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Public Service Logic from a Systemic Perspective Challenges in Advancing User-Oriented Welfare Services

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Orchestrating Resource Integration

The Central Role of Coordinators in Innovative Welfare Services

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Introduction

This study aims to deepen our understanding of the factors that empower coordinators to effectively execute their duties within complex systems for innovative and sustainable welfare services. Numerous studies emphasize the crucial role of both expert competence and a distinct coordinator role (Eriksson 2019; Williams, 2002, 2013; Danielsson and Westrup 2022). These coordinators, who could be service providers such as team leaders or project managers, are pivotal in encouraging resource integration behavior (Danielsson and Westrup, forthcoming). Key responsibilities include advocating for value throughout the integration process (Grönroos 2021), centralizing the organization and management of resource integration (Galbraith 1999), and structuring processes to navigate complexity (Normann 2001) to enhance efficiency. Moreover, coordinators must create arenas (Crosby, Bryson, and Stone 2010) where stakeholders can discern the interrelations between knowledge, resource capacity, and value (Lusch and Vargo 2014). This necessitates mastering specific skills while remaining adaptable to various orchestrator roles as circumstances demand (Hurmelinna-Laukkanen and Nätti 2018). Investigating how project managers and coordinators experience and manage the task of integrating resources and work to promote resource integration behavior within and between different organizations can elucidate key conditions for service innovation.

Methods

This qualitative study examines two distinct cases. The first case, involving temporary project managers (2020-2022) within a financial collaborative association comprised of four authorities (municipality, healthcare, employment service, and social insurance), aimed to facilitate the spread of resource integration behavior among these authorities. The empirical material from this project includes 13 focus group interviews with 12 project managers and six network meetings featuring representatives from the collaborating authorities. The subsequent case centers on permanent coordinators within adaptive projects as part of a research circle (2021-2023) consisting of two academics and eight practitioners, spanning 11 meetings. These practitioners, all working as coordinators in municipal welfare administrations overseeing education, health, and social services, alongside regional healthcare, were tasked with leading and coordinating various actors and their resources to co-create value more effectively for users.

Results and Discussion

The findings underscore the opportunities to devise innovative strategies for resource integration behavior that enhance innovative welfare services. It is critical to emphasize that coordinators working from an outside-in perspective need to possess flexibility and creativity, as they cannot rely on manuals, project descriptions, or their own expertise but must co-create sustainable solutions tailored to individual and societal needs and circumstances. The study accentuates the significance of collective leadership among coworkers and active involvement

of service users in this context. Additionally, the results highlight the importance of coordinators being able to perceive and describe innovative welfare services within a broader context that encompasses various levels of innovation, including conceptual innovation and workplace innovation. This is integral to fostering motivation and commitment that can lead to collective leadership in resource integration behavior.