

ABSTRACT/ OUTLINE OF PAPER

Title

“Improvement knowledge in health- and welfare operations – preliminary results from a study on experienced effects of a Swedish masters program in quality improvement and leadership in health and welfare”

Authors

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Background

In Sweden health- and welfare organizations increasingly use Continuous Quality Improvement efforts (CQI-efforts) to respond to the increasing demands on their operations (Bevan et al., 2007). The demands are multifaceted and have different origins. The population is aging, the technical- and medical development enables new and costly treatments and customers, as patients and clients, expect to co-produce the services (Batalden et al., 2015). This change corresponds to the development that is taking place in many western countries.

Improvement knowledge includes tools, methods and approaches essential for the ability to organize and participate in CQI-efforts (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2010). Despite this, researchers have pointed out that large proportions of educations aiming to foster new generations of health- and welfare professionals lack courses in improvement knowledge in their curricula (Lucas & Nancer, 2015). At Jönköping University, the Jönköping Academy for Improvement of Health and Welfare (JA) offers a masters program in quality improvement and leadership in health and welfare. Jönköping Academy is a collaboration platform including Jönköping University, Region Jönköping County and the thirteen municipalities in Jönköping County. The program is open for national application, but the local partners are providing the necessary resources, knowledge and managerial support. The partners requested the evaluation, and the knowledge of the effects of the program can be useful for participants as well. To our knowledge, this masters program is the only program at advanced level in Sweden, that is integrated in working life, where students are practising their new theoretical knowledge in their daily clinical practice to create and sustain quality improvement in health and welfare. An employment with active work in the health- and welfare sector, are admission requirements for the master program. The masters thesis is an action research study in which students independently lead larger CQI-efforts at their work places and thus, the program aims to foster experienced and knowledgeable improvement leaders.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to describe and examine the former students’ perceived value of improvement knowledge and leadership aiming to support the development of operations in the Swedish health- and welfare sector.

Method

The study was performed as a part of a larger mixed methods study, where the results of a questionnaire, sent to former students, are presented here.

The questionnaire

The questions in the questionnaire are based by the learning outcomes of the masters program (Jönköping Academy for Improvement of Health and Welfare, 2017). The researchers developed a draft questionnaire that was peer-reviewed by faculty members. The questionnaire was further developed in accordance to the feedback and pilot tested during a lecture for students enrolled in the 5th semester. In a subsequent interactive seminar these students gave verbal feedback on the communicative and pragmatic validity of the questionnaire (Haraldsson et al., 2016). Based on the feedback, the questionnaire was further developed and reviewed by the researchers, prior to a final version being created

The questions were organized into several sections. The sections and types of questions are described in Table 1, below. The questionnaire also contained questions regarding the respondents educational background, current work situation and the willingness to participate in an in-depth interview.

Table 1. Topics and types of questions

Sections in questionnaire	Numbers of questions with response options in a five-point Likert scale	Numbers of questions with open ended responses
Improvement knowledge	7	1
Organization and leadership	4	1
Scientific approach	2	1
Personal leadership	4	1
Overall benefit with the education	1	5

Distribution of questionnaire

Recent research indicates that posted surveys have higher response rates than electronic surveys. Thus, the researchers decided to send the survey to graduates' home addresses. The central university administration provided a sendlist including the postal address to all graduates from the masters program. These addresses were controlled on the internet by the researchers and in cases addresses could not be found, the local tax office provided additional information. The questionnaire was posted to 161 individuals. However, due to a clerical error the sendlist incorrectly contained 22 enrolled students. The answers from these students were excluded from the study. The questionnaires were sent out 6th of November 2017, including stamped envelopes with the pre-printed return address to JA. Instead of traditional reminders, reminders were posted twice at JA's Facebook site and Twitter account. After the second reminder period ended 3rd of December 2017, the survey achieved a response rate at XX %.

Coding and analysis

This is an ongoing study and the results of the quantitative data will be analysed with descriptive statistics. The open-ended questions will be analysed with content analysis.

Ethical considerations

The study was preceded by research ethical considerations (Creswell, 2013). Special emphasis was placed on examining participants' confidentiality and the benefit of participation. The number of

graduates was limited, and several of the graduates regularly comment posts at JA´s Facebook site and Twitter account. This means that they are not entirely anonymous for the public. Thus, the researchers considered it important to present the results of the study in such a manner that individual answers could not be recognized. The benefits for respondents to participate in the study were also closely examined. The respondents were given information about the purpose and procedures of the study in a cover letter to the questionnaire and the principles of confidentiality and voluntariness were emphasized.

Results and Conclusions

The results of the study will be used both for program development but also to show the usefulness of the program for the partnering organizations and for future students.

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