent) and leaves of absence (from app. 14 to 10 percent) over the course of a year. The issue of how health and performance outcomes are intertwined is complex though, and will be returned to in chapter 8.3.

Changes in units experiencing new demands

Some of the units in DOAS experienced new demands due to changed policies at the national level. They had to provide a wider range of services to a wider range of clients, and were in the process of recruiting employees with other professional backgrounds than had been dominating up till then. The TMG was interested in what these developments meant

for the employees in these units. They participated in unit meetings and took “time-outs” to reflect with them on challenges and opportunities for the future. They quickly established that there were “no crises”, but a significant need to highlight workplace development issues, and not continue daily work practices as if nothing was happening. As the TMG reflected in one of the conversations with CHPS:

1. What are we doing with..., you know, what sort of leadership should we have there (in those units)? How do we divide work tasks? How do we interact with others? Here there are lots of things that we perhaps haven't been attentive to, and so we have to focus (differently).

2. But the strange thing is that we thought we had catered for these things, you know, in more ways than one.

1. and 3. Right you are.

2. And then it turns out there is much more fear than we had expected.

CHPS. Fear among?

2. Among the employees. Concerning the new expectations, and what shall they do and how are they, and are anyone taking anything away from me, you know, quite classical concerns. But we have spent a lot of time on it, and it has started to fall into place in a way, but you have to take it seriously you know.

The TMG was thus able to attend not only to management crises, but also to emerging issues by questioning their assumptions (“we thought we had catered for these things”) in open-ended dialog with employees, acknowledging that “you have to take it seriously”.

When interacting with another type of units almost the exact opposite challenge was identified: Employees in these units felt they had too few professionals and felt uncertain about the quality of their services. They saw increased collaboration across units as a solution for the future, and the TMG sanctioned such a solution.

Taken together, there was a high number of workplace development initiatives in DOAS concurrently with the TMA. The TMG was either initiating or following up on such initiatives, by providing employees mandates that gave them increased “manoeuvrable space”, and the TMG used its authority to “anchor” decisions formally. In their project report they concluded (my translation):

The top-management group in DOAS asserts that this far in the process we can see clear benefits of the interdisciplinary training we have been through. (...) It seems as if we have achieved a more open organisation in which employees see the benefits of working across disciplines, and where the willingness to provide the energy to do so is great. There are many indications of the attitudes to collaboration being changed from previously not being prioritised, almost seen as a waste of time, and to seeing multi-disciplinarity as leading to improved production of services.

An unintended (?) consequence of the TMG's experiences

Data do not allow an extensive assessment of the TMG's initiatives outside the TMA. For instance, there are only scarce and fragmentary data on how employees experienced such initiatives. The accounts the TMG provided are mostly interesting as examples of how they changed their approach to workplace development issues, and they certainly experienced having success in so doing. The TMG provided no examples of their initiatives failing, but in a conversation with CHPS they did acknowledge that the initiatives had problematic consequences for some employees.

1. But what has been the most extreme in all of this, which is untypical for a municipality, is that some employees have had to resign, you know, because we have almost demanded that they had to resign, because we are now taking another direction which a great majority agrees on, and you are counteracting that direction so intensely that we have to ask you to consider your position. In all this it is actually so that the people involved means so much to make a change, that some have to say goodbye, have to be told to do so, no matter how untypical that is to a municipality.

2. Yes, but I believe CHPS has been important to do so.

1. Yes.

2. It is not certain that we would have accomplished so much if we couldn't have said that word (CHPS) repeatedly.

To CHPS the final comment was surprising. The issue of making some employees (mostly managers) resign had not been raised previously in conversations, neither by the TMG nor by CHPS. What seemed to have happened was that making employees resign was a consequence of the approach to organisation learning and employee empowerment CHPS had advocated. As noted above this was "extreme" in the context of a municipal public

service organisation. With the benefit of hindsight such outcomes could perhaps be expected, but at the time CHPS was taken by surprise. The employees had collaborated on increasing their control over work practices, i.e. were in an employee empowerment process, and the first notable effect was that those counteracting the majority vote had to leave. How such events are to be understood clearly depends on point of view. To some it could be seen as “mob rule”, whereas others would see it as “removing obstacles” to the benefit of a greater good. This tension is probably intractable, and the TMG was in a position where they had to act. CHPS did certainly not make such decisions for them, but the collaboration with CHPS had made them more aware of what they wanted to do and how they would go about accomplishing it. The decisions they made concerning counteracting employees increased theirs’ – and their remaining employees’ – control over work practices. The TMG had thus increased DOAS’ “power to” make changes by utilising “power over” those unwilling to comply with the majority.

The TMG’s assessments of own learning processes

When assessing their learning processes the TMG emphasised how they had come to see “leadership as a balancing act”. They presented several perspectives on this issue in conversations with CHPS and in their project report. From the outset of the collaboration with CHPS the TMG envisioned DOAS as an organisation in which all employees increased their control over work practices (see chapter 1.3). They also communicated this clearly to employees at various instances. To some extent they were frustrated about employees not taking them literally, but (at least on occasion) continued to treat top-managers as distant dignitaries. The following excerpt from a conversation with CHPS documents an interesting development in their understanding of the issue:

1. And if you have some sort of top-management sitting inside the administration then you meet these indistinct expectations to be seen, you know, what’s that about? You know, don’t interfere but see me. A dilemma, definitely a dilemma. It becomes a balancing act for you as a manager you know. (...) You saw what happened when I came to (a WDP-group’s project activity), where I was overwhelmed with hearts, and how great that I showed up, you know, it becomes paradoxical.

Q. You were the sun shining on the congregation, if I remember correctly.

1. Well yes, they said something like that, so it becomes overwhelming.
2. It becomes terribly invidious too.
1. Yes, very much so, and it becomes pretty unpleasant. I don't believe they even think that it's unpleasant for me.
2. No, they just think you'll appreciate it.
3. But it is like that, and it surprises me ever so often you know, that the manager is that important, but it really is like that. And then I think we just have to in a way show them more clearly what we think, because that is not so clear to them, it really isn't, and then (if they don't know what we're thinking) it easily turns into myths and things like that.

Traditionally there had indeed been a distance between top-management and other employees, not only in location but also in work practices. As described in chapter 6.1, DOAS-employees with tenure in the municipality had experienced the top-management as distant, on occasion taking top-down initiatives with variable relevance to ongoing work practices. Towards the end of the TMA the TMG reflected on their experiences with the feedback process to WDP-groups, to exemplify how they wanted their management practices to be in the future. As described in chapter 6.2 they were crystal clear on not wanting to instruct the WDPs, and they ended up providing scarce and somewhat confusing feedback.

1. I believe this is about changing a culture (...) The old traditional mind-set that everything is supposed to be sanctioned by a top-management group, and that top-managers should always be present to acknowledge, well that is what we somehow want to trust people to do themselves. Where we might have missed out, and that we have to take criticism for, is as Q. says that if we had clarified the boundaries (for the WDP-groups) then perhaps it would have been alright. But these are experiences we'll have to take with us. (...) And where we most likely missed out was by creating some expectations that haven't been realised, that haven't been explicit enough. I believe it boils down to that. (...) What we have to do is clarify the boundaries for what we think is fine, and what we intend to achieve with that, and the experiences we have gathered from not having adequate boundaries.
2. But we haven't really missed out. We've just gained some experiences, I believe. In spring we thought a certain way about how to be managers, and then we made..., then there were some needs that we didn't understand and that... And in a way we are a learning organisation.
3. That is what we were supposed to become.
2. That's what we are.

1. And that is precisely what we need to communicate, that thing about gaining experiences, being a learning organisation, clarifying boundaries. These three things are by and large what we are concerned about as a top-management group. And good and bad experiences have equal worth when it comes to take us further along the road. And I agree completely on us not saying that we have screwed this up. That's not what this is about. It is about the value of building on experiences.

3. Yes.

1. And we should be on the offense, as that is what we're trying to accomplish.

When addressing workplace development issues "outside" the TMA, members of the TMG were participating actively in the same processes as other employees. They also experienced that a lot could be accomplished with few means:

1. The only thing I did when working with (that unit) was to clarify the boundaries, just clarify when I was going to provide feedback, who would make the decisions, and that went terribly quickly. (...) I've tried to retrace what I was actually doing, what it really was that proved to be, well call it wise, there and then, and I believe it was to trust people, clarify boundaries, be there, and anchor it (the process) formally in the top-management.

CHPS. You were there a lot, right?

1. I was there a lot, and I was present at the meeting places, but I let them decide, and then I clarified boundaries all the time, and said you know best. And there were results all along. It was just to clarify the meeting places, you know, in which meetings will what decisions be made, and when do we decide, when will we not decide, who will participate in discussions, who will not participate in discussions. (...) And when the decisions were made, even though some preferred other decisions from a professional point of view, they agreed on let's try it out, you know. So many things happened very quickly when deciding. And this reinforces itself, because people suddenly start to think do we need this or that management position? Wow, interesting line of thinking, you know, and then you see the idea becoming contagious in the organisation. Suddenly another unit starts to think the same, and another.

CHPS. So it's complete anarchy you've initiated?

1. Something happens. It does something to people, suddenly it's bubbling and, and... and then you get credibility, that is the other thing happening that you get a kind of credibility on generating solutions.

(...)

1. Just the communication, suddenly the lines, we're on the same team right, opens up, and units don't isolate themselves, you know it is almost incredible that this is happening, and there are many reasons why it happens, for sure, but mostly it has to do with them having the responsibility themselves, and they have made some decisions on how they want to have it, and they agree with that approach.

CHPS. Well yes, because you said initially when I asked what you were doing, you said that you let them decide and you were in the background, a kind of empowerment strategy (...)

1. On what should be decided, yes. Because we always have, that question always arises, and you sense it at once, that it doesn't matter what we think because you'll decide in the end, right, and there is something about breaking that approach of make-believe invitations (ending up with) you'll decide either way.

CHPS. So you didn't (decide for them)?

1. No, nothing. In fact I suggested an entirely different solution, but we did what they wanted. In my head I saw a different solution that I found to be more logical, but in the discussion we ended up with their solution.

When reflecting on experiences this top-manager was able to identify what proved to be important in the change process. The common denominator was "to clarify the boundaries", i.e. whom can discuss and decide what, when at which meeting places. The top-manager decided not only to trust but also to insist on employees' abilities to generate the solutions they needed. Furthermore, it was important to participate in the process and "be there", among other things to assure employees that this is "breaking that approach of make-believe invitations". When employees decided for themselves "many things happened very quickly", employees became enthused and came up with more ideas, told colleagues about their experiences (making it "contagious"), and the top-manager got more credibility as someone who could generate solutions.

Given this and similar experiences it was certainly no surprise that the TMG time and again came back to the issue of "management by regulating boundaries". In the terminology of the vocabulary on organisation learning in chapter 2.3, the top-manager in the above excerpt had clarified the boundaries for employees' exploration of their manoeuvrable space (i.e. mandate), enabling them to participate in decisions on what they should give priority to, on how to organise for the future, and thereby also facilitating changes in their daily work practices. By acting in this way the top-managers used their formal "power over" resources in DOAS to enable employees "power to" increase their control over work practices. Evidently the top-managers experienced this as a win-win situation, i.e. they did not experience having "lost" power. On the contrary, they were able to accomplish more by having employees using their resources proficiently.

To CHPS it was interesting to learn more about how the TMG assessed the influence CHPS had on their learning processes. This was particularly relevant as the TMG evidently had

accomplished a lot more on their own than through the TMA. Their first response to this issue was interesting:

- You know, I believe the whole advantage with using CHPS and other stuff is that when you have a management position you get an intense focus on daily work practices. You know, you all the time get..., it is the daily work practices that..., there is a lot of job to be done. And then we leave this meeting here today and we all go our separate ways, and it will be like that tomorrow and the day after. So we in a way need someone to sum up together with us, in order for that rocket (daily work practices) to get a direction.

By collaborating with CHPS the TMG got “someone to sum up with us”, and assist in staying focused on workplace development issues in a setting where daily work practices demanded “an intense focus”. This response corresponds with what could be observed in the WDP-groups in DOAS as well: Daily work practices demand attention there and then, and makes it difficult to see the connections between various practices over time. An outside agent can be useful just by reminding employees about what they are trying to accomplish.

In addition to staying focused on workplace development issues the TMG also reported having learned from CHPS on how to address such issues, concretely by seeing leadership as a way of exploring boundaries and manoeuvring in tensions, developing existing and new meeting places between layers and unit in the organisation, work systematically with documentation and evaluation, and use conceptual tools to stimulate reflection. Very similar assessments of “learning value” for the TMG from interacting with CHPS were also made in a two-day seminar I attended in DOAS in late 2004, suggesting that these perspectives had a sticking effect. At the time of the completion of the TMA though, it was most interesting to see how learning would manifest in subsequent work practice. This issue is addressed in the next chapter section.

8.2 Workplace development in DOAS in the aftermath of the TMA

It seems as if the team spirit and the will to share responsibility for anchoring purposeful interdisciplinary collaboration are becoming rooted in the organisation. It looks as if the “span” in the organisation has lessened, and that openness and accountability is prevailing. We are getting closer to a “learning organisation”, and the tensions between managers inside (in the administration) and outside (in the units), and between waiving and taking responsibility, are less inflamed. (...) What we have learned, is that organisation development in the form of participatory processes and empowerment is a continuous phenomenon, and that this is a prerequisite for flexibility, willingness to change, and ability to relate to reforms and restructuring. We sense that a strong culture can translate reforms in ways allowing us to maintain our soul so we don’t have to copy, but can think new and creatively in our own ways. This is also important for credibility of leadership. (The top-management group’s project report. My translation, quotation marks in original.)

When concluding on what they had learned during the period they collaborated with CHPS, the top-management group (TMG) certainly emphasised increased capacity to do more in the future: Team spirit, will to share, be open, be accountable, participate and change. They recognised organisation development and learning, and empowerment, as continuous phenomena. They wanted to “translate” emerging reforms, and they wanted to “anchor” interdisciplinary collaboration. They saw that the process and generalist competencies they had developed enabled them to accomplish more in the future, and as will become evident in this chapter section they did not wait around.

In chapter 3.1 it was established that data from the aftermath of the TMA are not as representative or extensive as data from the period the TMA was carried out. As time goes by it also becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain if changes in DOAS were or were not motivated by their experiences from collaborating with CHPS. Still, data do document important events and changes that became manifest in the formal organisation or in work practices in DOAS, in the period from 2001 to 2004-05. More important than pinpointing CHPS’ contribution is to establish if DOAS continued to emphasise employee empowerment, and if so with what consequences for employee health and organisation performance. Data allow tentative assessments of these issues, which will be carried out mainly in chapter 8.3. Below four events and changes are highlighted, ranging from a seminar to incremental

changes in DOAS' formal organisation. I attended the first two; one event and one planning process, and this gave me some firsthand experiences with occurrences in the first six months after the completion of the TMA. As described in chapter 3.1 I also attended a two-day seminar in DOAS in the fall of 2004, and met DOAS-employees in the first half of 2005.

A seminar on child care

DOAS held a seminar on child care just weeks after the completion of the TMA. Employees from all the four types of units (child care, maternal and school health services, day-care centres, youth relief measures) were invited to attend. The explicit intention with the seminar was threefold: 1) To inform participants about the (changed) practices of DOAS' unit for child care; 2) to underline the importance of continued efforts to strengthen collaboration between units in DOAS; 3) to educate the seminar participants in current political, academic and methodological trends in child care, by having prominent contributors giving keynote speeches. I attended the seminar as an observer.

From the outset it seemed clear that the prominent contributors would dominate the seminar, as they were allotted considerable time to present their views. Representing the political level was a Deputy Minister for Families and Adolescence in Norway; representing the academic level was a distinguished professor in "special needs education"; representing the methodological level was a leader of a specialist training institution at county level. They were all eloquent speakers, and combined "state of the art" summaries of trends in their respective fields of expertise with normative recommendations on what DOAS should give priority to. Taken together they provided a "surplus of expectations" (see chapter 1.3), i.e. it would be impossible for DOAS to follow up on all they recommended as "important" or "necessary".

The seminar was organised as a series of speeches. Dialog between the keynote speakers and the DOAS-employees was not to be expected, and it was certainly not to be expected that there would be open criticism of the speakers' perspectives or recommendations. What happened after the keynotes was therefore highly unusual, at least in the Norwegian

context. The Deputy Minister was told from DOAS-managers that “we don’t want any more money for projects we can’t make ample use of. We want to focus on our core activities.” The professor was told that “it may certainly be a good idea to make every effort to keep a child under child care in the community” (which was the ideal of the day), but “nevertheless sometimes one has to get the child out of its community to provide for its best interests”, and furthermore that whether one should do the one or the other were “decisions those professionals dealing with a specific case are best equipped to make.” The leader of the specialist training institution was told that “the course you have developed on child care is interesting to DOAS if, and only if, it doesn’t contradict DOAS’ emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration”.

The point here is of course not whether the keynotes’ recommendations were (politically, academically and methodologically) sound or not. The point was DOAS’ open “criticism”, in the sense of providing alternative perspectives and values. Given the framing of the seminar these statements could almost be seen as acts of defiance, and at the very least they were strong expressions of motivation for self-determination. The keynotes quite literally did not know how to respond, suggesting that they had not expected opposing views.

It was nearby to interpret the seminar as a sign of DOAS-employees increasing their control over own work practices in the most fundamental way: By sorting what expectations from outside stakeholders to follow up on when making their priorities. As described in chapter 2.1 and elsewhere in this thesis, employee empowerment can be seen as increased control over priorities, organisation and changes in daily work practices respectively. On the other hand, it is of course important not to overestimate the importance of a singular event. One swallow does not make a summer, but in this case (to stay with the proverb) the swallow did seem to portend a change of season.

The revised plan for the municipality's adolescent services

DOAS started a process of revising the municipality's plan for adolescent services in January 2001, just after the TMA was completed. Whereas the TMG had found it difficult to recruit employees to the TMA, they had no difficulties in recruiting to this planning process. On the contrary, more employees than it was practically possible to involve wanted to participate actively. I attended several of the meetings in the initial stage of the process, and could witness considerable enthusiasm and optimism. DOAS built on their experiences from "the budget process" in 1999 (see chapter 5.2), and the TMG developed a fairly elaborate procedure for the 2001 planning process (my translation):

1. The new municipality plan for adolescent services shall be multi-disciplinary and operative, inspired by all levels in the organisation. This ambition shall be realised by applying clear boundaries, extensive involvement, and continuous evaluations in existing and new meeting places.
2. The employees and their units are the most important resources in this work. We will have a democratic, participatory process and use dialog methodology.
3. The organisation for the planning process will consist of multi-disciplinary groups in which each participant will represent specialist competencies. Each such multi-disciplinary group will be chaired by a member of the top-management group. The top-management group will act as an executive board.
4. All participants in multi-disciplinary groups shall be committed to address the planning process at meeting places with other employees, and gather employees' experiences and viewpoints.
5. In addition to DOAS' overall objectives the workplace development issues that were identified as part of the TMA shall be emphasised (i.e. the "grey areas", see chapter 5.2).
6. The politically elected representatives in the municipality will be given ample opportunity to provide their suggestions during the process, by use of existing meeting places.
7. In order to secure that politicians, clients and employees have realistic expectations to quality and quality indicators we will use simple benchmarking techniques.

8. Surveys are to be used among clients and employees to cater for their interests in the planning process.
9. Applying a principal-agent approach to provision of services will be considered as part of the planning process.

This framework for the planning process is interesting for several reasons. For one, several of the lessons learned on organisation learning in the TMA were followed up on, like providing a clear and transparent structure for the entire process, have various levels of involvement and responsibility for various stakeholders, and combine concerns for specialist and generalist competencies. Furthermore, the emphasis on “continuous evaluations in existing and new meeting places” indicated that the action research approach to organisation learning would be continued. Perhaps just as interesting; several of the concepts used in the vocabulary on organisation learning (see chapter 2.3) were continued to be used, for instance boundaries, meeting places, involvement, and gathering experiences.

On the other hand, some “new” (compared with the budget process in 1999, see chapter 5.2) features were also included, concretely benchmarking, extensive use of surveys to measure expectations and quality, and a principal-agent approach (points 7-9 above). These concepts, or more generally ideas associated with “new public management”, had been included in the strategic plan for Sagene-Torshov for 1999-2001 that the Municipality Council decided upon at the end of 1998 (see chapter 4 and Bydelsutvalget Sagene-Torshov, 1998). DOAS quite reasonably decided to follow up on this overarching plan, but the TMG’s reason for including them in the planning process, as opposed to just implement them top-down, was interesting: In their view these concepts provided a constructive challenge. If implemented as technologies top-down there was a risk that they would either be irrelevant to or undermine ongoing workplace development initiatives in DOAS, for instance by directing attention exclusively towards measurable quality indicators. On the other hand, the concepts were clearly relevant for increasing awareness of “quality” in public services, and they offered sets of ideas on how to work systematically with improvements. The TMG wanted to involve (potentially all employees and other stakeholders) in a process of

translating the concepts into practice that made sense in DOAS, i.e. a process of deciding which elements to use and not to use respectively.

The same constructive intent was evident in the TMG's reflections on what would be challenging in the planning process. They identified several "dilemmas" (tensions) that would have to be resolved (my translation):

There are dilemmas concerning management of processes. During our preparation we have had to balance and decide on how clear the boundaries should be. We want to give the multi-disciplinary groups the opportunity to explore boundaries and open up for creative solutions. There is also tension between the process- and time aspects. Wide involvement is time-consuming and may be in conflict with swift realisation of objectives. There is also need for time and space in the process of anchoring decisions. (...) It is important to facilitate a process where exploration of boundaries provides real opportunities to influence decisions, but where the workplace development issues provide a line of demarcation. (There is also the need to) balance between stop doing things and initiating new practice. One has to pour something out of the pot in order to get room for something new. By organising the groups multi-disciplinary the dilemma and balancing generalist-specialist will emerge. The idea is that the specialists will make sure that specialist needs are catered for, (while the collaboration between specialists) will lead to prioritising thereby promoting understanding of the totality in the plan for adolescent services. Another dilemma that has to be balanced when working with the plan is catering for today's organisation for daily work while thinking idealistically about a future organisation.

Taken together the TMG identified at least five tensions requiring attention in the planning process, between strict and open boundaries; attention to process and attention to outcomes; stopping and starting work practices; specialist and generalist competencies; and attending to today's and future organisation of DOAS. These were all relevant tensions, but most important was TMG's emphasis on identifying such tensions so as to be able to address them constructively, i.e. an action research approach to organisation learning. The above excerpt from TMG's documentation of the planning process also shows that they had taken up concepts like anchoring, stop doing things, and specialist-generalist competencies from the vocabulary CHPS had suggested.

I did not attend the final stages of the process leading up to the revised plan for adolescent services, but during the six months I attended the process went as planned, and generated a

lot of enthusiasm among employees. The finalised plan is not included here, because I do not have data on how DOAS used the plan in their subsequent practices.

DOAS' collaboration with "Department of Special Needs Education"

In 2001 DOAS started collaborating with the "Department of Special Needs Education" (DSNE) at the University of Oslo, which received funding for a major research and development project in Sagene-Torshov municipality. This collaboration continued for more than four years, and was more extensive than the collaboration between DOAS and CHPS. It comprised three major components:

1. Empirical analysis of upbringing conditions for adolescents in the municipality.
2. Provision of continuing education for close to 150 employees.
3. Improving quality of practice by application of theory and research.

The three components were intended to reinforce each other, and they were found to have done so in a formative evaluation after three years (Faldet and Lassen, 2004). The collaboration between DOAS and DSNE shared several similarities with the collaboration between DOAS and CHPS, for instance objectives of organisation learning, empowerment, and collaborative learning through experience. There was, however, a difference in emphasis. Whereas CHPS had emphasised development of generalist competencies, DSNE emphasised development of specialist competencies, i.e. competencies particularly relevant to provision of adolescent services. As such there was a similarity in overall ideas on how workplace development can occur, but a difference in the work practices highlighted. DSNE developed four courses:

1. Counselling and communication skills (15 ECTS)
2. Systemic counselling and innovation (15 ECTS)
3. Mental health – counselling groups (not listed)
4. Local development work as competence building (20 ECTS)

Employees attended these courses individually, and used experiences from their daily work practices with clients to facilitate application of theory and empirical research. Each employee thus in effect created their own workplace development project (or “innovation project” as they were called), albeit with emphasis on sharing learning experiences. In addition, several employees and students from DSNE conducted research on various practices in DOAS, for instance related to adolescents’ deviant behaviour, to clients’ experiences of empowerment, and to multi-disciplinary approaches to child care.

Any assessment of DSNE’s contribution to DOAS is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis, apart from noting that DSNE’s approach was more extensive than CHPS’ approach by conducting more research projects, providing more courses in continuing education to more employees, and lasting considerably longer. What is relevant to this thesis though, is how DOAS approached such an extensive collaboration with a university. It was evident that the collaboration provided a significant opportunity for competence development, but also some risks. For instance, activities initiated by the DSNE could have unanticipated consequences for DOAS’ objectives and practices, similar to the risks associated with the tailor-made approach CHPS developed. The TMG’s solution was to make it mandatory for all employees attending DSNE’s courses to specify how their study projects would be beneficial to DOAS’ objectives. Furthermore, the TMG engaged in dialog on what DSNE’s employees and students should do research on, so as to increase likelihood of the research being relevant to DOAS. Consequently, the TMG engaged constructively in making the most of the collaboration with DSNE. It was evident from informal assessment by the TMG in 2004-05 that the collaboration with DSNE had contributed substantially to DOAS’ emphasis on workplace development issues. In that sense this collaboration strengthened DOAS’ ongoing efforts for organisation learning. This learning also enabled incremental changes in DOAS’ organisation, as will be explored in the following paragraphs.

Incremental changes in DOAS' organisation

In chapter 4 DOAS' formal organisation after its creation in 1998-99 was presented (see figure 4.2). At that time DOAS was a compromise between delegation of services to district levels (day-care centres and youth relief services) and integration of services (child care, maternal and school health services). This was a volatile construction, and from the outset the TMG contemplated what changes to make, and how to make them. As described in chapter 4 they decided to opt for incremental changes instead of a major formal reorganisation. As shown in chapter 8.1 they succeeded in making several such changes already during the period they collaborated with CHPS.

When I was talking with members of the top-management in DOAS in 2004-05 it became evident that a number of further changes had occurred. First of all, the district organising had been abandoned altogether. Instead DOAS was organised around the principle of integrated services. The two maternal and school health services had been merged to one unit, and the four youth relief measures units had also been merged to one unit. These mergers were agreed upon by employees, the labour unions, the TMG, and the top-administrative level in the municipality, and they had been implemented quickly and without drama.

Child care, maternal and school health services, and youth relief services were now organised in one unit respectively. The fourth type of unit – day-care centres – underwent a similar type of change. The 19 day-care units got four top-managers with responsibility for budgets and personnel in all day-care centres, i.e. the 19 units were comprised in four. The previous unit managers still held their positions, but now only had responsibility for daily work and workplace development practices, within economic and personnel boundaries determined by the four top-managers. The idea was to allow unit managers to focus on leadership issues in daily work and workplace development, by alleviating them from administrative chores. The four top-managers for day-care centres were recruited among the unit managers. With few exceptions all unit managers and other employees supposedly expressed satisfaction with the changes. In parallel, in the unit for maternal and school health services, the two previous positions as unit managers were divided into one

managerial position for budget and personnel, and one managerial position for daily work and workplace development practices. Similar divisions were also made in the unit for child care, and in the unit for youth relief measures. In 2005 all leaders for ongoing work practices were to highlight competence development for employees in their respective units. This was particularly relevant to day-care centres, which had a large proportion of employees with little formal education.

Taken together, by alleviating more than 20 managers from budget and personnel responsibilities, the TMG had made a huge effort for highlighting workplace development. They did so with the explicit intention of strengthening organisation learning in DOAS. The top-management group was also expanded, as it included the four top-managers for day-care centres. The TMG defined itself as a “strategic” group, only addressing issues that were relevant across units. In addition each top-manager was expected to engage in self-defined development issues, which were then to be discussed in the TMG and used to raise the quality of ongoing work practices. For instance, one manager worked extensively with clients’ legal rights, and another with interdisciplinary collaboration for provision of mental health services.

The TMG asserted that they had achieved “insane effects” because of the changes. There were relationships of mutual trust between employees, and it was still possible to make changes quickly and without much bureaucracy. There was also increased personnel mobility within DOAS, as employees (by own initiative) alternated between units. The TMG saw agreed upon values and strategies as the glue holding the various activities together.

A brief reflection prior to conclusions

When comparing what had occurred in the workplace development projects (WDPs) that were part of the tailor-made approach (TMA), with what occurred as a consequence of the TMG’s initiatives during and after the TMA, data suggests two distinctly different assessments: The first one has the WDPs as its point of departure. These projects proved to be inefficient in the first sub-process of the employee empowerment processes, between

enable and explore. The group compositions, the restricted supervision from CHPS and inadequate feedback from the TMG, as well as the scarcity of ideas and limited competence of employees in decision making, made these projects not very relevant to organisation performance or employee empowerment processes. Once the WDP-participants had carried out their projects though, the learning associated with how they had approached their mandates was encouraging. Still, there was nothing concrete to sustain. Conversely, the TMG seemed to be able to facilitate increased employee control over work practices using a straight-forward and easily understandable approach. They decided on procedures specifying which employees could increase their control over what, within a specified timeframe, and participated eagerly in these processes. They went from deciding on objectives (which provided boundaries for all employees) to deciding on how to organise, and – not least by means of the “innovation projects” initiated as part of the collaboration with the Department of Special Needs education – it was likely that daily work practices were changed too. The TMG was also able to sustain initiatives by changing the organisation.

These mixed experiences must have consequences for the conclusions that can be drawn from this research project. They have to separate between how a work organisation can initiate employee empowerment processes on the one hand, and how an outside agent can assist in such processes on the other. There is, however, one important issue to assess first. Did increased employee control over work practices in DOAS strengthen both employee health and organisation performance? The data are somewhat scarce on this issue, but it is possible to make a fairly comprehensive assessment. Such an assessment is carried out first in the next chapter section, followed by conclusions to the overall research issue of how employee empowerment can strengthen employee health and organisation performance concurrently.

8.3 Conclusions: Recommendations and dissuasions

When comparing the Department of Adolescent Services (DOAS) of 1999 with the one of 2004-05, it was evident that a number of changes had occurred. In 1999 DOAS-employees had limited knowledge of each other across layers and units, both at a personal and a professional level. They expressed little trust in top-management, and experienced change initiatives as (at best) of little relevance to their daily work practices. New workplace development initiatives were met with scepticism. The relationship between the top-management level and labour unions was strained. There were serious problems in some of the units, which at least in part could explain why DOAS had relatively high turnover and absenteeism rates. DOAS also had a challenging formal organisation, in effect facilitating decentralisation despite of an ambition to integrate services. Nevertheless, employees expressed commitment to DOAS' mission of providing high quality adolescent services, and they had considerable control over their daily work practices.

In 2004-05 there was extensive collaboration between layers and units in DOAS, especially on decision making processes concerning priorities and organisation in DOAS. Employees expressed trust in top-management, both at a personal level and in the procedures used to make decisions. The collaboration between top-management and unions was constructive, making it possible to implement incremental changes in DOAS' organisation quickly and swiftly. The formal organisation structure for decentralisation was abolished. The management structure was transformed, making workplace development the prime concern for the top-management group and most of the unit managers. Employees showed great interest in competence development, and initiated activities that could improve the quality of services as part of formal training. Turnover and absenteeism had been significantly reduced.

It was evident that not only "something" but many things had happened. The most likely explanation for all the changes in DOAS as an organisation was employee empowerment: DOAS-employees had collaborated on increasing their control over work practices. Of course the mere facts that they got to know each other, like each other, and develop mutual trust

could – in their own right and independently of what they collaborated on – be part of the explanation as to why they were so enthusiastic and expedient. Still, the precursor for these qualities (knowing, liking, trusting) was collaboration on work practices. The thrust at the organisation-wide level predominantly went from changed practices to amicable relationships, not the other way around. Conversely, in the WDP-groups – where they did not have the required authority to increase employee control over priorities and organisation – the quality of relationships had to be strengthened before they started collaborating on changing work practices (developing a “communicative sphere”, see chapter 7.3). There the thrust predominantly went from amicable relationships to attempts to change practice, but without the same success in increasing and sustaining employee empowerment. Taken together; collaborating specifically on increasing employee control seemed to be important for the changes that had occurred between 1999 and 2004-05.

Furthermore, when taking changes in the aftermath into account, model 1.1 on employee empowerment processes seems to be a fairly accurate description of what had occurred: As shown in chapter 6 employees did anticipate the whole process from enabling to sustaining as postulated in chapter 1.4. Employees (across layers, and either within or across units) had collaborated on deciding priorities in and organisation of DOAS, had then tried to change their work practices accordingly, and then made incremental changes to sustain and strengthen new work practices; in ongoing cycles. DOAS seemed to have accomplished what the TMG from the outset said they wanted (their vision of employee empowerment) by – to a larger or lesser degree – doing what CHPS had suggested. Growing mutual trust was “oiling” the process, making employees eagerly participating in workplace development. As shown in chapter 8.2 the top-management group (TMG) played a crucial role in these developments.

However, many of the initiatives that proved to be important especially to employee health and organisation performance in DOAS, took place outside the TMA and the collaboration with CHPS. Data are scarcer and of poorer quality on these outcomes than on activities covered by the TMA. As a consequence, the following discussion and conclusions are more tentative than ideally would have been the case. Still, at least several issues of importance to the overarching research issue presented in chapter 1.1 can be identified in data. This issue

was not confined to employee empowerment per se, but included the constructive question of how empowerment can be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance. As shown in chapter 1.2 such a combination of outcomes is just one of at least four possible combinations, and not a foregone conclusion.

Assumptions on what would make employee empowerment conducive to both employee health and organisation performance

Chapter 2 addressed four theoretical assumptions on what can increase likelihood of empowerment yielding beneficial outcomes for both employee health and organisation performance. These assumptions – in the order they will be addressed below – were on 1) how power would manifest (see chapter 2.1), 2) how health and performance could mutually reinforce each other (see chapter 2.4), 3) how organisation learning could increase capacity to produce favourable outcomes (see chapter 2.3), and 4) how facilitation by outside agents could contribute in employee empowerment processes (see chapter 2.2).

Concerning how power becomes manifest, in chapter 2.1 it was stated that the ambition with the TMA was to increase employees' *power to* act on boundaries so as to alter work practices in ways generating a win-win situation for major stakeholders (employees, clients, owners (politicians)), seeing the relationship between *agents* (employees) and *structure* (the work organisation) as dynamic and in flux (hence possible to change through a constructive organisation learning-action research approach), yielding *outcomes* manifested as changes in DOAS' priorities, organisation and daily work practices.

This highly condensed perspective on power needs some untangling. First of all, this is of course not an ultimate theory on power, but only an assumption of how power would manifest when employees collaborated on increasing control over work practices. Power would certainly manifest differently if for instance employees were in conflict. In DOAS collaboration became more prevalent than conflict, and so it is reasonable to examine how tenable the assumption was. What indeed happened was that the TMG used its authority (or "power over") to enable employees "power to act on boundaries", i.e. priorities and

organisation in DOAS. The TMG did so by implementing transparent procedures for participation and decision making, leading to clarification of employees' mandates. The TMG collaborated extensively across layers and units in DOAS, thereby continuously clarifying and guaranteeing the boundaries within which employees had control. Furthermore, the relationship between employees and their work organisation proved to be highly dynamic, and priorities, organisation and daily work practices were changed through incremental changes based in organisation learning. When the TMG did not engage in this way, like in the workplace development projects (WDPs) within the TMA, the outcome was markedly different. The WDPs remained "one-off" initiatives with little or no long-term impact on DOAS. The majority of assumptions on how power would manifest when employees collaborate on increasing control over work practices thus seem to be justified, but the critical issue is whether or not a win-win situation materialised. This is where the interplay between health and performance outcomes has to be assessed.

Concerning health specifically, in chapter 2.4 it was suggested that employees can sustain their resources if work practices are comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to them. With increased control over work practices employees can *make* their experiences of work coherent to themselves. As commented in chapter 2.4 this is a somewhat unusual approach to "sense of coherence", emphasising how the settings people interact in influence opportunities to experience coherence more than individuals' global orientation to life. With the approach taken here it is necessary to interpret consequences of what people *do*, and (collaborative) practice is typically more ambiguous than individual statements.

When examining the indicators Antonovsky (1987) identified on comprehensibility (see chapter 2.4) it was evident that DOAS-employees actively sought to be understood by and know their colleagues, participated in organisation change with the ambition to make it more predictable, and participated in clarifying ambiguities and generating solutions. On the other hand, concerning more individual-specific responses of having mixed-up or undesirable feelings, feeling certainty of future events, and estimation of events, there is not much data. As noted in chapter 8.2 there was a "positive atmosphere" in the aftermath of the TMA, but individual variation in emotional responses were not recorded. Still, when data are taken together a tentative yet reasonable assumption is that a majority of employees

experienced work to have become more comprehensible as a consequence of having increased control.

When examining the indicators Antonovsky's (1987) identified on manageability (see chapter 2.4) it was evident that employees had become more able to get things done in cooperation with others, had more trust in each other, and saw the procedures the TMG initiated as fair. The other indicators are less relevant in this context (finding solutions to painful things in life, how one reacts to unpleasant events, having consistency in good feelings, having people one can count on in the future, not feeling like a loser, expecting success in overcoming difficulties in important aspects of life, and being able to keep feelings under control), but here Hanson's (2004) suggestions for indicators (see chapter 2.4) are useful. Employees in DOAS got better access to various resources, had a clearer organisation and guidelines for their work practices, and had better opportunities to influence work pace, work place, and decision-making. On the other hand, how professional, social and communicative competence, physical and mental stamina, breaks, and ability to distance oneself from a situation had been influenced by increased employee control, was less clear. Still, similar to comprehensibility a tentative yet reasonable assumption was that work had become more manageable to a majority of DOAS' employees.

Antonovsky's (1987) indicators on meaningfulness (experiencing caring, interest, fascination, purpose, pleasure, satisfaction and meaning in one's daily activities, see chapter 2.4) are somewhat wide, but again Hanson's (2004) suggestions are useful. He sees meaningfulness as depending on motivation generated for instance by visions, objectives, salary and fringe benefits, as well as values related to ethics, moral, and fair treatment. He also includes positive experiences from relationships with colleagues and managers, good work environment, humour, variation, satisfying activities, and sense of self. In DOAS it could certainly be observed that visions, objectives, fairness, positive experiences with colleagues and managers, and humour became more prevalent, and the motivational aspect of meaningfulness was also evident in employees' willingness to participate in workplace development processes outside their daily work practices. So, tenably but reasonably, it can be assumed that work also had become more meaningful to a majority of DOAS' employees.

When connecting various data, employees seemed to demonstrate considerable ability to use and develop resources sustainably, and generate coherence in their work practices, i.e. cater for their own health. This was evident in the aftermath of the TMA, characterised by an “energised atmosphere” that spurred a lot of workplace development initiatives throughout DOAS. The fact that turnover and absenteeism rates dropped indicated that they had not fallen into a “honey trap” (see table 1.1) of using more energy than they could preserve. Ability to cater for own health was also evident from the outset, in how employees averted top-down initiatives they did not concur with (see chapter 6.1), and even more so in the workplace development projects (WDPs). In the WDPs employees in effect transformed a challenging situation into work practices that were comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to them. However, they did not do this in ways that improved organisation performance. As described in chapters 6 and 7 they ended up doing project activities that were contrary to DOAS’ objectives and what they said they wanted. The outcome was more in line with “workers collective” than “sustainable productivity” as depicted in table 1.1.

There were also other data making it questionable if increased employee control in fact improved organisation performance. For instance, DOAS did not involve clients and politicians in their decision making processes, thereby making it unclear whether their decisions were in the best interests of other stakeholders. As shown in the seminar just after the TMA finished DOAS said no to more funding, and no to competence development that was deviating from what they had decided to prioritise. There were also some employees that had to leave their positions because they did not concur with the changes the TMG initiated. DOAS thus reduced potential for criticism and alternative perspectives, which often are vital for improving performance. In the relationship between health and performance it was health that seemed to be prevailing as a consequence of employee empowerment.

This does not mean that organisation performance was diminished as a consequence of increased employee control over work practices. The data do not justify such an assertion. Counter-balancing the problematic aspects of reducing alternative perspectives were several features: Employees were committed to DOAS’ mission of improving services to clients. The procedures the TMG developed were centred on this mission. In addition surveys of client satisfaction became more frequently used, and benchmarking systems for monitoring

quality was also introduced. As such the “indirect” participation of clients and owners was catered for.

There was also an additional factor that could be expected to improve organisation performance, and that was related to a third assumption addressed in chapter 2 on what would make employee empowerment conducive to both employee health and organisation performance, namely organisation learning. Centre for Health Promotion in Settings (CHPS) assumed that securing time and meeting places for workplace development issues, would enable employees to make incremental changes based on learning from trial and error. As described in chapter 2.3 CHPS also introduced a vocabulary for activities associated with prioritising, organising and conducting changes in daily work practices.

In the last stages of WDP-groups’ work processes they all demonstrated increased capacity to reflect critically on own assumptions and experiences (see chapter 7.2). Particularly concerning client participation the groups reported that they observed discrepancies between own ideals and practice. They also learned more about how organisation change can come about, and about documenting and analysing own practices. They had learned to know and trust each other, and saw that they could learn more from each other on how to do a better job (improve organisation performance). The TMA had stimulated an interest for organisation learning and workplace development, and capacity for critique and reflexivity in relation to own work practices had increased. In short, they had increased both capacity and motivation for engaging in workplace development issues. Data also suggests that they had to constitute a “communicative sphere” (see chapter 7.3) before they could seriously engage in developing work practice together, and furthermore that actual practice (not just planning) was crucial for the learning processes.

Considering what proved to be important for the learning processes, it is not reasonable to conclude that the WDP-groups actively sought to cater for own health at expense of organisation performance. It was more a case of “doing something” that made sense to them when they had been delegated authority they did not know how to make best use of. In addition, the scarce relevance of the WDPs for organisation performance could also be

attributed to the TMA (artificial groups, unclear mandates, complicated assignment) and the TMG (limited interaction between employees and managers).

It could have been possible to gather more data on how increased employee control influenced organisation performance in DOAS, for instance surveys of client satisfaction, data on numbers and types of services provided, data from benchmarking, etcetera in the aftermath. Although useful, such data would not have given definitive answers to *how* (process data) health and performance can be catered for simultaneously in work practice, only to what extent DOAS succeeded in this. The TMG did however see increased employee control as a means for improving organisation performance. As one of the top-managers explained in a conversation with CHPS at the end of 2000:

- The leader much more has to specify the boundaries and determine the framework. Think about a framework, and then in a way have people come up with solutions. And then you have to take the solutions they come up with seriously. (...) And I believe that is part of the tidying up of meeting places. I believe that providing frames and in a way take a stand on what is important. What is it we need to reach various objectives? Boundaries and objectives are what we should be specific on, and then we can gather what they give us, and send it back. And then I believe change will go incredibly much faster than if we come forward with our suggestions. We must have some thoughts about it, but it is the boundaries. And that is what I experience that people are really calling for, you know, give us clear boundaries and we will do it, and I certainly believe they will.

Being specific on objectives can certainly be conducive to organisation performance, but this is in itself no guarantee that objectives are optimal to other stakeholders like for instance clients. Although it is not possible to assert that both employee health and organisation performance was strengthened as a consequence of employee empowerment processes in the aftermath of the TMA, the data do however support the assumption CHPS started out with. The interplay between health and performance is dynamic, and continuous investigation of how these dimensions in work practice interact is to be recommended. Employee empowerment in the meaning used in this thesis allows employees to increase stability, but an accompanying risk is that of reducing flexibility needed to cater adequately for other stakeholders' interests.

Experiences with facilitation

The fourth assumption in chapter 2 on how employee empowerment could be made conducive to both employee health and organisation performance, was that facilitation by outside agents could make a valuable contribution. It is useful to separate analytically here between the tailor-made approach (TMA) as a framework for facilitation on the one hand, and on the other hand how CHPS-employees practiced facilitation within the framework. The TMA-framework and the rationale for it were presented in chapter 5, whereas various facilitation frames were presented in chapter 2.2.

Concerning the TMA-framework it is possible to draw several fairly univocal conclusions. The ambition was that the TMA would be a framework for supporting organisation learning, which in turn would initiate employee empowerment processes leading to sustained employee health and organisation performance. On the positive side, the overall idea in the TMA of combining workplace development and generalist competencies was clearly relevant. Employees had limited competence in and experience of using the work organisation to accomplish changes in their work practices. It was therefore difficult for them to accomplish changes that required extensive collaboration, and difficult for them to learn from each others' practices. The workplace development groups (WDPs) also showed that the relationship between intentions and practice is challenging, and this warranted an approach combining workplace development and training in generalist competences like decision making, interdisciplinary collaboration, organisation learning, and project work. Furthermore, the gatherings in the TMA did function as meeting places between employees, and the combination of lectures and group work proved to be useful for linking education and work. Data also support that the tool-box perspective was relevant. Especially, but by no means only, the TMG picked up a number of perspectives and approaches, and used the phrases in the organisation learning vocabulary they found to be useful. Developing abilities to choose between and use tools depending on what is sought accomplished in a specific situation, proved to be a form of "generalist" competence in its own right, thereby adding to the TMA-ambition of stimulating reflexivity among employees.

Several elements in the TMA-framework thus proved relevant to strengthen organisation learning, and thereby increase control over work practices, with reflexivity increasing likelihood of realising outcomes conducive to health and performance. On the other hand, equally conclusive, there were several elements in the framework that were counter-productive: The recruitment process was clearly not relevant to the ambition of developing services in the “grey areas” (complex client needs that no unit could cater for on their own). Firstly, a major problem was that many of the participants did not have the formal authority to change DOAS’ practices. In addition the idea of constituting new groups did not prove to be a success. Employees used a considerable amount of time just to get to know each other and understand what they could do in collaboration. Secondly, probably much as a consequence of the confusion on what they could do together, the top-management group (TMG) found it difficult to provide feedback. This made the relationship not only between the TMG and the WDPs, but also the relationship between the TMG and CHPS, tense. Thirdly, the rather complicated requirements the WDP-groups had to adhere to when documenting their experiences (see Appendix 2), made many participants use more energy on “being students taking a course” than “being employees conducting workplace development projects”. The fact that WDP-group members were mutually dependant of each other to take exams (write project reports meeting the requirements) strengthened this tendency.

When examining the experiences during and after the TMA, a nearby conclusion is that the TMA-framework as practiced was detrimental to organisation performance in the short run (workplace development projects), yet conducive to organisation performance in the long run (strengthening generalist competencies, facilitating collaboration across layers and units in DOAS, and strengthening capacity for investigating the relationships between intentions and practice). To CHPS’ continued practice with tailor-made approaches it was highly useful that the negative elements were easy to correct. CHPS has in the years following the TMA in DOAS developed tailor-made approaches that 1) address existing groups of employees with authority to decide on the workplace development issues they engage in, 2) advocated participation of managers in such groups, and 3) changed the format of documentation from (more or less) traditional project reports to the use of forms structured on the principles of

action learning, in which employees quickly (and repeatedly) document what they have done, what they have learned from the experience, and what they as a consequence plan to do in the future (Tiller, 1999). CHPS has also abolished the idea of making exams mandatory, instead making it an individual choice. This has made it easier for CHPS to secure the integrity of educational programs, and easier for employees to stay focused on workplace development issues. It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to assess experiences with such changes in the TMA-framework, but it can be noted that they are generally positive, and have not been reversed.

Concerning how CHPS practiced facilitation within the TMA-framework, it has been commented earlier (chapters 6 and 7) that CHPS-employees halfway through the TMA decided to act more as “experts” than as “assistants” (see chapter 2.2). As documented in chapter 7 DOAS-participants appreciated this change, and wanted access to CHPS’ expertise in carrying out and documenting project activities. In retrospect CHPS saw that acting more as experts than assistants also would have been favourable in the initial decision making process, but DOAS-employees provided a highly useful broadening of this perspective, based on their experiences with CHPS’ facilitation.

When DOAS-employees in the aftermath of the TMA commented on when CHPS’ facilitation was most proficient, they did not use concepts such as expert, assistant or advocate. Instead they asserted that CHPS-employees were “best” when acting as “critical companions”. To them a critical companion was someone asking critical questions with a constructive purpose, being loyal towards the values and objectives they had decided to pursue. The key was a facilitator’s “ability to ask obnoxious questions in a genuinely pleasant manner”, as one of the DOAS-employees put it. This assessment of course strengthened CHPS’ ideas on desirability of not sticking to a pre-defined facilitation role, but to apply various frames depending on how a situation is defined. Although CHPS’ expertise was probably especially relevant in this case because employees were acquiring new skills, it was in a sense uplifting that DOAS-employees did not see technical expertise as equivalent to proficient facilitation practice. A “critical companion” uses own competence to ask relevant questions, and such questions helped DOAS-employees clarify what they wanted to accomplish and how to do it. Such an approach to facilitation is compatible with emphasis on self-determination in

empowerment processes, and the term “critical companion” has entered CHPS’ vocabulary on facilitation. The concept does not necessitate a reworking of the facilitation frames depicted in chapter 2.2, but helps clarify on what basis facilitators should switch between frames.

Taken together the data provide information on how the TMA-framework could be improved, and how facilitation practices can become more proficient. There is, however, another phenomenon that also deserves serious attention. This is the somewhat paradoxical effect of poor facilitation practices strengthening employee empowerment processes. CHPS’ poor advice on recruitment, and confusion on the feedback from the top-management group (TMG) to workplace development groups, created frustrations that motivated the TMG to clarify what they wanted to accomplish, and act accordingly. The same phenomenon of unintended frustration yielding clarification and new practice could be observed in the two WDP-groups that came closest to realising their mandates. These developments merit two sets of conclusions; one on how employee empowerment can be facilitated by the work organisation on its own, and one on how employee empowerment can be facilitated in collaboration with an outside agent.

Conclusions: Recommendations and dissuasions on how to facilitate employee empowerment processes conducive to both employee health and organisation performance

The collaboration between DOAS and CHPS turned out to be a good illustration of one of the core principles in action research, namely “we (outside agents) suggest, you (people residing within the setting) decide” (see chapter 2.3). A dual emphasis on what could be learned from deciding, and what could be learned from suggesting, is therefore reasonable. Furthermore, it is reasonable to use the landscape metaphor presented in chapter 3.2 when concluding what could be learned from the research documented here, both practically and theoretically. In chapter 3.2 it was argued that action research can generate knowledge about social processes, and that such knowledge can be more or less relevant depending on the characteristics of a setting (or “landscape”). By engaging in action research participants

can learn more about the landscape (“topography”) by trying to alter social practices (“hiking towards a destination”). As such, it is the hiking (altering social practices) that generates knowledge about the topography of the landscape (the work organisation). Articulating experiences from such endeavours is – as argued in chapter 1.5 – articulating theoretical insight on what will be proficient or prudent practice.

The direct relevance of this research to employee empowerment processes in other work organisations depends on the characteristics of such organisations. Probably more important than whether the work organisation is in the public, private or voluntary sectors are the following characteristics:

- The work organisation is fairly large and departmentalised, with production predominantly occurring at unit level, yet employees on occasion have to transcend that level to realise objectives.
- Employees have to take on more responsibility for juggling flexibility and stability in production.
- Top-management and shop-floor levels are predominantly in agreement on what the mission of the work organisation is.
- There is interest in how productivity and health are intertwined dimensions in work practices.

Given such similarities the following two sets of 10 recommendations and dissuasions, on facilitation of employee empowerment processes for the anticipated benefit of both employee health and organisation performance, should be relevant; here first from a management perspective and then secondly from an outside facilitator perspective:

From a management perspective:

1. Develop objectives (priorities) together with employees using a transparent procedure describing who will participate on what, when, and with what

consequences within specified deadlines. Determine within which boundaries (mandates) the hiking will take place.

2. Stick with the objectives for a predetermined period of time, but be flexible and involve employees in how objectives are sought realised organisationally and in daily work practices.
3. Allow employees ample time to get to know each other and the terrain they are in before making important decisions.
4. Prepare to lead the way on issues requiring generalist competencies (decision making, organisation learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, project work). Your participation in the hiking party is paramount.
5. Make sure to set up camp at regular intervals, enabling employees to share their experiences with hiking. Assist employees who find it difficult to “find the time” to stay in camp.
6. Use unexpected occurrences (and frustrations) as opportunities to clarify the course to be taken.
7. Avoid delegation of tasks if they are not accompanied by adequate resources and decision making authority.
8. Be aware of how other hikers’ (owners’, clients’) interests are affected, and if possible involve them in decision making processes.
9. Be aware of how employees with deviating ideas and interests are treated.
10. Be aware of drifting from objectives: Enjoyment with hiking is not the same as progress towards an agreed upon destination.

From an outside facilitator perspective:

1. Use time on understanding where the employees want to go, and stay committed to the destination they decide on even if it becomes unpleasant or difficult (“critical companion”).
2. Interact with groups of employees that have to relate to each other on a regular basis. If possible avoid ad hoc groups.

3. Prepare for various situations in which various competencies and levels of engagement are required on your part (facilitation frames). Training and supervising are likely to be important activities. Mistakes are bound to happen, but generally not to be feared if used as inspiration to clarify what course to take.
4. Encourage employees to interact with other hiking parties (colleagues) and with inhabitants (owners, clients).
5. Carry a large tool-box (perspectives, approaches) and encourage employees to try out various tools depending on the terrain.
6. Stimulate repeated and systematic cycles of reflection on plans, experiences and evaluations of hiking experiences. This can typically be accomplished at camp sites (meeting places).
7. Engage in how employees develop the solutions they need to go on, not in the solutions themselves. (Make an exception for solutions you find dangerous.)
8. Encourage ways of documenting experiences that do not halt or divert the employees (consider format of documentation, and (if relevant) make exams an individual choice).
9. Do not overestimate employees' competencies in utilising the organisation's resources (generalist competencies).
10. Do not underestimate employees' willingness to critically investigate own practices.

Despite the inevitability of such recommendations and dissuasions looking somewhat superficial and banal, they are thoroughly consistent with the approach to action research taken in this thesis: Articulation of theory on how to change social practices (hence process competence) based on experiences with such practices; in this case the relationship between employee empowerment on the one hand and employee health and organisation performance on the other. The above lists serve a double purpose, inasmuch as they are both summaries of the practice-oriented outcomes of the research documented in this thesis, and a set of guidelines inviting further empirical investigation. They can inspire practice but do not entail detailed prescriptions that can be implemented technically. As such they do not provide fixed itineraries, but more guidelines for how to make progress in the direction of agreed upon destinations. They can also be refined and expanded both

within specific types of “landscapes” (work organisations; here for instance public service organisations), and in other landscapes (types of work organisations), thereby allowing cumulative generation of knowledge. As such they are theoretical much in the same way as ideal-types (see chapter 2.2), suggesting what will typically characterise a social phenomenon, but also a suggestion inviting further empirical investigation.

In essence the guidelines are on how employees through collaboration can transform the stress they experience when having to juggle flexibility and stability, into work practices that are comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to them, while concurrently developing and using their resources productively in the best interests of clients, owners and themselves. Conceptually speaking this is a settings approach to health promotion, and as the setting in this case is a workplace: A settings approach to workplace health promotion, pointing to a genuinely interdisciplinary field of knowledge where contributors from what in this thesis loosely has been termed health promotion and human resources should interact. This settings approach highlights how employees themselves can generate the solutions they need to strengthen health and performance. It can be developed from within a work organisation on its own, or in collaboration with (for instance) academic training institutions. It requires some level of understanding of what here has been referred to as “generalist” competencies, but mostly it requires courage to collaboratively investigate the relationships between intentions and practice when trying to alter social practices. Many contemporary work organisations in effect ask employees to be courageous in this way, and being it collaboratively may be part of an answer to the tantalising issue of how we can get both health and productivity from work.

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Appendix 1: Curriculum for “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice” (15 ECTS)

General information

Public service organisations face major challenges concerning integration of services for improving health and living conditions. Many of these challenges can be located at the interface between these organisations and their environments, herein included both “upwards” in relation to National government and “outwards” in relation to clients. The public service organisations and their employees are under pressure to cater for concerns and interests that often appear to be contradictory. At the same time these organisations are characterised by specialisation of tasks, creating barriers for coordinated practice for health and living conditions. It is necessary to see contributions from different professions, sectors and unit in conjunction, while simultaneously involving clients purposefully. A promising strategy is to empower employees and supplement specialist with generalist competencies. Interdisciplinary areas of competence, common meeting places for reflection, and long term focus on workplace development issues centred on concrete, practical challenges are central concerns in this context. Focus on own employees and organising will also strengthen public service organisations’ efforts to anchor new demands and new competencies in ongoing work practices and policies.

Vestfold University College has considerable experience with continuing education highlighting competence development and change processes. With practical experience from organisation development and health promotion as points of departure, combined with experience from previous courses in interdisciplinary collaboration, parental guiding, project management, prevention of substance abuse and so on, we can now offer a 15 ECTS course in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”. The course is first to be offered on commission and executed by the Centre for Health Promotion in Settings at Vestfold University College. Local adjustments to the commissioning organisation are catered for by working methods and organisation of the course.

Target group

The target group for this course is in the widest sense employees in public service organisations, for instance in municipalities, and persons working directly or indirectly with workplace development issues related to improvement of health and living conditions. It is not relevant to individual students, but it is flexible enough to be commissioned by other municipalities.

Objectives

The course's main objective is to strengthen competencies in interdisciplinary collaboration in public services, so as to strengthen the efforts to integrate and improve services for health and living conditions. The course shall contribute to reflection on the participants' own ongoing workplace development issues, and contribute to new insight being anchored in practice and policies. The course shall have an overarching focus on communication in organisations, and on strategies for solution-focus and empowerment. This includes:

- Enhancing participants' understanding of public service organisations, and the opportunities and boundaries such organisations provide
- Enhancing participants' understanding of approaches to workplace development
- Enhancing participants' competencies in strengthening relations to colleagues and clients
- Enhancing participants' knowledge of strategies in, and approaches to, client participation
- Enhancing participants' understanding of multi-cultural issues, and capacity for ethical reflexivity in working for mutual understanding

Content

The course is divided into five components, which share two commonalities. The first commonality is that they all – in a wide sense – concern communication within the organisation and in relation to clients. The second commonality is that they are all compatible with a resource and solution-focus on challenges public service organisations encounter.

1. Understanding of organisations
2. Workplace development
3. Guidance
4. Client participation
5. Multi-cultural issues

1. Understanding of organisations

Employees in public service organisations face paradoxical and partially contradictory demands and expectations from government. They are expected to manage by objectives in order to secure efficient use of resources in parallel with catering for qualitative dimensions and clients' self-defined interests. Employees therefore have to learn how to combine different approaches to organising practice and communication, and they need to understand the opportunities that exist within the organisation's boundaries.

Subjects:

- Collaboration across disciplines, units and sectors
- Organising communication
- Solution-focused organisation development
- Anchoring in practice and policy
- Practical know-how of own work organisation

2. Workplace development

Workplace development, seen as development of new solutions and approaches in ongoing practice, has become an important concern to public service organisations because of expectations of continuous change (flexibility) and improvement of practice. As a general rule workplace development requires collaboration across disciplines, units or sectors. The need for competence development across disciplines to enable collaboration is often under-communicated, both in relation to planning, practice and evaluation.

Subjects:

- Methodologies for assessment and evaluation
- Surveys of clients
- Documentation
- Group processes
- Presentation techniques

3. Guidance

Knowledge of and skills in guidance is essential in public service practices, both internally in the organisation and externally with clients. Guidance has both an academic and a personal dimension, and it is important to cater for both dimensions. Equity, good relations and mutual recognition are important elements.

Subjects:

- Guidance as support, liberation and empowerment
- Identification of own point of view
- The good conversation
- Guidance between colleagues
- Parental guidance

4. Client participation

Client participation is a concept covering multiple dimensions, and can be seen as a right, as a moral prerogative, and as a set of approaches to involve those affected by decision making processes. A precondition for ethically justifiable client participation orchestrated by public service organisations, is being explicit on opportunities and limitations in participating. It is therefore necessary to address different dimensions in client participation in connection.

Subjects:

- Strategies in health promotion

- Empowerment
- Conference methodology
- Developing meeting places
- Networking

5. Multi-cultural issues

Cultural pluralism is a hallmark of today's society. Communication and understanding is a foundation for public services. At the same time communication is the most important "tool". Communicative skills and ethical reflection is necessary to reach mutual understanding in encounters with colleagues and clients from other cultures.

Subjects:

- Multi-culture as resource
- Ethnicity
- Ethics
- Pedagogic approach to migration

Working methods and organisation

The course is organised around two main working methods; gatherings and workplace development projects. The gatherings are dispersed over the year, and in order to strengthen process learning each gathering is allotted one full day. In the gatherings there will be a combination between lectures and participation in dialog and exercises. Stimulating reflection on the competence participants develop through workplace development projects is emphasised.

Workplace development projects as a working method presupposes that participants are divided into groups prior to the first gathering, and that they address important challenges related to collaboration. These groups are supervised in planning and carrying out concrete project activities. The working methods include documentation, writing report, and

presentation technique. The process aspect of the workplace development projects is catered for by supervision and emphasis on group process.

Admittance

Students with qualifications admitting them to higher education will, based on passed exams, be credited with 15 ECTS. Students without such qualifications will be awarded a diploma.

Evaluation

Each workplace development project group is to write a report within 5.000 words +/- 10% documenting own project activities. A set of requirements to the project report will be developed.

Grades: Passed/ Failed

Appendix 2: Requirements for project reports in “Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice”

General information on production of texts

Developing a project report serves several purposes, among them 1) the workplace development project groups are to document their own practices on workplace development issues with the intended purpose of sustaining good practice, 2) documenting provides direction and continuity in the workplace development project, thereby making it an important pedagogical vehicle for learning, and 3) the project report is the exam assignment, which is to be evaluated as passed or failed.

A key concern in the course is for every group to produce texts of various types to promote own learning. A common denominator for these texts is *documentation* of both processes and outcomes in workplace development. Even short and fragmented text will be of assistance, not least to see connections in between various aspects of the work process. Such texts have in common that the level of ambition concerning scholarly solidity and cleverness should be *low*. It is the discussions and activities stimulated by the texts that are essential, in addition to documentation of activities and insight developed over time. It is therefore *only* the project report that has requirements that have to be met. For the other texts the most important requirements are relevance and purpose for the groups' work practices. The following text genres are particularly relevant, of which the project report is only one of several.

1. Logs (from gatherings, supervision and other activities)
2. Drafts (typically to generate discussion in the group)
3. Summaries (of group meetings, supervision, books and other texts, experiences with trying out new work practices, and so on)
4. Worksheets (typically to address a subject or issue with relevance to a research question)
5. Notes for supervision (in agreement with supervisors)
6. The project report (following requirements as specified below)

Requirements for the project report

Each group shall develop a research issue in the form of a question the group does not know the answer to, but wants to examine (see a detailed description in the book by Olsen and Pedersen). The research issue is to be related to a) one or more of the workplace development issues, b) one or more of the Department of Adolescents overall objectives, c) daily work practices, d) improvement of services to clients. The research issue determines what it is relevant to document. In principle all parts of the project report shall be relevant to explore the research issue. It is reasonable that the group uses some time at first to develop a research issue, and that this issue is reflected in the group's project plan. Such a plan is a tool, which it is reasonable to reassess fairly regularly.

The project report is to describe exploration of new practice. Such exploration is to be understood as attempts to "answer" the research issue, and it is necessary to specify the target group for the exploration. It is reasonable to describe different approaches (for instance solution focus or interdisciplinary collaboration) that have been used, herein included scope and effects of activities the group has initiated.

The project report is to describe the group's efforts to explore boundaries concerning competence, values, organisation, and contradictory expectations. This approach has at least two important dimensions, being 1) managing difference between group members' understanding of the boundaries, and 2) experiences gathered from trying out new practice. It is reasonable to describe experiences within both these dimensions. It is also relevant to describe how the group members' understanding of boundaries has developed over time, and to describe experiences with attempts to make the group (as a group) competent in workplace development.

The project report shall to a certain degree describe the group's reasons for decisions made when having to choose. Typical ways of choosing are 1) attempt to unite "the best of two worlds", or b) put emphasis on one concern over others depending on context (practical rationale), or c) choose to see one concern as superior (normative rationale).

The project report shall document reflections on own learning as a consequence of the group work. Typical dimensions in that respect is experiences with 1) own organising (production of texts, leadership in meetings, clarification of conflicting expectations, worksheets, division of tasks, and so on), 2) communication (active listening, methods to structure communication, involvement/ participation, managing differences, and so on), and 3) evaluation of own work practices (underway and at the end, both academic and process experiences).

The project report shall include the group's recommendations on sustaining and/ or dissemination, and/ or anchoring of experiences it is desirable to build on, herein experiences of relevance to both clients and colleagues. It is reasonable to highlight how such sustaining/ dissemination/ anchoring can occur, particularly by describing the processes that initiated the experiences. Conversely it is reasonable to include descriptions of "failed" experiences, and deliberations on learning thereof.

All references included in the project report are to be included in a list of references.

Word count: 5.000 words +/- 10% (app. 15 pages, 1.5 spacing)

Doctoral Theses at The Faculty of Psychology,
University of Bergen

1980	Allen, H.M., Dr. philos.	Parent-offspring interactions in willow grouse (<i>Lagopus L. Lagopus</i>).
1981	Myhrer, T., Dr. philos.	Behavioral Studies after selective disruption of hippocampal inputs in albino rats.
1982	Svebak, S., Dr. philos.	The significance of motivation for task-induced tonic physiological changes.
1983	Myhre, G., Dr. philos.	The Biopsychology of behavior in captive Willow ptarmigan.
	Eide, R., Dr. philos.	PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND INDICES OF HEALTH RISKS. The relationship of psychosocial conditions to subjective complaints, arterial blood pressure, serum cholesterol, serum triglycerides and urinary catecholamines in middle aged populations in Western Norway.
	Værnes, R.J., Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological effects of diving.
1984	Kolstad, A., Dr. philos.	Til diskusjonen om sammenhengen mellom sosiale forhold og psykiske strukturer. En epidemiologisk undersøkelse blant barn og unge.
	Løberg, T., Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological assessment in alcohol dependence.
1985	Hellesnes, T., Dr. philos.	Læring og problemløsning. En studie av den perseptuelle analysens betydning for verbal læring.
	Håland, W., Dr. philos.	Psykoterapi: relasjon, utviklingsprosess og effekt.
1986	Hagtvet, K.A., Dr. philos.	The construct of test anxiety: Conceptual and methodological issues.
	Jellestad, F.K., Dr. philos.	Effects of neuron specific amygdala lesions on fear-motivated behavior in rats.
1987	Aarø, L.E., Dr. philos.	Health behaviour and socioeconomic Status. A survey among the adult population in Norway.
	Underlid, K., Dr. philos.	Arbeidsløse i psykososialt perspektiv.
	Laberg, J.C., Dr. philos.	Expectancy and classical conditioning in alcoholics' craving.
	Vollmer, F.C., Dr. philos.	Essays on explanation in psychology.
	Ellertsen, B., Dr. philos.	Migraine and tension headache: Psychophysiology, personality and therapy.
1988	Kaufmann, A., Dr. philos.	Antisocial atferd hos ungdom. En studie av psykologiske determinanter.

	Mykletun, R.J., Dr. philos.	Teacher stress: personality, work-load and health.
	Havik, O.E., Dr. philos.	After the myocardial infarction: A medical and psychological study with special emphasis on perceived illness.
1989	Bråten, S., Dr. philos.	Menneskedyaden. En teoretisk tese om sinnets dialogiske natur med informasjons- og utviklingspsykologiske implikasjoner sammenholdt med utvalgte spedbarnsstudier.
	Wold, B., Dr. psychol.	Lifestyles and physical activity. A theoretical and empirical analysis of socialization among children and adolescents.
1990	Flaten, M.A., Dr. psychol.	The role of habituation and learning in reflex modification.
1991	Alsaker, F.D., Dr. philos.	Global negative self-evaluations in early adolescence.
	Kraft, P., Dr. philos.	AIDS prevention in Norway. Empirical studies on diffusion of knowledge, public opinion, and sexual behaviour.
	Endresen, I.M., Dr. philos.	Psychoimmunological stress markers in working life.
	Faleide, A.O., Dr. philos.	Asthma and allergy in childhood. Psychosocial and psychotherapeutic problems.
1992	Dalen, K., Dr. philos.	Hemispheric asymmetry and the Dual-Task Paradigm: An experimental approach.
	Bø, I.B., Dr. philos.	Ungdoms sosiale økologi. En undersøkelse av 14-16 åringers sosiale nettverk.
	Nivison, M.E., Dr. philos.	The relationship between noise as an experimental and environmental stressor, physiological changes and psychological factors.
	Torgersen, A.M., Dr. philos.	Genetic and environmental influence on temperamental behaviour. A longitudinal study of twins from infancy to adolescence.
1993	Larsen, S., Dr. philos.	Cultural background and problem drinking.
	Nordhus, I.H., Dr. philos.	Family caregiving. A community psychological study with special emphasis on clinical interventions.
	Thuen, F., Dr. psychol.	Accident-related behaviour among children and young adolescents: Prediction and prevention.
	Solheim, R., Dr. philos.	Spesifikke lærevansker. Diskrepanskriteriet anvendt i seleksjonsmetodikk.
	Johnsen, B.H., Dr. psychol.	Brain asymmetry and facial emotional expressions: Conditioning experiments.
1994	Tønnessen, F.E., Dr. philos.	The etiology of Dyslexia.
	Kvale, G., Dr. psychol.	Psychological factors in anticipatory nausea and vomiting in cancer chemotherapy.

- Asbjørnsen, A.E., Dr. psychol. Structural and dynamic factors in dichotic listening: An interactional model.
- Bru, E., Dr. philos. The role of psychological factors in neck, shoulder and low back pain among female hospitale staff.
- Braathen, E.T., Dr. psychol. Prediction of exellence and discontinuation in different types of sport: The significance of motivation and EMG.
- Johannessen, B.F., Dr. philos. Det flytende kjønnnet. Om lederskap, politikk og identitet.
- 1995** Sam, D.L., Dr. psychol. Acculturation of young immigrants in Norway: A psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.
- Bjaalid, I.-K., Dr. philos. Component processes in word recognition.
- Martinsen, Ø., Dr. philos. Cognitive style and insight.
- Nordby, H., Dr. philos. Processing of auditory deviant events: Mismatch negativity of event-related brain potentials.
- Raaheim, A., Dr. philos. Health perception and health behaviour, theoretical considerations, empirical studies, and practical implications.
- Seltzer, W.J., Dr.philos. Studies of Psychocultural Approach to Families in Therapy.
- Brun, W., Dr.philos. Subjective conceptions of uncertainty and risk.
- Aas, H.N., Dr. psychol. Alcohol expectancies and socialization: Adolescents learning to drink.
- Bjørkly, S., Dr. psychol. Diagnosis and prediction of intra-institutional aggressive behaviour in psychotic patients
- 1996** Anderssen, N., Dr. psychol. Physical activity of young people in a health perspective: Stability, change and social influences.
- Sandal, Gro Mjeldheim, Dr. psychol. Coping in extreme environments: The role of personality.
- Strumse, Einar, Dr. philos. The psychology of aesthetics: explaining visual preferences for agrarian landscapes in Western Norway.
- Hestad, Knut, Dr. philos. Neuropsychological deficits in HIV-1 infection.
- Lugoe, L.Wycliffe, Dr. philos. Prediction of Tanzanian students' HIV risk and preventive behaviours
- Sandvik, B. Gunnhild, Dr. philos. Fra distriktsjordmor til institusjonsjordmor. Fremveksten av en profesjon og en profesjonsutdanning
- Lie, Gro Therese, Dr. psychol. The disease that dares not speak its name: Studies on factors of importance for coping with HIV/AIDS in Northern Tanzania
- Øygaard, Lisbet, Dr. philos. Health behaviors among young adults. A psychological and sociological approach
- Stormark, Kjell Morten, Dr. psychol. Emotional modulation of selective attention: Experimental and clinical evidence.

	Einarsen, Ståle, Dr. psychol.	Bullying and harassment at work: epidemiological and psychosocial aspects.
1997	Knivsberg, Ann-Mari, Dr. philos.	Behavioural abnormalities and childhood psychopathology: Urinary peptide patterns as a potential tool in diagnosis and remediation.
	Eide, Arne H., Dr. philos.	Adolescent drug use in Zimbabwe. Cultural orientation in a global-local perspective and use of psychoactive substances among secondary school students.
	Sørensen, Marit, Dr. philos.	The psychology of initiating and maintaining exercise and diet behaviour.
	Skjæveland, Oddvar, Dr. psychol.	Relationships between spatial-physical neighborhood attributes and social relations among neighbors.
	Zewdie, Teka, Dr. philos.	Mother-child relational patterns in Ethiopia. Issues of developmental theories and intervention programs.
	Wilhelmsen, Britt Unni, Dr. philos.	Development and evaluation of two educational programmes designed to prevent alcohol use among adolescents.
	Manger, Terje, Dr. philos.	Gender differences in mathematical achievement among Norwegian elementary school students.
1998		
V	Lindstrøm, Torill Christine, Dr. philos.	«Good Grief»: Adapting to Bereavement.
	Skogstad, Anders, Dr. philos.	Effects of leadership behaviour on job satisfaction, health and efficiency.
	Haldorsen, Ellen M. Håland, Dr. psychol.	Return to work in low back pain patients.
	Besemer, Susan P., Dr. philos.	Creative Product Analysis: The Search for a Valid Model for Understanding Creativity in Products.
H	Winje, Dagfinn, Dr. psychol.	Psychological adjustment after severe trauma. A longitudinal study of adults' and children's posttraumatic reactions and coping after the bus accident in Måbødalen, Norway 1988.
	Vosburg, Suzanne K., Dr. philos.	The effects of mood on creative problem solving.
	Eriksen, Hege R., Dr. philos.	Stress and coping: Does it really matter for subjective health complaints?
	Jakobsen, Reidar, Dr. psychol.	Empiriske studier av kunnskap og holdninger om hiv/aids og den normative seksuelle utvikling i ungdomsårene.
1999		
V	Mikkelsen, Aslaug, Dr. philos.	Effects of learning opportunities and learning climate on occupational health.
	Samdal, Oddrun, Dr. philos.	The school environment as a risk or resource for students' health-related behaviours and subjective well-being.
	Friestad, Christine, Dr. philos.	Social psychological approaches to smoking.

	Ekeland, Tor-Johan, Dr. philos.	Meining som medisin. Ein analyse av placebofenomenet og implikasjoner for terapi og terapeutiske teoriar.
H	Saban, Sara, Dr. psychol.	Brain Asymmetry and Attention: Classical Conditioning Experiments.
	Carlsten, Carl Thomas, Dr. philos.	God lesing – God læring. En aksjonsrettet studie av undervisning i fagtekstlesing.
	Dundas, Ingrid, Dr. psychol.	Functional and dysfunctional closeness. Family interaction and children's adjustment.
	Engen, Liv, Dr. philos.	Kartlegging av leseferdighet på småskoletrinnet og vurdering av faktorer som kan være av betydning for optimal leseutvikling.
2000		
V	Hovland, Ole Johan, Dr. philos.	Transforming a self-preserving "alarm" reaction into a self-defeating emotional response: Toward an integrative approach to anxiety as a human phenomenon.
	Lillejord, Sølvi, Dr. philos.	Handlingsrasjonalitet og spesialundervisning. En analyse av aktørperspektiver.
	Sandell, Ove, Dr. philos.	Den varme kunnskapen.
	Oftedal, Marit Petersen, Dr. philos.	Diagnostisering av ordavkodingsvansker: En prosessanalytisk tilnæringsmåte.
H	Sandbak, Tone, Dr. psychol.	Alcohol consumption and preference in the rat: The significance of individual differences and relationships to stress pathology
	Eid, Jarle, Dr. psychol.	Early predictors of PTSD symptom reporting; The significance of contextual and individual factors.
2001		
V	Skinstad, Anne Helene, Dr. philos.	Substance dependence and borderline personality disorders.
	Binder, Per-Einar, Dr. psychol.	Individet og den meningsbærende andre. En teoretisk undersøkelse av de mellommenneskelige forutsetningene for psykisk liv og utvikling med utgangspunkt i Donald Winnicotts teori.
	Roald, Ingvild K., Dr. philos.	Building of concepts. A study of Physics concepts of Norwegian deaf students.
H	Fekadu, Zelalem W., Dr. philos.	Predicting contraceptive use and intention among a sample of adolescent girls. An application of the theory of planned behaviour in Ethiopian context.
	Melesse, Fantu, Dr. philos.	The more intelligent and sensitive child (MISC) mediational intervention in an Ethiopian context: An evaluation study.
	Råheim, Målfrid, Dr. philos.	Kvinnens kroppserfaring og livssammenheng. En fenomenologisk – hermeneutisk studie av friske kvinner og kvinner med kroniske muskelsmerter.
	Engelsen, Birthe Kari, Dr. psychol.	Measurement of the eating problem construct.

	Lau, Bjørn, Dr. philos.	Weight and eating concerns in adolescence.
2002		
V	Ihlebak, Camilla, Dr. philos.	Epidemiological studies of subjective health complaints.
	Rosén, Gunnar O. R., Dr. philos.	The phantom limb experience. Models for understanding and treatment of pain with hypnosis.
	Høines, Marit Johnsen, Dr. philos.	Fleksible språkrom. Matematikklæring som tekstutvikling.
	Anthun, Roald Andor, Dr. philos.	School psychology service quality. Consumer appraisal, quality dimensions, and collaborative improvement potential
	Pallesen, Ståle, Dr. psychol.	Insomnia in the elderly. Epidemiology, psychological characteristics and treatment.
	Midthassel, Unni Vere, Dr. philos.	Teacher involvement in school development activity. A study of teachers in Norwegian compulsory schools
	Kallestad, Jan Helge, Dr. philos.	Teachers, schools and implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.
H	Ofte, Sonja Helgesen, Dr. psychol.	Right-left discrimination in adults and children.
	Netland, Marit, Dr. psychol.	Exposure to political violence. The need to estimate our estimations.
	Diseth, Åge, Dr. psychol.	Approaches to learning: Validity and prediction of academic performance.
	Bjuland, Raymond, Dr. philos.	Problem solving in geometry. Reasoning processes of student teachers working in small groups: A dialogical approach.
2003		
V	Arefjord, Kjersti, Dr. psychol.	After the myocardial infarction – the wives' view. Short- and long-term adjustment in wives of myocardial infarction patients.
	Ingjaldsson, Jón Þorvaldur, Dr. psychol.	Unconscious Processes and Vagal Activity in Alcohol Dependency.
	Holden, Børge, Dr. philos.	Følger av atferdsanalytiske forklaringer for atferdsanalysens tilnærming til utforming av behandling.
	Holsen, Ingrid, Dr. philos.	Depressed mood from adolescence to 'emerging adulthood'. Course and longitudinal influences of body image and parent-adolescent relationship.
	Hammar, Åsa Karin, Dr. psychol.	Major depression and cognitive dysfunction- An experimental study of the cognitive effort hypothesis.
	Sprugevica, Ieva, Dr. philos.	The impact of enabling skills on early reading acquisition.
	Gabrielsen, Egil, Dr. philos.	LESE FOR LIVET. Lesekompetansen i den norske voksenbefolkningen sett i lys av visjonen om en enhetsskole.
H	Hansen, Anita Lill, Dr. psychol.	The influence of heart rate variability in the regulation of attentional and memory processes.

	Dyregrov, Kari, Dr. philos.	The loss of child by suicide, SIDS, and accidents: Consequences, needs and provisions of help.
2004		
V	Torsheim, Torbjørn, Dr. psychol.	Student role strain and subjective health complaints: Individual, contextual, and longitudinal perspectives.
	Haugland, Bente Storm Mowatt Dr. psychol.	Parental alcohol abuse. Family functioning and child adjustment.
	Milde, Anne Marita, Dr. psychol.	Ulcerative colitis and the role of stress. Animal studies of psychobiological factors in relationship to experimentally induced colitis.
	Stornes, Tor, Dr. philos.	Socio-moral behaviour in sport. An investigation of perceptions of sportspersonship in handball related to important factors of socio-moral influence.
	Mæhle, Magne, Dr. philos.	Re-inventing the child in family therapy: An investigation of the relevance and applicability of theory and research in child development for family therapy involving children.
	Kobbeltvedt, Therese, Dr. psychol.	Risk and feelings: A field approach.
2004	Thomsen, Tormod, Dr. psychol.	Localization of attention in the brain.
H	Løberg, Else-Marie, Dr. psychol.	Functional laterality and attention modulation in schizophrenia: Effects of clinical variables.
	Kyrkjebø, Jane Mikkelsen, Dr. philos.	Learning to improve: Integrating continuous quality improvement learning into nursing education.
	Laumann, Karin, Dr. psychol.	Restorative and stress-reducing effects of natural environments: Experiential, behavioural and cardiovascular indices.
	Holgersen, Helge, PhD	Mellom oss - Essay i relasjonell psykoanalyse.
2005		
V	Hetland, Hilde, Dr. psychol.	Leading to the extraordinary? Antecedents and outcomes of transformational leadership.
	Iversen, Anette Christine, Dr. philos.	Social differences in health behaviour: the motivational role of perceived control and coping.
2005	Mathisen, Gro Ellen, PhD	Climates for creativity and innovation: Definitions, measurement, predictors and consequences.
H	Sævi, Tone, Dr. philos.	Seeing disability pedagogically – The lived experience of disability in the pedagogical encounter.
	Wiium, Nora, PhD	Intrapersonal factors, family and school norms: combined and interactive influence on adolescent smoking behaviour.
	Kanagaratnam, Pushpa, PhD	Subjective and objective correlates of Posttraumatic Stress in immigrants/refugees exposed to political violence.

	Larsen, Torill M. B. , PhD	Evaluating principals` and teachers` implementation of Second Step. A case study of four Norwegian primary schools.
	Bancila, Delia, PhD	Psychosocial stress and distress among Romanian adolescents and adults.
2006		
V	Hillestad, Torgeir Martin, Dr. philos.	Normalitet og avvik. Forutsetninger for et objektivt psykopatologisk avviksbegrep. En psykologisk, sosial, erkjennelsesteoretisk og teoriehistorisk framstilling.
	Nordanger, Dag Øystein, Dr. psychol.	Psychosocial discourses and responses to political violence in post-war Tigray, Ethiopia.
	Rimol, Lars Morten, PhD	Behavioral and fMRI studies of auditory laterality and speech sound processing.
	Krumsvik, Rune Johan, Dr. philos.	ICT in the school. ICT-initiated school development in lower secondary school.
	Norman, Elisabeth, Dr. psychol.	Gut feelings and unconscious thought: An exploration of fringe consciousness in implicit cognition.
	Israel, K Pravin, Dr. psychol.	Parent involvement in the mental health care of children and adolescents. Emperical studies from clinical care setting.
	Glasø, Lars, PhD	Affects and emotional regulation in leader-subordinate relationships.
	Knutsen, Ketil, Dr. philos.	HISTORIER UNGDOM LEVER – En studie av hvordan ungdommer bruker historie for å gjøre livet meningsfullt.
	Matthiesen, Stig Berge, PhD	Bullying at work. Antecedents and outcomes.
2006		
H	Gramstad, Arne, PhD	Neuropsychological assessment of cognitive and emotional functioning in patients with epilepsy.
	Bendixen, Mons, PhD	Antisocial behaviour in early adolescence: Methodological and substantive issues.
	Mrumbi, Khalifa Maulid, PhD	Parental illness and loss to HIV/AIDS as experienced by AIDS orphans aged between 12-17 years from Temeke District, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: A study of the children's psychosocial health and coping responses.
	Hetland, Jørn, Dr. psychol.	The nature of subjective health complaints in adolescence: Dimensionality, stability, and psychosocial predictors
	Kakoko, Deodatus Conatus Vitalis, PhD	Voluntary HIV counselling and testing service uptake among primary school teachers in Mwanza, Tanzania: assessment of socio-demographic, psychosocial and socio-cognitive aspects
	Mykletun, Arnstein, Dr. psychol.	Mortality and work-related disability as long-term consequences of anxiety and depression: Historical cohort designs based on the HUNT-2 study
	Sivertsen, Børge, PhD	Insomnia in older adults. Consequences, assessment and treatment.

2007

V

- Singhammer, John, Dr. philos. Social conditions from before birth to early adulthood – the influence on health and health behaviour
- Janvin, Carmen Ani Cristea, PhD Cognitive impairment in patients with Parkinson's disease: profiles and implications for prognosis
- Braarud, Hanne Cecilie, Dr.psychol. Infant regulation of distress: A longitudinal study of transactions between mothers and infants
- Tveito, Torill Helene, PhD Sick Leave and Subjective Health Complaints
- Magnussen, Liv Heide, PhD Returning disability pensioners with back pain to work
- Thuen, Elin Marie, Dr.philos. Learning environment, students' coping styles and emotional and behavioural problems. A study of Norwegian secondary school students.
- Solberg, Ole Asbjørn, PhD Peacekeeping warriors – A longitudinal study of Norwegian peacekeepers in Kosovo

2007

H

- Søreide, Gunn Elisabeth, Dr.philos. Narrative construction of teacher identity
- Svensen, Erling, PhD WORK & HEALTH. Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress applied in an organisational setting.
- Øverland, Simon Nygaard, PhD Mental health and impairment in disability benefits. Studies applying linkages between health surveys and administrative registries.
- Eichele, Tom, PhD Electrophysiological and Hemodynamic Correlates of Expectancy in Target Processing
- Børhaug, Kjetil, Dr.philos. Oppseding til demokrati. Ein studie av politisk oppseding i norsk skule.
- Eikeland, Thorleif, Dr.philos. Om å vokse opp på barnehjem og på sykehus. En undersøkelse av barnehjemsbarns opplevelser på barnehjem sammenholdt med sanatoriebarns beskrivelse av langvarige sykehusopphold – og et forsøk på forklaring.
- Wadel, Carl Cato, Dr.philos. Medarbeidersamhandling og medarbeiderledelse i en lagbasert organisasjon
- Vinje, Hege Forbech, PhD Thriving despite adversity: Job engagement and self-care among community nurses
- Noort, Maurits van den, PhD Working memory capacity and foreign language acquisition

2008

V

- Breivik, Kyrre, Dr.psychol. The Adjustment of Children and Adolescents in Different Post-Divorce Family Structures. A Norwegian Study of Risks and Mechanisms.
- Johnsen, Grethe E., PhD Memory impairment in patients with posttraumatic stress disorder
- Sætrevik, Bjørn, PhD Cognitive Control in Auditory Processing

	Carvalhosa, Susana Fonseca, PhD	Prevention of bullying in schools: an ecological model
2008		
H	Brønnick, Kolbjørn Selvåg	Attentional dysfunction in dementia associated with Parkinson's disease.
	Posserud, Maj-Britt Rocio	Epidemiology of autism spectrum disorders
	Haug, Ellen	Multilevel correlates of physical activity in the school setting
	Skjerve, Arvid	Assessing mild dementia – a study of brief cognitive tests.
	Kjønniksen, Lise	The association between adolescent experiences in physical activity and leisure time physical activity in adulthood: a ten year longitudinal study
	Gundersen, Hilde	The effects of alcohol and expectancy on brain function
	Omvik, Siri	Insomnia – a night and day problem
2009		
V	Molde, Helge	Pathological gambling: prevalence, mechanisms and treatment outcome.
	Foss, Else	Den omsorgsfulle væremåte. En studie av voksnes væremåte i forhold til barn i barnehagen.
	Westrheim, Kariane	Education in a Political Context: A study of Knowledge Processes and Learning Sites in the PKK.
	Wehling, Eike	Cognitive and olfactory changes in aging
	Wangberg, Silje C.	Internet based interventions to support health behaviours: The role of self-efficacy.
	Nielsen, Morten B.	Methodological issues in research on workplace bullying. Operationalisations, measurements and samples.
	Sandu, Anca Larisa	MRI measures of brain volume and cortical complexity in clinical groups and during development.
	Guribye, Eugene	Refugees and mental health interventions
	Sørensen, Lin	Emotional problems in inattentive children – effects on cognitive control functions.
	Tjomsland, Hege E.	Health promotion with teachers. Evaluation of the Norwegian Network of Health Promoting Schools: Quantitative and qualitative analyses of predisposing, reinforcing and enabling conditions related to teacher participation and program sustainability.
	Helleve, Ingrid	Productive interactions in ICT supported communities of learners
2009		
H	Skorpen, Aina Øye, Christine	Dagliglivet i en psykiatrisk institusjon: En analyse av miljøterapeutiske praksiser
	Andreassen, Cecilie Schou	WORKAHOLISM – Antecedents and Outcomes

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