

In the eye of the beholder

Domain logic and goal perception in implementation
processes within the Swedish municipal social services

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Abstract

Implementation in public organizations is a complicated process. Previous research has shown that neither a top-down or bottom-up perspective is sufficient to explain why certain implementations succeed and others fail. Alternative models that take the complexity of implementation processes into account by among other things allowing for the interaction between both horizontal and vertical levels have been suggested. While new theories such as these have expanded scientific knowledge on implementation processes considerably, less attention has been accorded to factors connected to additional important variables such as competing organizational logics and perceptions.

The aim of the following thesis is to explain the failure and success of the implementation of the LOKE model for systematic evaluation within the Swedish social services through the application of theories of organizational domains and differing logics of appropriateness within said organization combined with contemporary implementation research. Through a series of interviews the varying perceptions of the implementation process of the involved units are collected and analyzed, showing how the different underlying logics of the different units affect both their perception of the LOKE model as well as their willingness and ability to implement its constituent parts. This in turn serves to underline the importance of utilizing methods to bridge the understanding gap between domains during the early stages of implementation efforts in order to increase the chances of success.

Key words: domain logic, implementation, LOKE, human service organization

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1 Introduction

The question of what makes or breaks successful policy implementation has been the focus of much discussion within and without the scientific community both before and after the rise of the discipline of implementation research. Within the field of welfare research the issue acquires extra importance, perhaps especially when viewed in the light of the challenges consisting of rising costs and labour market changes facing the welfare state outlined by among others Pierson (2013:213, 225). Meeting these challenges requires a welfare system where resource waste is minimized and implementation failures therefore are as few as possible. If this is to be achieved, the at times somewhat considerable gap between theoretical knowledge and practice identified in the implementation literature needs to be bridged. Indeed, Mitchell (2018) recently carried out an analysis of a large number of implementation processes in the United States, the results of which indicate that there are large gains in success rate to be achieved through bridging said divide. It is the intention of this study to further aid in this process by applying a theoretical framework derived from implementation research to a real-world implementation process on a municipal department level, thus providing additional data to inform said discussion.

An answer to the call for a more efficient welfare state in much of Europe and beyond has been the shift towards a new public management system (hereafter NPM) where measurable output and lean and specialized organizations are prioritized. This shift can be said to have been an ongoing occurrence in the Western countries since the seventies, even though the scale and speed of NPM reforms have varied to a considerable extent over time and between countries (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011:7-10). While subject to much criticism, this (not necessarily longer new) public management has exercised considerable influence on the way the welfare state is construed, something which is also evident in the new streams of post-NPM management philosophy that have begun taking root in recent years. One of these new streams is the movement in Swedish public administration towards a more trust-focused public management (see for example Tillitsdelegationen 2018) where greater emphasis is placed on the expertise and practical knowledge of the professions and front-line bureaucrats involved in welfare delivery, for example teachers, nurses and social workers. A concrete example of this is the LOKE (*Swedish: 'LOKal Evidens'*) model of constructive program-theory evaluations that have been deployed by the Social Service in Lund Municipality during the course of 2018. In this model, welfare service delivery and evaluation is examined and developed in a collaborative process together with professional stakeholders and front-line welfare workers, thus aiming to draw on their locally informed and practical knowledge to develop welfare programs and ways of measuring the impact and outcomes of said programs.

This model has at the time of writing been tested on a number of welfare programs, with to some extent varying results and ways of understanding these results. This variance will be the focus of this thesis. It is the intention of the author to through the application of among other things theories connected to the field of policy implementation, organizational theory and evaluation attempt to provide an answer as to why (and perhaps more importantly: in what understanding) the implementation of the LOKE model has been successful in some instances and less so in others – as well as how different actors within the involved organizations understand success and the occurrence of it, thus hopefully being able to contribute towards a discussion of implementation successes and failures in general.

1.1 Background

Recent years have seen a shift towards a more systematic and evidence-based way of working within the Swedish social services. Parallel to this there has been a movement towards allowing more room for the experiences of the working professions and front-line bureaucrats within the system. The former is to some extent congruent with the tendency within New Public Management to emphasize the importance of measuring results and benchmarking when taking decisions and allocating resources (see for example Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011:108), which in turn creates a need for measurable output. In addition it could also be said that it implies the existence of some kind of best practice that is both possible to discover but also diffuse and apply in a range of similar contexts. The latter – id est the movement towards allowing more room for the experiences of the working professions - can be interpreted as an indication that some kind of shift away from New Public Management is taking place, where the power to define successful outcomes is to some extent being moved from politicians and managers to more operative bureaucratic functions such as social workers. This is in itself not a strange thing. It is shown by for example Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011:209-210) that there is no such thing as “pure” NPM – rather any administrative system at any time will be a mix of ideas drawn from many different traditions. It therefore appears reasonable that concepts derived heavily from NPM will co-exist with both older and newer ideas – such as those stated above - within an administrative context such as the Swedish one (see for example Sundström 2016).

To further clarify this, it appears useful so devote some time in the next section towards very briefly touching upon some of the central NPM-related ideas. Indeed, all implementation takes place in an administrative context and because of this, it also seems prudent to supply the reader with a brief overview of the research field in relation to the administrative developments over the last half century – primarily the rise of New Public Management and a reflection on what might come (or for that matter, has already come) after. Note that this should not be considered a comprehensive description of the state of modern administrative research – rather it should be viewed as a starting point and way of providing context for discussing

the type of questions that have been outlined above. Many of the concepts mentioned above will be returned to and discussed in greater detail in the later parts of the thesis.

1.1.1 New Public Management and evidence based social care

As has been shown above New Public Management is not a clearly cut and defined concept. While researchers such as Hood (1991:4) have done their best to narrow it down to its constituent concepts, others argue that NPM-inspired administrative ideas exist side by side with both older and newer ideas and that it is more descriptive to talk of layers of reform rather than one overarching and coherent system (see for example Andrews et al 2016, Bach & Bordogna 2011, Bringselius 2015 and Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011). From this perspective, NPM becomes more like a menu or a buffet from which countries choose meals (or in this case reforms) rather than a one-size-fits-all concept. This also applies to Sweden, which has been sampling from the proverbial administrative reform buffet table since the early seventies (see for example Sundström 2015 & Sundström 2016). However this does not, in line with the reasoning above, automatically imply that these reforms are all coherent with each other or by necessity resembling however an ‘ideal’ New Public Management system would look like.

At the same time, there are other authors claim that there in Sweden and other places has been and is possible to discern an overarching administrative ideology influenced by thoughts that are possible to sort under the – as we have seen above admittedly rather wide umbrella - of New Public Management (see for example Ahlbäck Öberg & Widmalm 2016, Forssell & Westerberg Ivarsson 2016 and Widmalm 2016). Barzelay (2000:2) expresses similar thoughts when he describes NPM as being both an administrative *argument* as well as an administrative *philosophy* with not inconsiderable agenda-setting power. The effects of discursive context and power relations on the administrative-political system is also discussed by among others Dunn and Myller (2007), who claim that the latter is to no small degree shaped by the former. Both of these lines of reasoning are perhaps especially interesting when put in relation to the ideas of Carol Bacchi (2010), from which one can derive that the discursive superstructure of the administrative system has a significant effect on what problem formulations are possible when discussing policy itself, and as a result of this how policy itself is shaped. This is not dissimilar to Lukes (2008:35-38) conception of the third dimension of power – the power over what is possible to think.

As an example of this, the underlying tenets of New Public Management within the realm of social work can be seen in the move towards evidence based practice that originated in the United States in the sixties with the goal of demonstrating that social work was being carried out in an economically rational fashion congruent with the early NPM-influenced management philosophies of the time. In Sweden the evidence-based movement did not take hold until quite a bit later – in 1991 the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs started using a rhetoric heavily influenced by

New Public Management ideas in their own push for evidence based social work, with cost-efficiency and objective-based management in the provision of social services held forth as ideals for the municipalities to aspire to. This push was expressed through for example the addition of a quality clause to the Swedish Social Services Act (see SOL 3 § 3 2001:453) and the published general advice of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in regards to the establishment of systems for systematic service evaluation and development. The shift towards evidence-based social care in Sweden has generated three different established strategies that are commonly employed by the involved actors – the usage of local evaluation studies to generate locally informed knowledge, the establishment of systems to generate knowledge among front line bureaucrats and social workers, and finally the utilization of empirical and controlled studies from which to derive more generally applicable knowledge. Interestingly, the shift towards evidence based practice within social care was championed by quite different actors in the two contexts described above. In the United States, it was very much the case that the social work profession itself led the movement towards the aforementioned, while it was more of a state-driven venture connected to an increasing pressure to evaluate the public sector in Sweden (Bergmark et al 2011:30, 40, 44). It can for the sake of discussion be interesting to note that the motivating discourse in Sweden has shifted away from the “classic” NPM rhetoric towards a more client-oriented perspective in recent years (see for example SOU 2008:18 *Evidensbaserad praktik inom socialtjänsten – till nytta för brukaren*), at the same time as the advocated measures themselves have not changed. This can be taken as an indication that there is considerable variation in the outward processes, motivations and involved actors in different contexts, while the underlying “superideology” and administrative prescriptions remain the same.

The above can be interpreted as meaning that while the particular shape, deployed rhetoric and combination of reforms can and does indeed as we have seen above differ from country to country and judgement on international management convergence is hard to deliver, there does still appear to be some degree of common thought complex underlining the reform processes in most countries influenced by ideas related to NPM. Something has been happening in many western countries since the seventies, and that something has influenced the administrative ideologies and systems of many countries towards embracing concepts such as performance management, output measurement, cost-effectiveness and – as a result of this – the prioritization of implementing what is perceived as best practice (Hood 1991:4). Further, it is possible that these ideas have – to argue in the vein of Bacchi and Lukes – exercised influence on what is possible to think on the subject of public management and how problems related to for example implementation are possible to formulate.

1.1.2 Beyond NPM

In recent years it has been argued that ideas influenced by New Public Management are on their way out and are being replaced by new ways to think about public

management and administration. While exactly what they are being replaced by remains in many instances unclear (see for example Klasson 2010:175-176), Christensen and Lægreid (2007:4) describe how post-NPM reforms (and their own whole-of-government approach) emphasize trust, values and network-building. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011:22) claim to see several different new administrative trends, among these the growing importance of networks, governance and something they term neo-Weberian thought where great importance is accorded professional bureaucrats working within the confines of an efficient and responsive administration. Again, trust, values and the usefulness of networks is given prominence. In a Swedish context some of these ideas have been given recent and concrete expression through the work of The Delegation for Trust-Based Public Management (*Swedish: Tillitsdelegationen*), which in 2016 was tasked with “[...] analyzing and proposing how the management of welfare services in the public sector can be developed within existing regulatory frameworks so as to make more use of the competence and experience of employees.”, with the aim of contributing to raised quality in the provision of welfare services for citizens and companies (Tillitsdelegationen 2019). The thrust towards a greater emphasis on professional knowledge in the steering of welfare provision can also be seen in for example the three strategies for knowledge development described above, with the accumulation of local and professionally informed knowledge being important parts of two of these.

Taking the above into consideration, it seems clear that *something* is happening. As Widmalm (2016:2) writes, the frequency and incidence of critique against New Public Management has been increasing steadily over the last few years. One example of this is in the Swedish budget proposition for 2016, where a clear concern for the detrimental effects of NPM is possible to discern (Regeringen 2015:59). The public management ideas that have been dominating since the seventies are being challenged. At the same time – given that one agrees with the line of argument championed by among others Ahlbäck Öberg, Widmalm, Forssell, and Westerberg Ivarsson – this does not by definition have to imply that the overarching assumptions of New Public Management are being challenged. It is, to put it in different words, possible to critique some of what is perceived as the worst excesses of NPM without questioning the fundamental ideas that give rise to these – for example the perception that performance can and should be measured, as well as subjected to notions of best practice. Considerable space in the following thesis will be devoted to discussing this in greater detail.

1.1.3 The deployment of LOKE

The LOKE model is a good example of the above-mentioned simultaneous existence of multiple idea streams within the administrative culture at once. The model is devised to help develop local welfare services through designing models for measuring output in close collaboration with involved welfare workers and managers. In many ways the model bears a close resemblance to a classic program-

theory evaluation design, where the implementation agents in a series of workshops help the implementing agency define the objectives, methods and expected outcomes of the agency in question and finally aid in the creation of a structure to in a meaningful way measure said outcomes (see Hjelte 2017 for a more complete description of the model). In other words, both measurable outcomes and front-line local knowledge is given space within the structure of the program. Several different strands of administrative thought exist side by side.

It is, with the above in mind, interesting to note that there is a not inconsiderable number of actors involved in the implementation of the LOKE model. These range from the model designers at FoU Välfärd and model advocates at The National Board of Health and Welfare (*Swedish: Socialstyrelsen*) to the managers, implementing agents and implementing units (with their respective sets of managers and workers) at the local level. With such a range of actors it seems plausible that there might also be a number of different conceptions of the purpose and desired outcomes of the model, which in turn means that there is a risk that the systems used to evaluate implementation success are not in congruence with the professional norms of the front-line bureaucrats in the affected units, thus leading to differing definitions of what exactly is taking place and why it can be said to be helpful (see for example Ahlbäck Öberg & Widmalm 2016). It seems eminently possible that these different conceptions will emphasize different strands of administrative ideas, thus further blurring the line between New Public Management and post-NPM thought and calling into question how much of a shift has really taken place. Are we truly moving towards a system of administrative thought and practice beyond NPM, or are the same ideas just returning with a slightly different spin? Attempting to shed light upon this will be an important area of investigation for the following thesis.

1.2 Research question

As has been shown in the preceding section the aim of the following study is twofold. On one hand, the study seeks to investigate the determinants of (different definitions of) implementation success within two units in the social services of Lund municipality. In order to answer this the thesis discusses how differing priorities and circumstances give rise to different perceptions of implementation success depending on the organizational context and motivations of the different actors involved in the process. In addition, the study also takes an interest in what these differing priorities and circumstances can tell us about the administrative-cultural context within which the implementation takes place. What administrative strands of thought are emphasized by whom, and does this affect above-mentioned implementation success determinants?

Drawing on the above the research question is divided into two parts. These are as follows, with the first emphasizing the conception of success and the second focusing on what this can tell us about prevailing administrative thought:

1. How do the different levels of actors involved in the implementation of the LOKE model in Lund municipality understand implementation success?
2. Which of these success understandings have been achieved during the implementation of the LOKE model in Lund municipality?

While the questions might appear somewhat similar at first glance, there are some important distinctions. These are unpacked in the theoretical and methodological sections, where a set of tools for – somewhat ironically, given NPM’s predisposition towards measurement – measuring the incidence of the concepts introduced in the questions are outlined. For now it is sufficient to say that the study claims interest both in de facto implementation success, but also how different success conceptions influence the incidence of success – for example by providing a situation where a given conception within one domain has a detrimental effect on the possibilities of achieving the prevailing success definition within another domain. While this might appear a non-controversial issue, it can potentially become a challenge if – as Pollitt and Bouckaert show – several different strands of ideas exist and compete with each other within the administrative system. While it is of course difficult to generalise on the subject of the competing logics of the different domains within social services – or indeed the administrative system in Sweden as a whole – through a study with such a limited scope as this, it remains the hope and intention of the author that the questions outlined above can if nothing else serve as a starting point for a broader discussion on the effects of domain logics in implementation processes and how an understanding of these can be utilized to understand some of the challenges facing said processes. In addition, this thesis hopes to also stimulate a discussion on whether the competing success definitions and logics that will be outlined above makes the concept of program fidelity in the implementation of models and programs meaningful within the given context. Is it, given the incidence of a competing logics, possible to apply models derived from some kind of best practice in a local context?

1.3 Thesis disposition

In the chapter directly following this the field of implementation research is sketched out, with special emphasis placed on implementation within the field of social work and success determinants of implementation processes. This provides an overview of the scientific and theoretical landscape that the study is situated within. This is in turn followed by a chapter discussing the concrete theoretical framework around which the thesis will be structured, combining elements and concepts touched upon in the literature review to provide a theoretical lens through which to understand the different facets and logics underlying the implementation of the LOKE program in Lund municipality. The methodology employed to gather the data to which the theoretical framework will be applied is given attention in the subsequent section, which encompasses among other things discussions connected

to the selection of empirical cases and how knowledge about these can be gained. In the ensuing two chapters, the results of said methodology are analyzed and discussed in terms of the outlined theoretical framework. In the successive and last chapter the conclusions of the thesis are outlined.

2 Literature review

2.1 Implementation conceptualized

In this section an attempt will be made to illuminate the field of implementation research to provide context for the study. Special attention will – as an effect of the underlying research questions – be given to discussions within the field regarding implementation success determinants and how the different levels involved in an implementation process might perceive and be affected by these. The section begins with a conceptualization of implementation, which is then followed by a description of the different types and stages of implementation that have been observed by researchers. Following this, the possible actors and organizational settings of the implementation process are discussed.

2.1.1 Implementation as a concept

There are a number of ways which the concept of implementation can be understood. For the purposes of this study the definition utilized by Meyers et al (2012) is as good a starting point as any. They – in their attempt to arrive at what constitutes a quality implementation – describe the concept of implementation as made up of three parts. These are a specified set of activities intended to be put into practice (1) which in turn require a change process within the implementing organization (2), and as a result of this require a certain degree of development of new knowledge and skills within said organization as well as changes to for example organizational culture (3).

Fixsen (2005:12) identifies five main components of implementation – a source or best example (1), a destination such as an adopting organization (2), a communication link such as a group of people whose job it is to implement a given program (3), a feedback mechanism which is utilized by said communication link (4), and finally the fact that a given implementation process will always be operating within a certain social, economic, or historical (among many others) context. Other authors employ other definitions. Common for most of these is that implementation is defined as a specific and discernable set of activities that are purposefully used to put into practice an identifiable program or practice. Some

elements of this definition are important prerequisites for implementation research, as they emphasize the observable nature of the implementation process. This is necessary if what is being implemented is to be possible to separate from ongoing practice and therefore available for study (Fixsen 2005:6).

2.1.2 Implementation types

Hernandez and Hodges (2003) note the existence of three main degrees of implementation – what they term recorded theories of change, active theories of change and integrated theories of change. The first of these often takes the shape of formally adopted new routines for organizations even though no actual events connected to these necessarily needs to be taking place. Implementations belonging to the second category are, in contrast to this, often connected to ongoing events within the organizations and are – hopefully - in the process of becoming integrated within the organizations practices. The third category of implementations are fully implemented and integrated within the organization in question. While movement from one degree to another is by no means assured and a recorded theory of change might very well remain a recorded theory of change indefinitely, it appears reasonable to also assume that successful implementation design will involve a certain amount of movement between perhaps especially the last two degrees as, in the words of Faggin (1985), innovation becomes accepted practice.

2.1.3 Implementation stages

The different stages of the implementation process have been explored by among others Fixsen (2005:15), who based on a study of a large sample of implementation studies argues that implementation can be divided into six rough stages. These are as follows: exploration and adaption, program installation, initial implementation, full operation, innovation and sustainability.

In the exploration and adaption stage the context (for example stakeholder needs and organizational limitations and possible barriers to implementation) is investigated and a suitable intervention is selected on the basis of criteria based on the yield of said investigation. During this stage political, financial and human services support for the chosen programme is also secured and a decision to begin the implementation is taken. It should, as Fixsen (2015:16) does, be noted that a decision to implement something does not automatically mean that implementation will actually take place or that what is implemented ends up resembling what has been decided upon. What forms this can take and what it can entail will be discussed in greater detail in the later parts of this thesis.

During the program installation stage, which takes place after the aforementioned decision to begin an intervention has been taken, structural supports such as funding streams, policy development, reporting frameworks and outcome

expectations are put into place. In addition, staff training and hiring commences in this stage.

In the third stage, initial implementation, the change process begins. This is in many ways a critical stage as, in Fixsen's words, "[...] the compelling forces of fear of change, inertia, and investment in the status quo combine with the inherently difficult and complex work of implementing something new". It is easy to see how this might result in implementation failure. Perhaps as a result of this it is also, together with the exploration and adaptation stage, the part of the implementation process that has been the subject to most academic study (Fixsen 2015:16). This is a potential problem, as the results of a "fresh" implementation might very well differ from what the results might be once the implementation has had a chance to mature and become accepted practice.

As the implementation transitions into the fourth stage the organizational change has been fully integrated into the organization. This means that what was once seen as innovation now becomes accepted practice and business as usual. It can also be argued that it is at this point that any measurement of implementation outcomes becomes possible or meaningful, as the staff has had time to develop their new skills and outcomes have had time to develop to an observable state. To reach this point might take years, which in turn makes implementation outcomes difficult to adequately measure (see for example Blase et al 1984, Fixsen & Blasé 1993 and Fixsen et al 2001).

As the implemented intervention matures, the stage is set for the innovation stage. Some degree of drift in the application of a given intervention is common and does not by necessity have to be a bad thing – in this way program improvement can be secured through the integration of innovation in the basic program structure. On the other hand, drift can also be problematic as a lack of program fidelity may interfere with the underlying change theory and make outcomes difficult to relate to the implementation that has taken place (see for example Dobson & Cook 1980).

The final stage is termed by Fixsen as the sustainability stage. This is what takes place after the initial years of the implementation, when the knowledge and practices that have been developed need to be sustained through staff and collaboration changes as well as changes in the external (for example political) environment. The goal in this stage is to quote Fixsen (2015:17) " [...] the long-term survival and continued effectiveness of the implementation site in the context of a changing world".

The diverse number (and length) of the stages presented above is illustrative of some of the challenges facing implementation research. Implementation processes take time and program drift makes it difficult to evaluate what outcomes are related to the implemented program. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that most scholarly knowledge that has been generated on the subject concerns the explorative and initial implementation stages (Fixsen 2015:18).

2.1.4 The actors of the implementation process

As Petersilia (1990) states the ideas that make up social programs are not self-executing. The process and actors involved in the adoption of programs are crucial for the results and outcomes. In this section, an attempt will be made to sketch out these processes and what actors might be involved in these. Within the field of implementation research there has been considerable debate as to what perspective on the actors involved in the implementation process is the most fruitful. Traditionally, implementation has been viewed as a top-down process where the bureaucrats responsible for carrying out policy are – to paraphrase a fictional civil servant of not inconsiderable fame - naught but humble vessels within which the political masters of the day pour the fruit of their deliberations. This perspective yields a hierarchical and linear understanding of the implementation process, where distinctive and from each other clearly separable stages follow each other (Premfors 1989). This is not dissimilar to the thoughts espoused in for example Pressman and Wildavskys (1984) famous study as well as Hogwood and Gunn, the latter in which considerable emphasis is placed on how just decision-makers can avoid implementation failures. It is also analogous to the well-known model of the political system drawn up by Easton (1953), where clearly discernible and demarcated outputs such as decisions and implementations follow on clearly discernible and demarcated inputs, who in their own turn are the products of clearly discernible and demarcated feedback from preceding cycles of clearly discernible and demarcated implementations. It does not seem unfair to speculate that actual reality might perhaps be somewhat more complicated (and, dare one say, messy) than this.

The stagist model above carries a certain degree of attractiveness in its simplicity. At the same time, it has been critiqued for leaving little room for the ideas of the people and organizations tasked with carrying out the implementation process (see for example Sabatier 1993). Lipsky (1980) famously took issue with this top-down perspective in his study of front-line bureaucrats, ascribing great importance to the latter group in the implementation of public policy and championing a bottom-up perspective instead. This is a view also seized upon by for example Winter and Nielsen (2008), who outline a number of consequences that the context within which the front-line bureaucrats in a process work have on the implementation process. Instead of the implementation process being a firmly top-down or bottom-up process, Winter postulates that a number of actors wield influence upon the results it. Among these are the people leading the implementation process, the front-line bureaucrats in the organization where the change is being implemented and also the target audience of the organization within which the change is being affected, whom Winter argues coproduces the implementation results together with the front-line bureaucrats (see Winter 1990 and Winter 1994). This focus on many actors is mirrored in much other recent research within the implementation field. For example, Wolman (1981) points out that implementation failures may occur as a result both of weaknesses in the formulating stage as well as in what Wolman terms the carrying out stage. As a result, both stages need to be considered – albeit in different ways – when

evaluating implementation efforts. Honig (2006) makes a similar point within the context of education, showing how both policy formulation and local context plays a role in implementation results. Similar results are arrived to in Alexanderssons (2006) study of implementation within the auspices of the social services, which shows that a lack of capability and capacity within both the management level and carrying out level of the organization can have a detrimental effect on outcomes.

In regards to the interactions of the target audience with the implementing bureaucrats theorized by Winter, similar thoughts can be found in for example the work of Wagenaar (2011) who postulates the need for an interpretative dimension to policy analysis where the *meaning* of a given policy or program for participants and stakeholders is accorded weight in the understanding of its success or failure. As an example of this, Wagenaar describes how embedding the experiences of institutionalized patients in an attempt to explain readmission rates drastically changed said explanation. This is interesting, as it shows how providing room within research for the views and preferred variables of groups that would traditionally not be given the opportunity to wield such agenda-setting power could yield different results than what for example a statistical analysis utilizing variables influenced by the professional knowledge of (in the case of Wagenaar) therapists would have. This adds yet a dimension to be considered while carrying out implementation research – not only should the formulation and carrying out stages and actors connected to the implementation process be accorded weight, but also the people affected by a given implementation.

The key roles of stakeholders and target groups is also discussed by Peters and Pierre (2012), who describe the importance of building commitment and capacity to a policy among these. The authors describe how this can be achieved through utilizing education and training targeted towards the implementers of policy, as well as fostering commitment among target groups through information campaigns and cost-sharing requirements. Stakeholder effect on policy implementation is also given weight within evaluation literature. Rossi et al (2004) also discuss the need to involve stakeholders in the formulation of evaluation questions when trying to appraise the effectiveness of a given implementation.

Drawing on the above, it is possible to see a shift from the bottom-up versus top-down debates of Lipsky, Pressman and Wildavsky in the eighties towards a more holistic – and to some degree more complex – approach where several groups on several different levels are seen as coproducers of implementation processes and results in more contemporary research. While not possessing the potential for analytical simplicity that the stagist model outlined above benefits from, it can be argued that the latter model serves as the closest analogy to reality of those that have been described. As this study places great importance on the perceptions of a multitude of actors within the implementation process, it is also the model that will be used in the construction of the theoretical framework that follow below.

2.1.5 The organizational context of implementation

As per the definitions that have been outlined above, all implementation processes take place in an organizational context. Understanding this organizational context becomes especially important for understanding the determinants of implementation success if it is assumed – in accordance with some lines of thought within the field of organizational theory - that cultural constructions such as workplace rituals and language vary between different organizational settings. This creates a need for a thorough understanding of the organizational cultural context of a given policy implementation before anything can be discerned regarding reasons for its success or failure (see for example Dahler-Larsen 2012). This is not entirely dissimilar to the argument made by Christina Boswell (2012) in regards to how the actions organizations take are the results of a strive after internal and external legitimacy, and that these therefore behave according to a given logic of appropriateness dependent on among other things organizational culture. This line of reasoning will be returned to below when discussing determinants of implementation success on an organizational level, as well as in the construction of a theoretical framework for this study in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to state that how an organization perceives its role within the context within which it is active can also determine what actions said organization will prefer – and these actions do not by necessity have to be instrumental.

It should perhaps also be noted that large part of the contemporary research on implementation has taken place on a macro rather than micro level (see for example Alexandersson 2006:23ff). Focus has often been on national agencies and horizontal implementation processes rather than local organizations and the both horizontal and vertical processes that take place within these. This could potentially be construed as a problem, especially given the importance of the organizational context outlined above. It is the authors hope that the following study will aid in redressing some of this balance by paying considerable attention to the local organizational context.

3 Theoretical framework

In this section a theoretical framework with which to answer the questions above is constructed. This takes place through an operationalization of what has been described in the literature review through the application of theories drawn from among other things implementation theory, domain theory, neoinstitutionalism, (specifically organizational fields and vertical and horizontal implementation), Lennart Lundquists concept of willingness, comprehension and ability and Christina Boswells thoughts on organizational knowledge use, which provides us with a tool with which to understand the gathered data. While the theoretical concepts mentioned above might seem numerous at first glance, it will in the following sections be shown that they in many ways intersect with one another.

3.1 What is implementation success?

In this section it is shown how different institutional and organizational contexts yield different perceptions of what can be regarded as a successful implementation. This is interesting for the study at hand because, as we shall see below, the different actors involved in the LOKE implementation process are active within different intraorganizational contexts and might therefore not share the same definition of what a successful implementation might consist of.

3.1.1 The organizational level

Drawing on what has been discussed in the prior chapter, the literature reviewed can be interpreted as describing that successful implementation is dependent on several factors. Firstly, the organizational context and culture the implementation takes place in affects the possible outcomes, not least by dictating the logic of appropriateness in a given organizational setting. As we have seen above, Boswell (2012) distinguishes between the instrumental and symbolic functions of knowledge, arguing that the former occurs when the organization in question believes that knowledge use (or in this case, implementation of the LOKE model) can increase its output in an environment where output increases are called for by a principal it is beholden to, while symbolic use is applied to enhance the organizations legitimacy or lend credibility to its policy preferences. Given this, the internal and external conditions of each participating unit or program needs to be discussed to determine if its reasons for implementing the LOKE model are

instrumental or mainly symbolic. If the latter is the case, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that implementation failure (according to a more instrumental success definition) might be closer at hand than what would otherwise be the case. At the same time, it is perfectly possible for an organization or part of an organization that utilizes a more symbolically influenced success definition to perceive the situation in an opposite manner. Another factor that seems necessary to consider is the place of norms and values in making implementations “stick”, something discussed by among others Paul t’Hart (2014) in relation to successful change processes.

Implementation researchers have also studied the effects of organizational readiness in an effort to discern how these affect the success of implementation processes (see for example Lehman, Greener & Simpson 2002). In Lehman et al’s case, the scale considers variables such as what the authors term “motivational readiness” (id est training needs, internal and external pressure to change, perceived organizational need for improvement), the available institutional resources (for example physical space and tools such as computers as well as personnel), the attributes of the staff (where variables such as the staffs adaptability and influence over organizational processes are accorded weight) and the organizational climate of the implementing organization as a whole (goal clarity, openness to change, cohesiveness, et cetera). While some of the variables above overlap heavily with the success conditions described in other studies, it does not seem that the casual connection between organizational readiness – at least in the form described above – and implementation success is strong enough to serve as an explanation in itself (Fixsen 2005:10).

Other researchers have described other factors as important for implementation success on an organizational level. For example, Sunesson (1985) postulates that what is defined as the norm in a given social work organization has a considerable effect on the implementation of new concepts and ideas – perhaps more so than what individual social workers or units as a whole consider important. It is once again possible to connect this to the concept of logic of appropriateness that has been described above. Eriksson and Karlsson (1990) and Forslund (1996) argue in their turn that goal-awareness and interest from management and possibilities to affect the process from the front-line bureaucrats are necessary organizational preconditions for successful implementation. An organizational structure that provides conditions for the interest of management in the implementation program and process is also emphasized by for example Larsson (1999) and Rasmusson (2004). In addition, the perceived match between the organization and the project that is being implemented is accorded considerable weight by a number of researchers (see for example Johansson 2004). Finally, several studies seem to indicate that an organizational structure where a person or function has a clear responsibility for and ownership of the implementation process and the evaluation of it is beneficial for implementation success (see for example Enstöm & Larsson 1998, Jenner & Segraeus 2005, Kalev et al 2006 and Larsson 2005).

3.1.2 The actor level

The literature indicates that the commitment and capacity of involved stakeholders – both management-level and front line, but also other stakeholders such as target groups - is of importance too, regardless of the attributes of the organizational structure. While several factors affecting said commitment and capacity – such as program legitimacy and perceived usefulness – are shared by several of the stated groups, it is also possible to imagine that there are some influential factors which are individual to each group. For example, it is possible to speculate in a similar vein to Boswell (2012) that the commitment of management level stakeholders is likely to vary depending on whether instrumental or symbolic knowledge use is in effect. It is also possible to imagine other factors influencing the performance of the management level stakeholders. For example, Lundquist places great stock in the three concepts of willingness, comprehension and ability among both managers and front-line bureaucrats. According to Lundquist, the incidence of these three among the actors in an implementation process will wield considerable influence upon the outcome of said process. This appears to be corroborated by a not insignificant amount of other studies (see for example the previously mentioned studies by Forslund 1996, Enström & Larsson 1998, Larsson 1999 and Rasmusson 2004, as well as Lundefors 2003).

While much of the above – and especially perhaps the Lundquistian trinity of concepts - is also true for front-line welfare service providers such as social workers, it is also possible to imagine other commitment-affecting factors for these. These could for example be lack of training, time or resources (or in Lundquistian terms comprehension and ability), as well as perceived usefulness of the model and legitimacy of the source (or in Lundquistian terms willingness). Peters and Pierre (2012) also emphasize the usefulness of signalling desired courses of action towards both front-line bureaucrats and managers by the application of oversight mechanisms and making sure good examples are given attention and spread. It is possible that a failure to secure front-line commitment by utilizing these could be detrimental to implementation success. This is a sentiment echoed by Petersilia (1990), who in accordance with what has been stated above believes that recognition and acceptance of an implementation and its measures by the affected community (for example welfare workers) is critical for the survival of said implementation. Once again it is possible to argue that Lundquists concept of willingness could be especially illuminating in the light of this. If recognition and acceptance is low, it stands to reason that the willingness to implement the program in question might also suffer. In addition it has been shown by among others Eriksson & Karlsson (1990) and Karlsson (1992) that is beneficial to implementation processes within the field of social work if the involved social workers perceive that there exists a need for the implemented program, for example if the work they are carrying out is not leading to the desired outcomes. While stating that there must be a need for the program might seem like a truism, it is nonetheless important to state as – which we shall see below – the perception of both programs and current work might vary to a considerable extent between different actors in a given social work setting. Another variable that is mentioned in the literature as important for implementation processes on the actor level is ownership and participation in the design of the evaluatory instrument – *id est* in

determining the definition of success (once again, see for example Forslund 1996, Larsson 1999, Lundefors 2003, Rasmusson 2004, and Jenner & Segraeus 2005). In addition, studies seem to indicate that the program under implementation will have a higher chance of success if the ideas espoused by it are possible to connect to the practical work experiences of the implementing social workers and correspond to a need experienced by these in their day to day practices (Sunesson 1985).

In the following study there are several involved actors (and, perhaps more interestingly, several different levels of actors). These are the national level from which LOKE is spread to the local level, the local management level, the local implementer level, the local unit managers and finally the front-line bureaucrats working in the local units. These will be conceptualized and discussed in greater detail in the theory chapter – for now it is sufficient to state that there are at least five different levels who are in one way or another involved or who affect the implementation of the LOKE model in Lund municipality. While only three of these will be discussed in detail in this particular study, the literature nonetheless indicates that this can give rise to challenges within implementation processes – something which will be discussed in the following section.

3.1.3 Instrumental or symbolic success?

As the discussion above indicates, implementation success is not an entirely unproblematic concept. For starters, it does not seem to be the case that all domains within an organization by necessity need to share similar success definitions, which can potentially be explained by their differing sources of legitimacy and logic of appropriateness. This in turn affects the level to which they can fulfil the two criteria (willingness and comprehension) outlined by Lundquist. In addition, it would – based among other things on the writings of Exworthy and Powell – appear that the interactions between different parts of the implementing network or organizational field wield considerable influence on the outcome of the process. Drawing on this, the following section will be dedicated to conceptualizing different success definitions as well as the determinants of implementation success that these are dependent upon with the aim of providing a framework through which the data that has been gathered as a part of this study can be studied.

Instrumental success

Instrumental success is success that derives from the concrete usefulness of an implemented measure. This can for example be the positive effects of the LOKE model on client outcomes or a measurable increase in the quality of other aspects of service delivery. It can also be instrumental organizational goals such as providing a clearer idea of a given organizational structure or helping the agency reaffirm control over units where there for example is no clear sense of their place within the organizational context.

Symbolic success

Symbolic success outcomes include living up to external and internal logics of appropriateness, notwithstanding whether or not this in turn gives rise to any instrumental gains. One example of this could be a research and development unit spreading an evidence-based way of working informed by research to other units, or an agency drawing on expert knowledge because it believes that it is expected to do so.

3.2 Domain theory

The preceding sections have touched upon the role of both actors and organizational context in implementation processes within public organizations in general and the field of social work in particular. In addition, the social service in Lund municipality has been defined as a human service organization. This is significant for the understanding of what factors exercise influence on the actors and organization and as a result of this the implementation of LOKE. Kouzes and Mico (1979) framework of different organizational domains is a key concept in the pursuit of said understanding. According to this framework, a human service organization such as the social services can be divided into three principal domains – a policy domain chiefly inhabited by decision-making politicians, a management domain and a service domain. In addition, as Alexandersson (2006:63) states, it is often possible to find actors and functions that act as a kind of bridge between for example the management and service domains – in the case of this study this would be the municipal resource and development unit on the local level and different types of research and development organizations on the national level. According to Kouzes and Mico the different domains are different to each other both in function and concept of institutional legitimacy and appropriateness. Ergo the management domain is dominated by a different kind of logic and norms than for example the service domain, which can give rise to different types of responses and reactions to outwardly similar stimuli.

In the context of this study the management and service domains are represented by way of the local management and front line bureaucrats. In addition, the above-mentioned bridge domain is represented by way of the local resource and development unit, which will for sake of this study henceforth be referred to as the expert domain. In contrast to what seems to be assumed by the model espoused by Kouze and Mico the relationships between these is not strictly hierarchical – instead interaction takes place both within the horizontal and vertical dimensions. This will be discussed further in conjunction to the theoretical framework of the study.

The concept of coexisting inter- and intraorganizational domains is of paramount importance to this study. If it is accepted that Kouze and Mico are indeed correct, it does not seem entirely unreasonable to assume that the perception and legitimacy grounds of a given implementation project will vary depending on which domain is queried. The logical extension of this that the different domains might have very different ideas altogether of what is happening, why it is happening and what the goals of the process is.

3.3 Modes of knowledge use

Organizations act the way they do for a great number of different reasons. We have already seen that different domains draw upon different logics of appropriateness and grounds for legitimacy in their actions. This is a behaviour that has not gone unnoticed by neoinstitutional scholars. For example, Christina Boswell in her study of political usage of expert knowledge describes how political decision-makers draw upon said knowledge for three main reasons. These are as a means of problem-solving (instrumental use), as a source of legitimacy (symbolic use) or as a way to substantiate policy preferences. The second usage is interesting when put in relation to the two main venues the author describes for organizations to generate legitimacy: either through their output (for example – in a social service setting – the number of clients helped) or through their adherence to certain processes and structures (Boswell 2012:12-13). According to this understanding, an organization, or domain within an organization, can in other words gain legitimacy by acting in such a way as to which is congruent with how organizations of the type in question are *expected* to act. For instance an organization that is active within a field where great emphasis is placed upon empirical knowledge will derive legitimacy from drawing upon research in its practices, whereas an organization that is active within a context where the emphasis is on helping disadvantaged people at a concrete level in an ad-hoc fashion where focus is on what works will derive legitimacy from generating successful outcomes for said people, regardless of what – for example – empirical grounds exist for the methods chosen.

While Boswell discusses these concepts in a larger organizational context, it does not, in accordance with what the text above has hinted at, seem unreasonable to postulate that the same pattern could be seen within the constituent parts of an organization. In the context of LOKE it is possible that this could mean that, given that each involved actor strives for legitimacy, each level (regional, local managerial, LOKE implementors, front-line management and front-line bureaucratic) has differing conceptions of what it needs to do to achieve legitimacy. For example, it seems reasonable to imagine that the resource and development unit within the local social services would place emphasis on expert empirical knowledge as a source of legitimacy, while the front line bureaucrats within the implementing units might perceive that they derive legitimacy from the outcomes of their client-focused work. The framework outlined by Boswell provides this study with a context within which to understand these potentially different conceptions of legitimacy.

3.1 Organizational field interaction

Exworthy and Powell (2004) describe the importance of considering implementation both in a wider policy context but also, and perhaps for the purposes of this thesis, more importantly, in relation to the local horizontal relations between involved actors. Indeed, the authors claim that many classic implementation problems can be traced to difficulties on the horizontal level rather than the vertical (Exworthy and Powell 2004:2). To counter this, a model inspired by Kingdons three stream model is suggested where implementation success is tied up to occurrences in the interactions between central-central, central-local and local-local levels, thus further complicating the top-down, bottom-up and mixed models of policy implementation that have been described in the preceding chapter.

In the context of this study, the idea that horizontal interactions between domains with diverging expectations and goals might be just as important as vertical ones is central. This ties into the discussion that has been touched upon in the preceding chapter, where the somewhat messy nature of implementation, existence of organizational fields and competing logics of the different organizational domains has been described. Because of this, the following study presupposes that it is not possible to simplify implementation to the extent that it is possible to talk about top-down or bottom-up processes, at least not in the context that is under investigation here. The implementation of the LOKE model involves a great number of actors with a great number of relationships to each other, few of them possible to describe in conventional hierarchical terms. Because of this, the model championed by Exworthy and Powell is central to the understanding of the relationships between the involved actors. More often than not the LOKE implementation process is based on the interaction between horizontal local levels (for example the local development unit and the implementing units, or the LOKE diffusers in the local development unit and the local management level within the municipal social services) rather than interactions between different levels. That being said, the process also involves a hierarchical element – for example the interactions between the local management level (both on an agency level and on a unit level) and the front-line bureaucrats in the different implementing units. Fortunately, there is space for this too within Exworthy and Powells model.

As the discussion above shows the relationship between the actors involved in the LOKE process does not conform to any of the traditional implementation perspectives that have been described in the literature review. For example, the National Board of Health and Welfare interacts both with the regional research and development unit, the local resource and development unit in Lund municipality as well as the local agency management. None of these interactions can as a result of how the Swedish social service system is structured be said to be hierarchical in the traditional understanding of the word. While the structure of the social services on a national level are interesting in themselves, the focus of this study will be on the local level. At the aforementioned level it is possible to see how the resource and development unit interacts in a non-hierarchical way with the local unit management as well as the local unit front-line bureaucrats, while at the same time being subject to directives from the local agency management – an characteristic it also shares with the local unit management. In the light of the above it seems more prudent to talk about an implementation network rather than an implementation

hierarchy. This in large parts non-hierarchical relationship between the involved actors carries with it the implication that given the existence of different conceptions of what is being implemented there is not a clear mechanism for enforcing a given conception within the scope of the organizational field in question. As a result of this, it does not seem unwise that any study concerned with implementation in such a context should also concern itself with what perception “wins through” in the end.

The above bears obvious similarities to the discussion that has been had above on the subject of different domain logics. Given that different domains hold different logics of appropriateness and as a result of this both different rationales as well as different success definitions for a given program, and these domains exist in a largely non-hierarchical organizational field where one definition is not given automatic preeminence over others, it can be argued to be important to determine which of these definitions are shaping the overall perception of the implementation process. This will be further operationalized in the next section, where Lennart Lundquists concepts of willingness and comprehension are brought to bear upon the different domains within the organizational field.

3.2 Comprehension and willingness within different domains

Lennart Lundquists understanding of the importance of the three factors of willingness, comprehension and ability underpins many implementation studies (see for example Alexandersson 2006 where the conceptual framework of Lundquist is further developed while studying implementation efforts within the social services). For Lundquist, this framework can be applied to understand the outcomes of many different types of implementation processes. This study primarily draws upon the concepts of comprehension and willingness. Ability, while no doubt important, can be argued to be less central to the processes under scrutiny here as there is little variance in the resources deployed to implement the LOKE model between the involved units, owing to the fact that a large part of the process is handled by the Resource and Development Unit of the municipal social services. Further, it does not seem improbable that the dimensions of comprehension and willingness are more liable to vary in accordance to the underlying logic of the domain in question, while ability – at least in many ways – remains constant regardless of how the model is perceived.

3.2.1 Comprehension

For the purposes of this study, the dimension of “comprehension” is connected to the different definitions of the implementation goal (and success measures) that

exist among the different organizational domains and will be used to categorize the information gathered from the actors in the interviews. This connects to the very core of the research question: how do the different domains involved in the implementation process perceive what is happening, and in what way does that perception affect what happens under the course of said process. It is possible to speculate that a great number of understandings permeate the process – for example one category of actors might understand the LOKE model as a way of improving service delivery in relation to achieved client outcomes, while another category of actors might primarily view the model as a way of gaining greater knowledge about the working practices of the affected units and whether or not these are in accordance with the level of service delivery mandated by law. These different understandings will be discussed in greater detail under the course of the discussion on the results of the interviews that have been carried out as a part of this study.

The “able” dimension is connected to the organizational and knowledge resources of the different levels and gathered both from the interview subjects and the complementary data. In the context of LOKE useful indicators for ableness can be both on an organizational level (for example allotted time as well as previous experience with systematic evaluation systems), but also on an individual level – for example the knowledge resources of front line workers and managers, as well as their day-to-day work load of the same.

3.2.2 Willingness

The “willingness” dimension is connected to the working context of the interview subjects as well as the knowledge use in action (see below). In the former case it can for example be observed that limited working hours necessitate prioritizations, and these prioritizations are in turn influenced by the desires and preferences of the involved actors. In the latter case it does not seem unreasonable that the reasons for implementing the model (or – as we have seen above – in Boswellian terms the knowledge use in action) also exercises influence on the willingness of the implementing actor. This will once again be covered in greater depth in the methodology section. In addition, useful indicators for willingness in the context of LOKE implementation can be for example allotted working hours and staff resources.

3.3 Comprehension, interaction and success perception

When combined, the theoretical concepts outlined above presents us with a multitude of factors to take into account when studying implementation within the social services. First, the legitimacy grounds and mode of knowledge use for a given

domain needs to be established. When this has been done, the success definition and logic of appropriateness (corresponding rather well to the Lundquistian dimensions of comprehension and willingness) of the domain can be arrived at. This in turn makes it possible to establish whether horizontal or vertical relationships within the organizational field within which the domain in active has been instrumental in shaping said definition, as well as what the determinants of implementation success are given the above-mentioned variables. In addition – and conclusion – an analysis of aforementioned factors can also be beneficial in establishing whether or not the LOKE implementation has been successful (and perhaps more importantly, whether it can be said to have been so for all involved actors and domains).

Methodology

In this chapter the methods which have been deployed to answer the research question will be described. The chapter begins with a section on the methodological assumptions of the thesis are outlined in an attempt to position the knowledge claims which are made later within an ontological and epistemological context. This is then followed by a discussion on the case selection for the study, as well as the data collection methods employed and the way in which these have been analysed.

3.4 Methodological assumptions

Before elucidating on the actual research design itself it might be useful to say a few words in regards to the ontological and epistemological point of view of the study. This thesis positions itself in a post-positivist tradition, where objective observation of the world is both possible and desirable. That being said, external circumstances and experiences still influence what is observed and how these observations are interpreted, meaning that care has to be taken in order to devise strategies to prevent this from affecting the validity of the study. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

In addition, it is for the purposes of this paper assumed that the actions of the actors within said world are some degree of rational, *id est* to some extent value-maximizing and consistent. At the same time, said rationality is assumed to be bounded by computational limits and imperfect knowledge (see for example Allison 1999:19ff). This bounded rationality means that decisions are seldom objectively rational, but rather rational within the given current social and knowledge context of an actor. This needs to be allowed for and reflected in the research design by paying attention to said context. This perspective bears no small degree of resemblance to what might be found in the behaviourist tradition, which is perhaps the closest analogue to the positions outlined above (see for example Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker 2018:23ff). Further, it is the hope of the author that the acknowledgement of the inherent boundedness of rationality will prove a semblance of defense against some of the critique usually levelled at positivist and behaviorist methods (Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker 2018:30). Nevertheless – this bounded rationality when combined with the above notion regarding the observable state of the world, means that it should be possible to gain knowledge of a given problem, such as implementation successes, by studying the actions of different actors.

3.5 Case selection

The LOKE model has at the time of writing been implemented in several different units and organizations and is in the process of being implemented in several more. The model itself is interesting to study for several reasons. First and foremost, it can be argued that is quite typical of the wider trend within social work in Sweden. As has been touched upon in the background section, the last 20 years has seen increasing movement towards evidence-based working practices. There is little reason to suspect that this will cease being the case in the foreseeable future. Also, the breadth of LOKE implementation provides a wide array of cases to choose from. For the purposes of this thesis it has been thought beneficial to utilize a most-similar study design, where two units which are as similar to each other as possible except in relation to implementation outcome have been selected. It should be noted that no two cases can ever be truly similar – there is always going to be some degree of variation. Instead, the most-similar study design should in this context be seen as an ideal type of research design to which the study aspires (see for example Teorell & Svensson 2007:227).

The two cases, hereafter unit A and unit B, are of a similar size and part of a similar wider organizational context. Both units employ a number of front-line bureaucrats who work directly with clients (albeit with different demographics and different types of service provision), as well as managers with previous front-line experience. While there are differences in the nature of their work, the similarities are greater. This makes the chosen units well suited for this kind of study.

3.6 Data collection method

Several different types of data – mainly interviews and an analysis of written sources - underlie this study. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, there are many who argue that there is an inherent usefulness in validating hypothesis through data triangulation. By gathering data from several sources the study is less vulnerable to errors in any single one source. Secondly, employing methods such as qualitative readings of written sources is a useful way to identify sample members. Morse refers to this process, where the output of one methodology is used to inform a second methodology, as sequential triangulation (Johnson et al 2007:3-4). Drawing inspiration from this, the analysis of written sources has been geared in such a way as to both generate data that can be used in answering the research question and in the identification of possible interview subjects.

3.6.1 Interviews

In accordance with what has been shown in the theoretical framework of this thesis it does not seem unreasonable to assume that the actors involved in the implementation process possess considerable knowledge that may be useful in determining reasons for the outcome and perception of the implementation process in question. A total of 9 interviews have been carried out under the course of this study. 4 of these have been with front line welfare workers, 2 with managers and 3 with members of the unit responsible for aiding in the local implementation of LOKE. A large portion of the interviewees have been made subject to a strategic selection process where variables such as previous experience and years within the field have been accorded weight. The purpose of this has been both to capture as broad a number of perspectives as possible, but also investigate whether previous experience with evaluator systems shape the perception and outcomes of the current process. In addition, the members of the research domain have been selected in such a way as to ensure a variety of professional backgrounds ranging from front-line social work to more academic and research-oriented pursuits.

As the subjects in question are professionals and specialists within a wide range of fields, there is a not insignificant knowledge gap between the interviewer and interviewees. It could be argued that this makes said professionals similar to the elites discussed by among others Harvey and Conti & O'Neill in relation to power and knowledge asymmetries (see for example Conti & O'Neill 2007:5) – meaning in turn that some of the strategies outlined by these authors are relevant in the context of this study. Among these can be especially mentioned making use of open questions in such a manner as to compensate for any eventual deficiencies in technical knowledge on the part of the interviewer. Further, the fact that that it is possible that the elites have a predisposition against discussing possible implementation failures candidly means that trust-building strategies such as being transparent about how data will be used and results disseminated is critical. For similar reasons more sensitive questions are deployed in the later stages of the interview process rather than the earlier (Harvey 2011:3-4, 7).

Roulston (2010:15) makes a similar argument, describing how the utilization of open questions is beneficial in providing the interviewee room to formulate their response in their own words, rather than being constrained by the effects of possible knowledge gaps on the phrasing of more closed questions. Further, Roulston describes how open questions can be used as openers for probes, for example by rephrasing the interviewees statement and feeding it back to them, thus once again providing the interviewer with a much-needed toolset in the face of potentially overwhelming technical expertise. Drawing on the above, it - given the attributes of the target interviewees - seems suitable for the research enquiries to take the form of semi-structured interviews with a prepared set of open questions to begin each section of the interview with, which are then followed by probes adapted with help from the answers of the subjects (Roulston 2010:18).

Once again it appears useful to position the proposed research within the neo-positivist tradition interview tradition which Roulston describes, where the object of the questions is to reveal the subjects (observable) “inner self”, thus gaining knowledge of its (rationally bounded) actions and thoughts. This gives further credence to the intended usage of open-ended questions, as one of the core

assumptions of the post-positivist interview tradition described by the author is that it is inherently useful to avoid closed and leading questions, as the responses of the interviewee gain in validity if they do not know why a certain question have been asked and are not subject to any external indication of what an acceptable or desired answer might be (Roulston 2010:54).

Two different interview guides (see appendix I and II) have been constructed, each geared towards a specific function within the implementing network. These guides have been adhered to during all the interviews, even though – as has been stated above - a degree of variance is possible to trace in the utilization and content of probes because of the differing answers offered by the interviewees during the interviews.

3.6.2 Complementary data

The complementary data that has been gathered consists of several different categories. A large portion is written material generated by the implementing units themselves under the course of the implementation process. This ranges from purpose and process descriptions to plans for systematic evaluation. In addition, material connected to the LOKE model put together by the program diffusers has been studied. This material, being comprehensive to its nature, provides the baseline with which the differing perceptions of the implementing process is compared.

3.7 Data analysis method

3.7.1 Interview data

The data gathered as a result of the survey and interviews is coded in accordance with a for said purpose devised coding scheme (see appendix III), which makes it possible to discern themes in the responses of the subjects. Designing a coding scheme with high validity is fraught with several difficulties – for example measures need to be taken to make sure that the codes actually are relevant to the subject, something which is made harder by the above-mentioned technical nature of some of the professions involved. Further, it is important to make sure that relying on a methodology based on coding does not affect the data or steer it in a particular direction (Roulston 2010:152-156). For the purposes of this study, a round of pre-interviews from a grounded approach have been used during the construction of the coding scheme, thus providing a foundation for this to stand upon. In addition, a second coding round has been carried out after the first analysis in a bid to ensure a high degree of validity in the final coding. Here, a second coder

has been exposed to a sample of the coding in an attempt to through the process of investigator triangulation secure a valid and reliable coding process (Johnson et al 2007:3). The themes that have been identified through this process provide the foundation for the final parts of the thesis, where the responses of the different domains are contrasted with and put in relation to one another and the theoretical concepts outlined in the theory chapter.

3.7.2 Complementary data

When necessary the interview data has been complemented by additional data such as model design documents and workshop output from the affected units describing the particular shape the implementation has taken in the different contexts in question.

3.7.3 Source criticism

As in all interview situations, special care has to be taken to treat the gathered data with a degree of scepticism. The respondents are – like all humans - coloured by their own experiences and agendas, which in turn influences the content of the data gathered from them. In addition, factors such as time elapsed since a particular event or distance to an event can influence the information that is gathered (see for example Teorell & Svensson 2007:104 for a discussion on what factors might have a detrimental effect on data from a source criticism perspective).

4 Data analysis

4.1 Definitions of implementation success

In the following section the different definitions of implementation success that have been derived from the interview data will be described. These are divided by the different domains that the interviewed subjects can be sorted under and discussed one by one. A selection of the themes identified below will be returned to under the course of the concluding discussion, where similarities and differences between the different domains and how this can be said to affect the implementation results is deliberated upon.

4.1.1 The expert domain

In the interviews that have been carried out with members of what has been termed the expert domain several themes can be identified. Some of these appear to be unique to the expert domain. These, as well as those whom the expert domain share with the other domains, will be discussed in the following section.

The first of the abovementioned theme is **fidelity to the model**. All three of the interviewed expert functions emphasized the providence of the model as well as the structures that had been put into place to ensure that the model would remain true to said providence even when applied in the local context. According to this definition, a successful program implementation is one that remains true to the underlying logic of the program. A variety of reasons is brought forward for this – most prominent of these being a conviction that the evidence-driven nature of the program demands a certain degree of fidelity if the desired results are to be obtained. At the same time, as we shall see below, the need to adapt the model to local circumstances is often accorded considerable weight by the respondents. While this might seem contradictory to an outside observer, the respondents seem to have little trouble reconciling these two views. This somewhat surprising order of things will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The second theme that stands out in the expert domains views on implementation success is the arrival at a **long-term routine for the systematic collection of data to be used for evaluation purposes** in the implementing unit. It is clear from the data gathered that the responsible experts view this as the overarching goal of the program implementation. This comes to the fore in quotes as for example the following:

“My understanding of what LOKE is, is that if you follow the program in its entirety, then the goal is to arrive at carrying out evaluations” – Expert domain worker 1 (my translation)

This is congruent with the above-mentioned emphasis on program fidelity. The LOKE model is at its core geared towards the gathering of data to inform local practices. It is therefore entirely logical that the experts, who are well-acquainted with the model on a theoretical level, should place considerable importance on this.

At the same time, it is possible to see diverging perceptions here too. For example, when asked to rank the two constituent parts of LOKE after each other in order of importance, all interviewed expert domain respondents expressed the opinion – in accordance with the above - that the most important part of LOKE according to the model was the arrival at a method for systematic collection of data and evaluation. On the other hand, further probing often revealed that this goal (which, it can once again be emphasized, was accorded considerable importance) was to some extent subordinated to local conditions. Under the course of the interviews it was expressed several times that there was a gap between ideal conditions (where this goal could be in focus and easily reached) and actual conditions at the municipal social services. This is well illustrated through the following quote:

“In the best of all worlds I would have liked every unit in an agency such as the Social Services to have a well thought out written description of activities, a sort of program theory. This is not the case at our agency. Therefore, the LOKE-model has become a way to help the unit managers create a description of activities. This description is really important, because it serves as the foundation for everything else” – Expert domain worker 2 (my translation)

As we can see, it is not in this particular instance felt that the prerequisites for focusing on the stated goal of the model are in place. Instead, the model becomes something else – a tool to arrive at the conditions within which it can be implemented through the **creation of systematic work descriptions**. This is something rather different than the formal goal, which it should once again be emphasized, is unequivocally agreed (at least, it would seem, in theory) by all members of the expert domain. This also shines through in the following quote:

“Yes, I believe that this [the carrying out of both stages of the model] should be the goal of the implementation. At the same time.. We get so much input about what we are supposed to do under the course of a year that many things compete for our time. There must also be time to carry out our core functions, meeting the clients and all that, and therefore one can have to wait with stage 2.”

- Expert domain worker 3 (my translation)

Once again it seems clear that there exists a conflict between what the model should be and what it actually becomes in the meeting with the realities of the day-to-day work of the social services. This will be returned to in greater detail in the

discussion. For now it is sufficient to state that there seems to exist a difference between an “ideal” implementation and what implementation is possible to achieve in reality in the perception of the expert domain professionals.

The final theme that is possible to observe among some elements of the expert domain is the opinion that the goal of the model must be **improvement for the clients**. While this perspective underlines all work that takes place within the auspices of the social services to the extent that it is mandated by law, it is still interesting when it is expressed in such concrete terms by the expert domain as which by its very nature has limited contact with clients as in the following quote:

“The goal in general is what this “gives” the client. Yes, that is an important thing to emphasize: this is a model which is oriented towards the individual in such a way that the point is to look at what we want to give our clients, who our clients are. What do we want to provide them with, and what do we want to make sure that they have been provided with? The point of this is not to arrive at a description of the organization or catalogue what resources are available, but rather to do individual follow-ups that can then be aggregated and summarized on a group level, but which always draw upon the experience of the individual” – Expert domain worker 1 (my translation)

The above quote is interesting for a number of reasons. To begin with it further complicates the already rather complicated understanding of what the goal of the implementation process is. We have now seen how the goal is alternately defined as arriving at a method for evaluations or establishing the prerequisites for being able to talk about evaluations, this in itself being dependent on what the local conditions allow. At the same time as this flexibility is mandated and indeed stated as necessary, fidelity to the model is accorded great importance – often by the same individual who moments earlier was stating how critical adaption to local circumstances is if any meaningful results are to be arrived at. This inherent contradiction will be discussed in greater detail below. In addition, it does not seem uninteresting to speculate in that the background of the professional respondents also plays a role. While client improvement is mentioned by nearly all respondents from the expert domain, it appears to be especially emphasized by those within said domain who have previously worked in a more practical capacity as social workers. This is, as we shall see below, not entirely dissimilar to what seems to be the case within the management domain. This too will be brought up again under the course of the concluding discussion.

To summarize the discussion above, it is possible to perceive a great number of themes in relation to the goals of the implementation of the LOKE model among the members of the expert domain. To reiterate, these are model fidelity, the arrival at a long-term routine for the systematic collection of data to be used for evaluation purposes (LOKE phase 2), the creation of systematic work descriptions (LOKE phase 1) and finally client improvement. This leads us to the concluding part of this section, which is a discussion concerning the motivations of the respondents. A number of explanations and motivations for the varying goals outlined above are drawn upon by the members of the expert domain. Among the most noteworthy of

these is a perception that a systematic way of working is, to quote one of the respondents, “very much of contemporary relevance” (my translation). This is a sentiment which is echoed among all members of the expert domain that have been interviewed. It seems, to refer back to Boswell, clear that drawing upon systematic evidence and data is very much something that carries with it external legitimacy within the field the expert domain is active in. In relation to client improvement, two main motivations can be seen in the material. One of these draws upon the legally obligated responsibilities of the social services, and views the implementation of the LOKE model as a way of living up to these. This can once again be interpreted as the domain in question (and for that matter, the organization as a whole as this sentiment is as we shall see below echoed within all domains) striving to conform to outside expectations and through this achieve legitimacy. The second one takes stock in the working realities of the implementing social workers. As one of the expert domain interviewees with a professional background within practical social work states: “*I believe that one as a social worker often returns to the question of whether or not ones job is meaningful. Do I make a difference [for the client]? This is what we can answer through evaluation.*” (my translation). This is something rather different than conforming to external expectations and legitimacy grounds. Indeed, it could be interpreted as the exact opposite – a drive for internal legitimacy through the application of the professional logic of the service domain, which as we shall see below is greatly concerned with the welfare of its clients and what effect their working practices has on this.

4.1.2 The service domain

The themes within the service domain are both different and similar to the ones that have been described in the discussion above. Among social workers from both the interviewed units emphasis was placed on above all two things – **client improvement** and the **clients right to equal treatment and legal security** in his or her dealings with the social services. Both of these themes are accorded weight by all service domain workers without exception in all the interviews that have been carried out, which could be interpreted as them carrying considerable importance for the social workers of the service domain.

The first theme, client improvement, is expressed in terms of the point of the implemented program being to make things easier for the client in different ways. It is clear from the supplementary material that has been investigated as part of this study that this perspective also has shaped what form the second evaluatory stage of the implementation has taken too – in both of the participating units the second stage has focused on areas of work that have a direct and concrete impact on the care and service the client receives. The sometimes strong feelings of the service domain workers are well summarized in the quotation below.

“The purpose [of LOKE] is that things should become easier for the client. That’s the way I think, at least. If this is not the case, I think we should just as well stop using it.” – Service domain worker 1 (my translation)

Similar sentiments are echoed in the other interviews, where for example the following views are expressed:

“I think it [LOKE] needs to be something concrete that has direct application to what we do every day if it is to be meaningful and good.” – Service domain worker 2 (my translation)

“You always think like this: ‘Right, what is this now? Will this be useful to me? What is this going to lead to?’, you know. But this became very concrete in the end.” – Service domain worker 3 (my translation)

It seems clear that models and programs with direct practical applications in regards to the clients are preferred by the service domain. In addition, it seems that what can be interpreted as initial scepticism (see the third of the quotes above) gives way to careful optimism when the conditions allow for the model (in this case LOKE) to be reinterpreted by the service domain workers as something with concrete benefits for the client. This too is a recurring characteristic of the interviews with the service domain workers. In nearly all of the interviews a certain degree of cynicism towards models which are perceived as too administrative and divorced from reality can be seen. As one of the respondents states, *“We work with real life situations and real life is by its nature never really what you expect it to be”*. When the LOKE model is shown to be compatible with the reality within which they perceive themselves to be working, said cynicism is re-evaluated. The goal of the service domain workers is to make sure that the client receives the help they need, which is perhaps best illustrated by the following quote:

“I think that the most important thing is that the clients get the feeling that they have received help. That we don’t have make things so damn complicated.” – Service domain worker 3 (my translation)

Therefore, the LOKE model seems to be evaluated in terms of whether or not it is in accordance with this goal. When it is found to be so, as seems to have been the case among the service domain workers interviewed, it is integrated into this goal. This is interesting, as it is to some extent different to some of the goals espoused by for example the expert domain – the legitimacy of the model is not derived from the fact that it is in accordance with a given evidence-driven zeitgeist, but rather from the practical applications of it.

Thus it is also with the second theme that can be found among the service domain workers, namely the clients right to equal treatment and legal certainty. While similar to some extent to the theme above, perhaps mainly in relation to the desired outcome (improvement for the client), it is still different enough to warrant its own discussion. Equal treatment is, has been mentioned above, mentioned by all the interview subjects within the service domain. Often terms that connect said treatment to the clients rights are used, as exemplified by for example the below statement:

“It [stage 2 of the LOKE process in the unit in question] helps guarantee that everybody gets the help that they have a right to, and that they get equal help – based on their needs and capabilities. That the aid they receive does not vary depending on who helps them.” – Service domain worker 2 (my translation)

The same sentiments are also expressed in the quotation below:

“[What the social services do] must be legally secure for the client, everyone needs to be working the same way, it shouldn’t matter who happens to be the case worker. Everybody must receive a fair and humane review of their situation and their need for help.” – Social domain worker 1 (my translation)

As these quotes once again make clear, the LOKE process – specifically the second stage, which by its nature is the most practical of the two – is very much viewed as a concrete tool for service delivery by the front-line workers of the service domain. This stands in considerable contrast to the data-gathering goals of the expert domain, which does not appear to be a very important goal at all for the members of the service domain. Indeed, the following exchange took place when one of the respondents was asked about second stage collection of data:

Interviewer: So, do you gather any data about the clients in these [second stage] meetings?

Respondent: No, we haven’t gotten that far.

Interviewer: But you intend to get that far?

Respondent: No, I don’t think so. No.

Interviewer: Why? Is there no need for it?

Respondent: Maybe 5, 10 years in the future. But we need to figure out how it benefits the client.

A not dissimilar notion was also expressed in an interview with another member of the service domain:

Interviewer: Have they [the second stage meetings] been about data gathering at all?

Respondent: No, consider it more to be a matter of.. Well, I’m always more concerned about the needs of the client. The client needs so much else. Sometimes, they need help filling in forms. Finding the right forms. All of the practical stuff, sort of.

This is interesting, as the gathering of data is very much at the core of the model as it is perceived both by its creators and the local members of the expert domain. This

goal does not seem to have been adopted by the service domain at all. Rather, it is once again possible to see the language of client benefit being deployed. Concrete work with concrete client benefits (such as the second stage meetings discussed above) seems to take precedence before the administrative task of gathering data that can then be aggregated and used in the development of service for the front-line workers in the service domain. While this will be discussed in greater detail below, it does not seem unreasonable to for now speculate that this can once again be put into relation to the perceived nature of social work, the “real world” mentioned in one of the preceding quotes. The differences described in a previous chapter of this thesis between the Swedish and American drive for evidence-driven care also springs to mind. It does not seem unreasonable to speculate that the appetite for data collection among Swedish social workers is less than that of its American counterparts. The drive for concrete solutions and less administrative tasks such as data collection is perhaps best expressed through the following quote, expressed in not inconsiderable frustration at the end of one of the interviews:

“It doesn’t have to be so damn complicated! [...] It wasn’t this way during the eighties. No, back then you just ‘spat in your hands’ regardless of what the situation happened to be and solved it!” – Service domain worker 2 (my translation)

This seems to once again indicate that the practical usefulness of a given model is seen as more interesting than less tangible values. This is further reinforced by the fact that only implementing the first stage (which the attentive reader will surely remember was considered an acceptable compromise by elements of the expert domain given the prevailing conditions within the social services) is discounted almost entirely by all interviewed members of the service domain. One example of this is the following exchange:

Interviewer: If we divide the process in two parts – the first and second stage, which of these have best answered your needs?

Respondent: The second stage, no doubt.

Interviewer: Based on what criteria?

Respondent: That we think more about what we do, that we provide a legally secure service to our clients, that all the constituent parts are there. That we all work in the same way, towards the same goal, with the same tools.

Interviewer: So, if I understand you correctly, if it only had been the first stage it would not have felt as useful?

Respondent: No, no, I don’t think so. No. Not at all. I think it has to be something concrete that is connected to what we actually do every day for it to feel useful and meaningful.

To summarize the discussion above it seems clear that slightly different goals are in motion when the service domain is considered. While there are also similarities

– which will in turn be returned to under the course of the concluding discussion – it is clear that practical usage and direct client benefit is entwined to a considerable larger extent with the goals of the LOKE model among the front-line social workers than what is the case among the professionals of the expert domain. That being said, it is important to note that this does not in any way imply that the client benefit is not a goal for the expert domain. Quite the opposite – client effects are, as has been stated above, clearly part of the goal perception of the expert professionals as well. The main difference between the two domains seems to be that the service domain places a lot larger emphasis on this goal, while the expert domain also retains several goal perceptions with a rather different emphasis. As we shall see in the concluding section of this chapter, this is not entirely dissimilar to prevailing notions among the members of the management domain.

4.1.3 The management domain

The one thing that stands out about the data gathered from the members of the management domain is how outwardly similar to the service domain it is. Once again a clear theme of the clients right to **quality service** and **equal and legally secure treatment** is possible to make out in the material. In addition, a wish to **gain empirical knowledge** and, to some extent, conform to **internal expectations** is traceable. The following exchange with one of the unit managers demonstrates this with clarity, and could just as easily, in regards to the themes it emphasizes have been the words of the social workers of the service domain:

Interviewer: What is the use of this [LOKE]?

Respondent: That we can confirm that we're doing the right things. Are we 'doing good' for the clients? Are they happy? Does their situation improve by meeting us? Or do we do things the wrong way? Are there areas where we need to get better? I think that's the important thing. That we sort of follow up the client perspective. That's the very reason one follows up things – for the clients sake, so they get the treatment and help they need. But we also need to know that we arrive at the same things and that people get what we say they're supposed to get. That we do what we think we're doing.

In an interview with a different member of the management domain, the following views was expressed when the respondent was queried about the point of implementing models for evaluation like LOKE:

“Because.. The point of departure has to be – are we doing a good job? How do the people we meet fare in a longer perspective? What happens to the people that we try to help to another life in relation to their own wishes and the like?” – Management domain worker 2 (my translation)

The statements above are interesting and in many ways' representative of the general views of the management domain as they have been expressed under the course of the interviews underlying this study. We shall therefore at this juncture spend some time unpacking them. It is possible to make out three distinct themes in the quotations above – the wish to provide quality service and “do good” from the perspective of the clients, the wish to “arrive at the same things” and through this provide equal and legally secure treatment for the clients, and finally the wish to actually know and measure the impact of the treatment and programs that are deployed in the service of the client.

It is possible that this could be interpreted as a sign that the management domain draws upon both the logic of the service domain and the expert domain – it shares the client focus of the service domain while also having internalized the value of evaluation and following things up espoused by the management domain. It is possible that this is once again possible to connect to Boswells modes of knowledge use. As the (local unit) management domain straddles the organization and exists with one foot in the practical realities of social work and the other in the more strategic concerns of upper management and the expert domain it is possible that it needs to appeal to different legitimacy expectations. Legitimacy in the service domain is to a large extent an effect of instrumental knowledge usage (the improvement of client conditions), while legitimacy in the expert and, it can be speculated, upper management domain is an effect of systematic knowledge usage, drawing upon established administrative “truths” such as the benefits of evidence-based care. This is something rather different than the legitimacy grounds of the above-mentioned hand-spitting social workers of the eighties.

4.1.4 Summary

As it is possible to see above, the different domains each emphasize slightly different themes while also having at least one (client improvement) in common. It is in itself interesting that client improvement appears among the data collected from all three domains. It is possible to speculate that this bears relation both to the clear legalistic bounds that the social services work within where client improvement is emphasized. This makes it possible for all domains, their differing logics notwithstanding, to draw upon the law for legitimatizing this emphasis. It is also possible to speculate that the well-defined professional space that the social services work within socializes certain values into its workers, regardless of domain – a process which is no doubt made yet stronger by the fact that many members of both the management and expert domain began their careers as front-line social workers. That being said, the above is purely speculative and best left for studies concerned with the professional identity of the members of the social services.

When it comes to the differences between the domains, it is possible to see that the expert domain tends to emphasize goals such as model fidelity, the arrival at a long-term routine for the systematic collection of data and the creation of systematic work descriptions, none of which are particularly mirrored by the service domain which instead nearly without exception formulates the goals of the LOKE

implementation in terms of client improvement and arriving at ways to secure clients rights to equal treatment and legal security. The management domain, on the other hand, draws upon a combination of these themes and seems to view the goals of the implementation of the model both in terms of client improvement and securing the clients right to equal treatment and legal security, but also as a way to through the process of systematic evaluation and data-gathering arriving at a greater knowledge of what interventions work.

4.2 Shades of implementation success

In this section the results of the two LOKE implementations that have been studied are briefly discussed and put into relation with the data from the interviews that has been described above. While it should be strongly stressed that this study in no way aspires to provide a comprehensive evaluation of what has been achieved during the implementation of the LOKE model, it is nonetheless of interest for the concluding discussion to briefly touch upon some of the main strands here. The reason for this is that the gathered data seems to indicate that there are a number of different and to some extent conflicting success definitions connected to the implementation process. This in turn means that the results of the processes that have taken place can be interpreted in several ways, depending on which success definition is being espoused. As a result, touching upon these different interpretations – albeit briefly – can serve, in accordance with what has been outlined when the research questions underlying this thesis were presented, as an interesting starting point for a discussion on how future implementation efforts can take different domain logics into account. This will be returned to under the course of the concluding discussion.

4.2.1 Implementation results

In both of the units that have been investigated the LOKE implementation has taken place under the better part of a year. Both units have been made subject to a similar procedure where a number of workshops have been held during the initial implementation process. These can, as has been stated in the preceding section, be divided into roughly two stages. In the first stage, attention is given to the underlying program logic of the unit in question. In collaboration with the workers of the research domain, the management and front-line workers are invited to discuss and systematically organize what the goal of the unit is, who the target group is, what methods it deploys (and towards whom) to achieve said goal and whether or not these align with what the goals and target groups actually are. The second stage has a more practical nature, and is – at least according to the underlying theory of the original LOKE model – geared towards systematically gathering data that can be used to improve service delivery. In both of the

implementing units this has taken the shape of the front-line workers systematically working together with aspects of service delivery that have until the implementation of the model been the domain of each individual worker. Neither of the implementing units have at this stage arrived at a method for gathering data, but instead chosen to focus on structures for evaluating aspects of their day-to-day work.

4.2.2 Expert domain

From the point of view of the expert domain, the implementation can be said to have met with mixed success. While the (common for all three domains) goal of service delivery improvement can be argued to be met, the same can not be said of the goal to arrive at a long-term routine for the systematic collection of data. On the other hand, the expert domain does in the interviews display a degree of flexibility in regards to how important this goal is stated to be, for example by at times stating the opinion that it can be regarded as sufficient to create systematic work or program theory descriptions as a first step. Whether these statements are a reason for or a result of the implementation outcome remains outside the scope of this study. What is clear is that program theory descriptions have been carried out in both the units involved, which in turn can be interpreted as some of the goals of the expert domain being fulfilled. The above also means that the goal of program fidelity has not, by definition, been fulfilled. The LOKE implementation has in its second stage deviated to a considerable extent from the original intent behind the model, which is to gather systematic data that can be aggregated and used to track and improve service delivery. In both the instances that have been studied as a part of this thesis no such data gathering has taken place in the second stage, and focus has instead been on through discussion and systematic evaluation improve concrete steps in the service delivery.

4.2.3 Service domain

As we have seen above, the social workers active within the service domain formulated the goals of the LOKE implementation in a considerably more concrete fashion than the expert domain. There appears to be little aspirations or understanding of the model as geared towards gathering data, and more focus on concrete service delivery and how the model can be used to improve this. This goal can, especially in the light of the second stage of the LOKE process in both units, be said to be achieved. This is interesting, as it differs to a rather large extent from what the model in its “original” form proscribes. It is possible to speculate that the logic of the implementing domain has in a way interpreted the model and implemented it in a fashion more congruent with its own goals and needs, regardless of the theoretical foundation of the model. This will be discussed to a further extent in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

4.2.4 Management domain

It has been shown above that the goals of the management domain draw both upon the ones emphasized by the service and expert domain respectively. Once again it seems reasonable to categorize the goals connected to using the model to benefit client improvement and establish ways of safeguarding the clients right to equal treatment and legal security. In addition, it is possible to argue that the goal of establishing *what works* is to some extent fulfilled through the first stage of the LOKE process, which as has been covered above focuses on elucidating on the program theory of the unit or intervention in question. While systematic and data-driven evaluation still remains unimplemented in both the participating units, some degree of evaluation of the working practices of the two involved units is still achieved through the creation of the work and program theory descriptions in the initial stage of implementation. In the same way, the second stage of the LOKE model as it has been implemented – while not data oriented in the sense that the original model proscribes – was described by the interviewed managers as also fulfilling an evaluator function, albeit potentially in more concrete fashion that what for example the members of the research domain interpret the model as aiming towards. The tension between the practical and concrete and the more theoretical modes of evaluation (or, if you will, the tension between a largely instrumental knowledge use versus a more abstract one) will be returned to in the concluding discussion, which is also the next chapter of this thesis.

5 Discussion

The preceding chapter has shown that there are several different success definitions in play, and that these seem to vary depending on what domain the interviewee belongs to. In this chapter an attempt will be made to connect this and the different shades of success to the theoretical concepts outlined earlier in the thesis and, drawing on this, arrive at an answer to the research questions underlying this study.

Under the course of the theoretical exposition in the earlier parts of the thesis several theoretical concepts were touched upon. The first of these, the dichotomy between instrumental and symbolic knowledge use described by among others Boswell seems to, in the light of what has been discussed in relation to the interviews, carry considerable explanatory power in regards to what has transpired during the LOKE implementation process. It does not seem unreasonable to interpret the gathered data as heavily favouring the parts of the LOKE model that lend themselves to instrumental use such as client service improvement and measures to guarantee legal security and equal service delivery for said clients. There are several possible explanations for this.

Firstly, it does not seem out of place to speculate that the norms and values (see for example Paul t'Hart (2014) of the given human service organization favours concrete knowledge use that carries with it direct benefits for the clients. Indeed, some authors (see for example Liljegren and Parding 2010) argue that the professional knowledge norms among social workers are so strong that it is possible for them to come into conflict with other value systems on the occasions they come into contact with these. While there are little traces of conflict in the implementation process under study in this particular instance, it is still clear that certain values – working in an active and not always administratively constrained manner to better the life situation of the clients – are core to the identity of the front line workers and are given considerable precedence in the face of what can be, if nothing else because of time and resource constraints, interpreted as competing values. This is also consistent with the argument made by Sunesson (1985) which has been touched upon in the preceding chapters in regards to how the prevailing norm in a social work organization can carry more importance than the individual norms of the members of the service, expert and management domains. The recurrence of themes touching upon using the LOKE implementation to affect direct change for the clients that come into contact with the social services could be interpreted as indicating this.

Secondly, it is possible that the critical role played by the front-line workers in the implementation of this particular model heavily favours instrumental goal formulations. LOKE as a model is at an early stage put almost entirely into the hands of the implementing unit. The expert domain functions as process leaders, but the management and service domain formulate the content of the different

stages in a highly independent fashion. This gives the service domain ample opportunity to shape the process according to its own prioritized goals, which we have seen are often instrumental in nature – perhaps to some extent because of the strong sense of professional identity among social workers and special concrete and client-oriented nature of the work many members of the service domain carry out. It is perhaps no coincidence that the solution oriented (and, it can be imagined, not always administratively leaning) social worker of the eighties is held up as an example of what is desirable by one of the interview respondents. While other, more symbolic values such as the significance of utilizing evidence-driven knowledge, might be assigned importance by the expert domain it might simply be the case that they, because of the very structure of the implementation process, do not translate into the final goal formulation by the implementing social workers.

The discussion above ties into the Lundquistian concepts of willingness and comprehension. It does not in the light of the preceding discussion appear irrational to postulate that the perceived usefulness of a model directly influences the motivation of the service domain to implement it, given that said domain tends to value instrumental use above more intangible such. To express it in the terminology used by Lundquist, the comprehension of the implementing domain (in this case the service and to some degree management domain) may affect its willingness to carry out the implementation. If the comprehension of the model is that it is mainly symbolic and geared towards to for example fulfilling internal and external expectations (as was expressed by some of the respondents when queried about prior experiences with models for evaluation), willingness will be lower than if the model is comprehended as suited for instrumental and concrete use. This is in accordance with what has been revealed under the course of the interviews, and can also be imagined as tying into questions of program legitimacy.

The question of legitimacy brings the discussion to the interactions between the different organizational fields that have been discussed in the theoretical parts of this study. As has been shown, the implementation process is dependent on a number of horizontal interactions between mainly the expert domain and service/management domain. As there is no clear hierarchy between these, it can be argued that the program in question needs to carry a certain degree of legitimacy if it is to have a change to be implemented successfully. This legitimacy does, in this case, seem to be in no small degree derived from how much the model is perceived to be in accordance with the underlying values of the implementing domain. There are several instances during the interviews where members of the service and management domain have emphasized the need for models to be in accordance with what they perceive are the needs of their unit and the work they carry out, and indicated that models or programs that do not live up to this will be (whether intentionally or not) deprioritized in the daily scramble for time and resources. In the light of this, and given that the kind of non-hierarchical implementation networks that have been described are only likely to become more common, the issue of legitimacy can be argued to be supremely important.

5.1 Conclusions

A number of the points that have been made in the preceding two chapters can be put to work answering the research questions underlying this study. In regards to the first question, how the different levels of actors involved in the implementation of the LOKE model in Lund municipality understand implementation success, it is clear that there are clear differences between the different domains.

For the expert domain, the expressed goals involve both service improvement for the clients, but also organizational and knowledge-generating goals such as arriving at methods for evaluating and following up the work and interventions of the involved units. This is related both to internal and external expectations by the interviewed members, and it seems clear that they derive a large part of both internal and external legitimacy through working in an evidence-focused fashion. For the service domain, the goals are formulated almost entirely in terms of client improvement, equality and legal security. Data collection and conforming to external expectations are hardly mentioned at all, and when they are mentioned they are assigned low priority. On the other hand, conforming to what can be conceptualized as internal expectations connected to the norms and values that seem common among social workers seems to be ascribed considerable importance. These norms and values do not, on the other hand, appear to be by definition connected to empirical and evidence-driven collection of data. In regards to the management domain, it is possible to see elements of the goals espoused by both the expert and service domains. This can be possibly explained by the management domains position “in the middle” of the organization, between the logics of upper management and front-line welfare workers. Indeed, it is possible that the designation of “bridge domain” is more apt for the management domain than it is for the expert domain.

Given that the above is true and there are in fact a large number of different goal perceptions in play, the question of which of these success understandings has been achieved during the implementation of the LOKE model in Lund municipality acquires extra salience. This is especially true in the light of the horizontal nature of the implementation process, where no clear hierarchical lines exist. In answer to this, it seems that the implementation goals as they have been formulated by the service domain have had the largest impact on the final form of (and especially the second stage) of the implementation. This can potentially be explained by the great influence the service and management domain have wielded over the formulation of the model in the local context. Regardless of why this might be the case, the consequences of it seem clear – any implementation effort that aspires to “stick” within the context described in this study needs to take the underlying norms and values of the service domain in particular and the human service organization in general into account in the formulation of its intentions and goals. A model which cuts against the grain of these appears considerably less likely to succeed, both as a result of the willingness of the involved front-line workers but also because of the time and resource constraints inherent to working in what the interviewed workers term “real life”, which necessitate both conscious and unconscious prioritization. This leads to models which are not perceived as concretely useful quite simply getting lost in the noise.

5.2 Suggestions for future research

It is clear that the differences in driving logic between domains has not inconsiderable consequences for implementation processes, perhaps especially in fields – such as the social services – where strong professional identities are in play. This may be all the more important in the light of the New Public Management-influenced trend of striving towards decentralized and less hierarchical agencies, where implementation processes take place in a more horizontal fashion than what might have been the case in previous administrative systems. It is eminently possible that future research could be helpful in shedding more light upon the effects of said domain logics and how implementation processes can prevent detrimental effects of these.

6 References

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7 Appendix

7.1 Appendix I: Interview guide, research domain

Please note that as the interviews have been carried out in Swedish, this is also reflected in the interview guide.

1. Vad är LOKE?
2. Berätta lite om hur ni hittade modellen.
3. Vad såg ni som fördelarna med modellen när ni hittade den?
 - Varför blev ni intresserade av att använda er av den här?
 - Vad är problemet som ni tänkte att modellen skulle råda bot på?
 - Hur har ni kommit fram till att det här problemet finns?
4. Hur såg processen med att "ta hit" modellen ut?
 - Hur beskrev ni vad det var ni hittat för lokal management etc?
 - Hur såg förankringsprocessen ut?
5. Skedde någon slags anpassning av modellen till lokala förhållanden innan ni började implementera den här?
 - Om ja, varför?
 - Om nej, varför inte?
6. Hur många enheter har modellen implementerats på? Hur valde ni dessa? Vilka enheter har du varit delaktig i?
7. Har implementeringen sett likadan ut i alla enheter? Hur har den varierat?
8. Vilka steg har implementeringen följt?
 - Hur har processen sett ut hos de enheter där du har varit inblandad?
 - Vad har varje steg syftat till?
9. Har ni lärt er något under implementeringen som har påverkat senare implementeringar?
10. Hur har resultatet blivit?
 - Hur har ni och verksamheten i stort följt upp det?
 - Går det att säga att det har varit en framgångsrik implementering?
 - Utifrån vilka kriterier har den varit det?
 - Utifrån vilka kriterier har den inte varit det?

7.2 Appendix II: Interview guide, management and service domain

1. Berätta lite om dig själv och dina arbetsuppgifter. Hur länge har du varit här?
2. Vad arbetar din enhet med? Vad är din funktion inom detta?
3. Vad är LOKE?
 - Hur har ni använt modellen i er verksamhet?
 - Har ni använt liknande modeller innan?
 - Vad är LOKE till för?
4. När hörde du först talas om LOKE? Vem var det som delgav dig informationen?
5. Vad verkade vara fördelarna med modellen?
 - Vilka delar tyckte du lät spännande och intressanta?
6. Vilka typ av problem tänker du dig att man kommer åt genom användningen av LOKE?
7. Hur har eran process sett ut?
 - Vilka steg? Träffar etc?
 - Har det motsvarat de förväntningar du hade?
8. Om vi tänker oss två huvudsakliga steg (verksamhetsbeskrivning och uppföljning), vilket tycker du var viktigast och vilket motsvarade bäst dina behov?
9. Vilka delar var mindre viktiga?
10. Vad tror du att dina kollegor tycker?
11. Hur har resultatet av LOKE-arbetet blivit?
 - Tycker du att det har blivit bra eller dåligt?
 - Vilka delar?
 - Utifrån vilka kriterier har det varit en framgångsrik implementering?
 - Vem tänker du att detta har varit mest användbart för?

7.3 Appendix III: Coding scheme

1.0 Perceived goals

- 1.1 Work load improvement
- 1.2 Service delivery improvement
- 1.3 Organizational control and systematic work descriptions
- 1.4 Full theoretical implementation and program fidelity
- 1.5 First stage implementation
- 1.6 Second stage implementation
- 1.7 Client improvement
- 1.8 Legal security
- 1.9 “What works”
- 1.10 Fullfill internal expectations

1.11 Fullfill external expectations

2.0 Achieved goals

2.1 Work load improvement

2.2 Service delivery improvement

2.3 Organizational control and systematic work descriptions

2.4 Full theoretical implementation and program fidelity

2.5 First stage implementation

2.6 Second stage implemenation

2.7 Client improvement

2.8 Legal security

2.9 “What works”

2.10 Fullfill internal expectations

2.11 Fullfill external expectations

3.0 Implementation constraints

3.1 Willingness

3.2 “Physical” resources (time, staff, et cetera)

3.3 Knowledge resources