

Project based implementation of technology in elderly care

-Subject positioning, identification and distancing

During recent years innovation has often been seen as a solution to many challenges on the market and increasingly also in public services, such as, elderly care. Innovation is often used in efforts to improve and manage efficiency. The role of innovation in public services has been celebrated to the extent that some scholars have begun talking about an innovation imperative to highlight how technological innovation is assumed to be an essential aspect for the survival and development of public services. Harshening pressures within public management not only has called for innovation, but also flexibility and an ability to deal with continuous change. Thus another parallel transformation, projectification (increasing use of temporary organizing, such as, projects) in the public sector has been noted. Often innovation and projectification in care work seem go hand in hand. For example, to increase and scale-up innovation that addresses health issues for older people EU promotes and supports innovation implementation through models that seems to depend on projects, testing and experimentation.

The dominant view of innovation and projectification implies that the concepts carry positive connotations as they are typically assumed to be a cure for nearly all ills. The view of innovation as always being good has been widely accepted and largely gone unquestioned. This tendency towards constructing innovation both in theorizing and in practice as always good is also known as the pro-innovation bias. The pro-innovation bias celebrates the beneficial effects of innovation while providing a limited vocabulary for addressing inefficient and undesirable consequences of innovation. However, new research indicates that there are various risks around innovation in the public care sector.

The aim of this study is therefore to examine desirable *and* undesirable effects of innovation implementation projects in elderly care. We argue that this is important as the increasing emphasis on technology testing and implementation projects in care work is likely to imply that a growing number of care workers will experience innovation implementation in their daily work. It hence seems important to advance knowledge around innovation and projectification as an increasing number of care workers (and elderly) can be expected to be effected not only by beneficial but also by non-beneficial consequences of the project format and innovation. We are interested in exploring the effects of technology implementation projects on care workers' "sense of self". How do technology implementation projects shape care workers' sense of self? How do technology implementation projects constrain or enable care workers' identification and dis-identification with care work?

The empirical part of this study is conducted in Finnish care homes for elderly. We analyse 13 interviews with care workers in care homes for elderly in which technological innovations, such as, Xbox, iPads and smart phones, have recently been implemented.

The study contributes a glimpse into project based technology implementation in elderly care at the level of mundane care work. While much attention has been given to innovation in the private sector, in particular to drivers and practices of innovation, this study gives a more nuanced perspective by focusing on the public and third sector as well as on effects of innovation. In doing so, the study illuminates relations and tension between daily care work and new practices. In addition it shows how care workers deal with such tensions, which is likely to have further effects on the quality of care work.