Evaluation as learning

A study of social worker education in Leningrad County

Ove Karlsson Vestman
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Preface

Participating in the development of social services in Leningrad County while working as evaluator has been an extremely interesting and stimulating task. During the evaluation I have had the opportunity of meeting and getting to know many interesting people in the social services, all with different kinds of knowledge, experience and professional competence.

I would like to thank all the participants in the evaluation: Zinaida N. Bystrova, Head of the Employment and Social Services Committee in Leningrad County, the participants on the different courses, the respondents in the different social services I visited, the interpreter, and others, whose enthusiasm and efforts have been important to the evaluation.

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1 Introduction

The results presented in this report are based upon an evaluation of the “Social project in Leningrad County”. The project ran between 1998-2001 and was carried out by the social services in Sörmland County and Leningrad County, with financial support from Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The overarching goal of the project has been to provide support and direction in the development of social services in Russia. The project involved in total 160 social workers from Leningrad County, who were given the opportunity to take part in a program of education in Sweden. The program has functioned as a support for local social service projects in Leningrad County. The evaluation’s goal has been to examine the program of education and the manner in which participants have then used their acquired knowledge and experiences in their own projects.

1.1 Background

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Russian society has experienced deep-reaching political and social changes. Social problems have become ever more evident and the need for new policies acute. The authorities have faced significant difficulties, with an increasing pressure on social services to meet the needs of individual and groups living under trying circumstances. Alcohol and drug abuse has increased and the economic and social burden upon families has been heavy, especially for children. There is a pressing demand to improve the care of the elderly and the services for the disabled.

Under the Soviet regime social problems were in general addressed from within the framework of the Communist party and the trade union. With Perestrojka in 1985, a re-organisation of society’s social services was initiated. This resulted, in among other things, a reduction in the influence of party and the trade union. Social problems on the level of the individual and in the family became still more visible. This process resulted in a political decision in 1992 to re-organise social services under a new department, which was to attend to issues connected with social support and providing counselling services.

On the county level, social services are governed by the Work and Social Security Committee, which governs and regulates the implementation of national social policy. State institutions are monitored in the county and issues touching upon the content and development of social work methods in local organs are addressed. The committee is responsible for proposing state pol-
icy in state institutions, public planning with the goal of strengthening the social infra-structure for different groups in need of support and working together with local organs on the question of working conditions and benefits for employees.

It is the state who are the main source of funding for social services and their institutions, even if municipal obligations have risen sharply in recent years. Since the mid-90s, municipal local self-government has developed and authority has been delegated to the local administration. This has resulted in local municipalities experiencing greater freedom to act, legitimacy and responsibility when it comes to formulating needs and meeting costs. However, almost a third of municipalities are unable to balance their budget and receive a topping up subsidy from the county. This is financed by the more wealthy local municipalities.

1.2 Designated areas

The Work and Social Security Committee in Leningrad County that is responsible for the management of social services has designated four priority areas for the development program: (1) the elderly and disabled, (2) family and child policy, (3) drug addiction among youth, (4) rehabilitation of children with limited opportunities. The programs are supposed to give a framework for the development of social services in the municipalities and the county.

1. Elderly and disabled

According to public statistics from 1999, there are in total 139 000 people in the county with different forms of disability and struggling to take care of themselves. The degree of disability varies, which means that different groups require different forms of social security and support. An important area of development covers the need for more differentiated forms of institutional provision. Since 1996, the number of elderly admitted to the total care institutions has increased. In 1999, there were 3758 using these services, of which 325 were children under the age of 18, 950 were pensioners and 2583 were disabled of working age.

2. Family and child policy

The situation of families with children is another area of priority. In the county in 1999, there were about 4000 children registered as homeless i.e. living without parents or economic support. Some 15 percent of these are children without parents, while the remainder has parents whom for different reasons are unable to take care of them. This has meant that the number of foster homes has increased from 22 to 38. There is a great need to improve the
situation of families, so those parents can themselves attend to the care of their own children and their upbringing. In the county, there also exist 6537 families with about 7000 children who have some form of disability. The majority of these families live in poverty or are lone parents. In almost half of the county’s local municipalities there exists no policy initiatives for these groups.

3. Drug addiction among youth
The fight against drug abuse is the third area of priority. The increasing use of drugs among children and youth is a growing problem. What is needed is a clearly defined program of rehabilitation and professionals trained to deal with these questions. The lack of information and access to written material on the problem of drugs, as well as the lack of understanding among the general public that anybody can become an addict, are further explanations as to why the problem is not taken seriously.

4. Rehabilitation of children with limited opportunities
The fourth area of priority concerns children with different kinds of disability or limited opportunities. In Leningrad County, there are 12 social rehabilitation centres for these children. These are for children from economically deprived families or for children with functional or learning disabilities. In 1999, 2161 were admitted to these rehabilitation programs. The professionals working with child rehabilitation drew attention to the fact that many children are today born with psychological and physical forms of disability, chronic illnesses, movement difficulties and environmental illnesses. The problems are connected with poor living conditions and the goal is to find ways of improving the situation of children and their social adjustments to life. What is required are connected policy initiatives for both children and parents.

1.3 The joint project to change the social services
To be able to carry through these four programs a development of organisational forms and methods is needed, as well as an overview of the individuals requiring support and assistance. There also exists a great need for education, in order to acquire knowledge about how a modern system of social services can be created. Against this background the Swedish state through Sida has sort to stimulate an exchange of experiences between Swedish and Russian social services, and to thereby exert an influence on the direction of development. A starting point for co-operation took place in 1998 when the Swedish Minster for Foreign Aid visited Russia and presented a proposal outlining a program to train 1000 Russian social workers over a five year pe-
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Sida then took contact with the Centre for Welfare Research at Mälardalen University and asked it to develop a joint project on the county level between Södermanland and Leningrad. The commission resulted in the Social Project in Leningrad County, with the Association of local authorities in the county of Sörmland as the Swedish co-ordinator. The head of the project was Mats Forsberg, previously head of social services in Eskilstuna. Responsible for the Russian part of the joint project was Zinaida N. Bystrova, chairwoman of the Work and Social Security Committee in Leningrad County.

The over-arching goal with the co-operation has been to bring about a structural transformation capable of increasing the quality of social services in Russia. Sida underlines in a letter (12.9.98), that work towards this goal must pay particular attention to historical and cultural differences. It is therefore important that the project develops on the basis of a close co-operation and consultation between the involved parties. From the Swedish perspective, the emphasis has been upon public sector activity incorporating ideas of democracy and effectiveness. It is also important that social policy initiatives are democratic and address the issue of equality. Sida asserted that these principles were not necessarily transferred into Russian society a simple and straightforward manner. It is more the case that a change in attitudes is required in the different levels of social service provision.

The Russian social services are a complex enterprise and it is important to recognize that it could not be comparable in any straightforward way with how social services are organized in Sweden or other western democracies. A transformation of the Russian social services requires a strategy across several tiers of responsibility.

1.4 Program of education

A main part of the joint project between the Swedish and the Russian partners has been a program of education incorporating an exchange of experiences. The education program catered for eight groups; in total 160 participants from the social services in Leningrad County. All participants were involved with local projects in their municipalities dealing with the four designated areas of social problems mentioned above.

The eight groups received their education over several months, with the first group beginning in the autumn 1998 and the last in spring 2001. The groups contained representatives from all the local municipalities in the county. An attempt was made to have a wide sample of participants, so that the distribution of the social services matched the spatial distribution.

The education program for each of the groups had three connected stages. The content was as follows: First a preparatory course in St. Petersburg, where participants in the course of a week acquire historical knowl-
edge about co-operation between Russia and Sweden. Participants also learn about the Swedish social structure, leadership, conflict resolution, questions of gender, the humanist conception of the social services and how social work is practised in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries.

The second part builds upon the content in the first part and consists of a two-week course of study at Mälardalens University in Eskilstuna. The course includes lectures on Swedish Social Law and how social services are organised, as well as the different methods used in social work. The topics covered are social security in Sweden, family, children and youth problems, social work in theory and practice, knowledge about evaluation of social program and reforms. All the lectures are given in Swedish and translated into Russian.

Study excursions are also taken to different social services, authorities and organisations in Södermanland, where participants become acquainted with social work and form a conception of how modern reform work is practised. The areas studied across the social services cover initiatives for the elderly and disabled, families and children; drug related problems among children and young people, as well as the rehabilitation of children with limited opportunities.

The study excursions are an important supplement to the lectures. The excursions have changed somewhat from course to course, but have always been connected with some component in the lecture series. During the excursions the groups are divided according to their areas of interest and work. In addition to the excursions, some cultural activities are arranged, so participants have the opportunity of experiencing Swedish culture, history and society.

A central goal is that the participants implement their newly acquired knowledge in their own organisations. The third part of the education program takes place after a month or two in the form of a seminar in St. Petersburg. Participants tell each other about the projects in their own municipalities after completion of the education program.

1.5 The commission to carry out the evaluation

In the spring of 1999, the Centre for Welfare Research at Mälardalen University was awarded the commission to evaluate the program. The he evaluation has examined the education program’s pre-conditions, how it was run and the knowledge, learning and processes of change introduced by the program across the different tiers of the social services. One further ambition that the evaluation should lead to the promotion of learning and change in the social services in Leningrad County. The evaluation has been carried out during the
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project period, beginning in April 1999 and finishing in the autumn 2001. With these goals five questions in the evaluation were formulated:

1. What pre-conditions for the program of education existed in Leningrad County and among program participants?
2. Have the participants learnt anything and acquired knowledge from the program?
3. Have the participants been successful in the dissemination of their new knowledge to others in their organisation?
4. How this knowledge led to changes and developments in their respective organisations?
5. Furthermore, a fifth question has been posed: has the evaluation contributed to learning in the project such that the perception of problems has changed?

In this report, results are presented of the evaluation into what participants have learnt and how they have spread their knowledge. The question of the program’s contribution to any changes in the organisation and activity of the social services is addressed, along with how the evaluation process has itself contributed to learning.

1.6 The report’s disposition

The first chapter provides an introduction into the program and the evaluation. In the second chapter the theory used in this study is presented through a discussion of learning, knowledge and its dissemination and the use of this knowledge to bring about change. In chapter three, the research perspective and the methods used in the collection of data are presented and how qualitative data has been analysed. In chapter four and five the results are presented. Chapter four describes the social situation in Leningrad County providing an insight into the education program’s preconditions. Chapter five deals with the participant’s views of the program, and thereafter, the results from our case studies in Leningrad County and our meetings with key people on different levels of the social services. In chapter six, there is an analysis and a discussion of the learning and processes of change, which have occurred among the participants. An analysis of how knowledge and experiences from Sweden have been implemented is also provided.

In chapter seven the perspective changes, with a focus on the evaluation itself as an experience of learning. The evaluation process, the role of the evaluator and the participants as learners and teachers are examined.
2 Theories of learning and change

As mentioned in the previous chapter the goal of the evaluation is to carry out an investigation and evaluation of the learning and processes of change across the different levels of the social services and how they have been set in motion by the education program. Judging the significance of the program for learning and practice has meant that the primary focus has been upon investigating and evaluating how participants have changed their conception of what it means to be a social worker. A change in the understanding of the individual can in turn result in new conceptions and ideas about how the structure of the social services can be developed. In order to assess if this has occurred, it is necessary to view the learning of the individual from within a larger perspective and examine changes taking place in the participant’s own activity. It is important to note difficulties exist when it comes to determining the knowledge and experience traceable to the program and what kinds of impressions and experience have their root elsewhere. Judging the implementation of the program’s results, therefore, requires caution and a willingness to recognise the presence of other factors.

In this chapter, the issues under discussion are the different theoretical perspectives for an investigation and analysis of learning and change on different levels: individual, collective and on the level of the organisation, as well as with respect to the dissemination and utilisation of knowledge. To understand learning we must take into account both individual thought and the types of communication taking place within the specific social and cultural context. This means that learning can be explained by the changing social and cultural relationships that give new impulses, new concepts, and different perspectives on reality. Furthermore, the individual develops new ideas that he or she communicates with others and these can influence ways of coping with reality. This in turn leads to changes in social and cultural patterns.

2.1 Individual’s and learning

Theories of learning offer different points of departure (Ellström, 1996). Behaviourists for example, see learning as the technical transfer process between a sender and receiver. A sender, e.g. a manager, informs staff who react by learning the information given. While behaviourism’s interest is in learning as a matter of stimulus and response, the cognitivist theory emphasises the individual’s thinking and mental processes. An influential variation
of cognitivism is constructivism that emphasises the individual as actively constructing his or her understanding of the world. Knowledge in this perspective does not exist as a finished picture out in reality, which the individual then registers in his or her memory like a photograph. It is instead something that is created by the individual. A third learning perspective is the socio-cultural that emphasises learning as an interaction between people within a society or culture. The mutual influence between the individual and environment is not to be misunderstood as primarily the context followed by the action. Action is rather something that is included in the context and even creates and recreates this context.

The socio-cultural perspective also opposes the traditional cognitive developmental psychology, which talks of certain pre-determined phases through which all must pass. Instead, learning is described and dependent upon the context and how the actual learning will be rooted in the specific character of the situation. To understand the learning that takes place, it is thus necessary to consider what the individual thinks and communicates and the social and cultural framework in which these processes take place. This means that the individual’s learning can be explained in terms of changes in social and cultural relations, and how this generates new impulses, concepts and perspectives of reality. But, the learning can also be explained by the individual developing new ideas, which he/she communicates with others, so that how reality is seen and managed is transformed. This is something, which in its turn leads to changes in social and cultural patterns (Säljö, 2000).

2.2 The learning collective

Learning is not only an individual process. It also happens through collective learning as people develop knowledge and competence together. The knowledge and competence that people gain is then more than the sum of each individual's learning. Hansson (1998) refers to this kind of learning as a special form of collective competence. By this he means that in well functioning organisations, such as a work team in an institution, a football team, or a sailing team all have the potential to develop a unique collective competence. Not only do such groups have familiarity with respect to how tasks are to be solved, but also collective competence is developed, participants "know" what they are to do without having to discuss the task.

One has then developed what is known as “tacit knowledge”. When a group of workers team possess such a shared knowledge and competence, one can talk of the learning collective. There exist different preconditions for such a learning process. Hansson draws attention to some of the factors; one of which is that participants can have an open dialogue and make their subjective experiences accessible to others. An open exchange of meanings
makes it possible for members to create a shared perception of what is to be done, how and why, and not in the least, when. To create a shared perception of these questions raises in turn the demand for empathy, as well as the will to understand others and to try and attempt to put yourself in their position.

The final outcome is that group members in the learning collective are willing to embrace the experience of others. One factor, which can determine if this will happen, is the shared feeling of belonging. That the group is familiar with the nature of their tasks and that there exists the competency to deal with the situation constitutes the group’s basis for action. Collective competence becomes thus, through dialogue and action a way of developing a shared meaning about what constitutes the special tasks and professional practice of the group.

2.3 The learning organisation

Groups, labour gangs or teams form in part of an organisation. Calling these kinds of collectives learning organisations might mean how does learning take place in such a context? Researchers with an interest in behaviourism consider learning in organisations as the changing of over-individual routines. By changing, for example instructions and rules stimulate the individual to change their behavioural patterns. Researchers in the cognitive tradition on the other hand, view learning in organisations as a process connected with changing the individual’s conception of their tasks and function in the organisation. The organisation is seen to be founded upon shared perceptions, carried by individuals and changed through interaction. Finally, a socio-cultural perspective understands learning in organisations as both an individual and social or collective process. It is not only individual or group perceptions of their role in the organisation, which change; the organisation’s behaviour also changes when it becomes a learning organisation (Granberg & Ohlsson, 2000; Schön, 1983; Swieringa & Wierdsma, 1992).

The result of the learning organisation can be described, partly in terms of different competence’s developed by individuals and groups, partly according to the changes in ways of working, forms of social interaction and attitudes of individuals, groups of workers and on the level of the organisation. When individuals and the collective become part of larger, more comprehensive organisational frameworks, change and development become a question of the organisation adjusting to changed relations in the environment. An investigation of the learning organisation can take place partly, by focusing on the individual and their cognitive learning and/or by looking at the changes in the groups shared perceptions; and partly, by focusing on the learning based upon changing the rules, insight and ideas and/or a more
through-going re-evaluation of the principles supporting the culture of the organisation.

2.4 Three perspectives on learning

This short presentation of different views on learning demonstrates that there is no single definition of learning. The type of evaluation that is argued for in this study is closely aligned with encouraging both cognitive development and social learning. The interdependence between individual cognition and social context is widely accepted in learning theory, cultural theory and new institutional perspectives on how organisations function.

In order to have an analytical tool to analyse the learning taking place in the project the following three perspectives on learning will be drawn upon (Hultman, 1996).

(1) The first order of learning (assimilation or single-loop) takes place within the framework of existing routines and is maintained by the system. This is a form of system learning, which can lead to increasing knowledge of how new techniques and methods are applied in practice. It results in a refinement of the expert’s knowledge, which can be both simple and more complicated in character. The goal is often that the present system should function more effectively.

(2) The second order of learning, accommodation or double-loop deals with looking at one’s activity from new perspectives. It can entail studying another’s way of working in order to gain new ideas. It offers the opportunity to judge the strengths and weaknesses of one’s own organisation and to thereby acquire knowledge to bring about its development.

(3) Lastly, it is possible to talk of change directed learning, which comprises the re-evaluation of earlier experiences and knowledge, so that they gain new significance. What happens is a more deep reaching change of the individual, group or organisation’s way of functioning. Learning results in a re-evaluation of fundamental perspectives, so that a different, changed view of work and the organisation can be formulated. The third order learning (or meta-learning) involves learning something that isn’t on the “agenda” (such as the concealed curriculum and social discipline) or that one learns something “theoretically”. Meta-learning is something, which is considered important, for example a local organisation theory or program theory, such that one sees one’s own workplace or activity with new eyes. Besides, meta-learning can result in learning about power structures, one’s own competence and so on.

The three orders are comparable with Ellström (1996) who distinguished between types of learning: Reproductive learning, developmental orientated productive learning, and the creative and development directed learning, which entails that learning to exploit skills and select methods in a more
knowledge-based and reflective manner than was the case in the two earlier mentioned levels. It is also important to underline Ellström’s point (p 159) with respect to the application of models on the division of learning; in practice in most situations it is necessary to work both on a "lower" routine or rule based level, as well as upon a "higher" knowledge-based and reflective level.

2.5 Comparing the questions for analysis

The following table provides an overview of a number of possible questions for analysis and an evaluation of the kind and level of learning and change that has occurred on the program of education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of learning and change:</th>
<th>First order of learning (assimilation) and change from within existing routines</th>
<th>Second order of learning (accommodation) and change from within existing perceptions</th>
<th>Third order of learning (meta-learning) which leads to changed perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levels:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Individual learning and personal and professional change</td>
<td>The individual has refined his accustomed behavior</td>
<td>The individual has developed his view of work within existing perceptions</td>
<td>The individual has revised his fundamental view of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Collective learning and social change</td>
<td>The group has improved existing working methods.</td>
<td>The group has developed its view of working within the dominant perceptions</td>
<td>The group has changed its fundamental view of its roll and function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Organisational and structural change</td>
<td>Occurred a change in goals, rules and regulations in the activity. Integration between social services</td>
<td>Developed increasing insight about what is a good organisation. Integration between social services</td>
<td>Development of policy and principles and a change in perception of the organisation’s fundamental function in society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea behind the table is that it provides both a starting point for the collection of empirical data on what kinds of learning and change occur on different levels in the organisation of social services, and a starting point for the analysis and evaluation of the education program and its results.

2.6 Preconditions and barriers to learning

In order to understand if any learning and change occurs it is important to see what kinds of preconditions and barriers to learning exist. Lundquist (1987) talks of three aspects and circumstances that are central to learning. The first is to understand what is being talked about. The second is to be willing to embrace the new and transform old knowledge. The third is about having the opportunity to exert an influence on the process, i.e. possess the preconditions in the form of power and resources, so that individuals and
groups can gain new knowledge, which can then be used at work. The pre-
conditions for individual, as well as collective learning are also influenced if
space exists for an open dialogue between the participants. If the participants
are willing to question their own and other’s perceptions and participate in a
shared reflection, where one places one’s own different views and experi-
ences in a more broad connection. On the basis of these points, it is possible
to gain an insight into barriers to learning.

2.6.1 Challenges to learning

Larsson (1996) takes up three challenges facing those organising studies or
offering learning. He emphasises that human interpretations must be chal-
lenged. When it comes to an education situation or another connection re-
quiring learning, a change in dominant ways of thinking, a break with old
ways of thinking and perceptions are required. If these are to be changed
they must be challenged. Otherwise, there will be no pressure to test and re-
flects in new directions. A requirement is therefore that the learning offered is
sufficiently ambitious and demanding, so that participants learn more than
they already know. What are needed are new, exploitable differences in ex-
perience. This is in order to cause a conversation and dialogue between par-
ticipates. A tension has to be created, which is capable of challenging and
changing old representations.

A second challenge is that the learning must touch us in a deep and au-
thentic manner. All are familiar with the kind of drilled recall, which relies
upon knowledge learnt for the test, facts, which it is acceptable to forget once
they have been demonstrated. This kind of learning is seen to be similar to
the kind of teaching given in schools, when courses are followed, which we
haven’t chosen and in which we hold no interest. Even in everyday learning
there is a risk of ending up in a situation, where the learning is not consid-
ered authentic if one is forced to participate in the activity, in order to earn
one’s living or because one has no other choice.

The third challenge to bring about learning is that it is experienced as
relevant. Most experiences regarded as part of the formal learning in school
are not immediately relevant for one’s own life and future plans. But, knowl-
dge learnt with a clear content and relevance for our daily life is often learnt
as knowledge separated from its daily context. We learn to read and write in
order to communicate and manage our daily practical tasks and this involves
a transferral of knowledge in a formal educational context well removed
from its daily point of application. This makes it difficult to see how it will be
used and why it is needed. If we can we see how a skill is relevant for us then
we will more easily learn it. When we have the opportunity of learning in a
practical situation, it becomes important to learn the knowledge and seek its
acquisition. The need to master a foreign language becomes more important if one lives and works among people who speak it. This is in order to make oneself understood, to know and be accepted by its speakers and also to cope with the work and the learning of the work tasks.

2.6.2 Barriers to learning

What barriers to learning might there be? To begin with, it is important to look at what is regarded as an inability to understand the given information. It can be the result a weakness in the information itself, or in how it is communicated, rather than in something to do with the recipient. That the individual or group has a lack of ability with respect to understanding can indicate an unreflected acceptance of the present state of affairs. It can also be the result of difficulties in generalising from concrete experiences. This means that thinking is locked in the specific, practical task at hand and one is unable to construct a new way of carrying out the task. A reason can also be that the main work tasks are routines and offer few opportunities of development.

An unwillingness to learn can be seen when a person demonstrates conscious attention, and at the same time doesn’t seem appear to have seen or heard what is being communicated, or that one enters into an apparent cooperation, without an underlying willingness to re-evaluate one’s reason for co-operating.

A lack of preconditions can assume a social character. It can be a lack of openness between people in an organisation, that the working environment is characterised by uncertainty and that there are strong patterns of segregation, which means that only certain people talk with each other. There can also be certain dominant people who always control the conversation, ensuring that the views of others remain unheard. A further example can be that there exists a conflict in the organisation and/or in the team of workers. The preconditions to implement knowledge may be lacking because of the paucity of political will, a shortfall in economic and material resources, or an insufficient dissemination of information. (Dalin, 1997; Granberg & Ohlsson, 2000).

Questions for evaluation

To summarise, an investigation into the different barriers to learning and change can take place on the basis of the following questions: Can participants understand what is being said? Are the participants willing to change? Do real opportunities or the necessary preconditions exist for change? One can also ask if the knowledge represents a challenge to existing ways of thinking and conceptualising about the world. Is the new knowledge presented in a way that it is seen to be relevant for the people involved and their life situation.
2.7 The dissemination of knowledge

The third question in the evaluation concerns investigating how participants disseminate their newly acquired knowledge in their own organisation. The diffusion of information in an organisation demands co-ordination, which can take place in a number of different ways (Stein, 1996). Co-ordination can take place on the basis of a hierarchical structure, such that information passes from the top of the organisation to subordinate levels. A common variant is that many meet together to listen to the boss’s message. An argument in support of this form of dissemination is that all are present to hear the same information. A further argument is that the method is effective, saving time and money. The disadvantage with the hierarchical method of dissemination is that it works against the communication of information between those on the same level of the organisation, since “all eyes look to the top”.

The lateral diffusion of information is an alternative principle and is directed towards employees on the same tier of the organisation. The advantage is that it can stimulate a high level of participation and interest, since those “in our department are affected”. The disadvantage is that costs rise when a large number of actors communicate all involved parties are to be given the opportunity to express themselves.

A third way of diffusing information is through a standardisation of what is considered appropriate in a particular situation. This method leads to limited learning, since the information (the changed rules...etc) differs from what one has done before, rather than adding to or adjusting dominant methods and techniques. It results in a number of new rules to follow, without the activity’s fundamental functions having been reformed and developed.

A fourth way of diffusing information is through different types of network. This method has significant advantages. The network is not centralised. As centralisation can lead to information being controlled and certain information lost, it is an advantage when networks spread information, so that it is accessible to everybody. The network can also take on a specialised character when those with similar interests exchange their high degree of expert knowledge, ensuring that the spread of information becomes more effective in their respective field. On the other hand, the resultant specialisation can also mean that the dissemination of knowledge between different fields of knowledge becomes more difficult and individuals from these different fields find it difficult to understand each other. A second aspect, is that network relations are often less formal than in the organisation. The disadvantage with the informal character is that one can’t impart information to those who are not part of the organisation’s network. One must not share the organisation’s ”business secrets”, ”strategies”...etc.
Questions for evaluation
To analyse and judge how the dissemination of knowledge occurs in the participant’s own activity, the following questions can be posed: Does dissemination occur from the managerial level to others tiers in the organisation, between actors on the same level of the organisation and/or through the network?

2.8 Utilisation and structural change
The fourth question in the evaluation deals with how the results of the education are applied or implemented in the activity, and if this leads to any change in the activity’s practical character. The evaluation is also meant to judge if there occur any structural changes after attending the program of education.

2.8.1 Utilisation
Utilisation can be viewed in different ways. Nydén (1992) has given an account of some of these, beginning with instrumental utilisation. This deals with what the participants have learnt and how it is directly shown in their actions. An alternative is conceptual utilisation: the learning of participants as it comes to expression in a new way of looking at their activity. We have also mentioned the kind of utilisation of knowledge involving changes in the activity’s self-identity and cultural character. All three forms of utilisation (instrumental, cognitive and socio-cultural) can be judged according to results from the program of education and their effect upon structure.

Utilisation also has a temporal aspect. One requirement can be that the utilisation of the education results should be immediately apparent, or at least closely connected with the fact that the program has been undertaken. In the long-term it can take time before the result exerts an influence on the participant’s activity and it might also be the case that the utilisation only becomes acceptable with time.

When utilisation is viewed from the perspective of the individual, the question is how the individual applies results from the education in their own work, and this can be evident after a short period of time.

Questions for evaluation
To understand which forms of utilisation are evident, the following questions can be posed: Is there a direct or indirect utilisation of the program’s results? Is the utilisation of knowledge cognitive, instrumental and/or socio-cultural? Over what span of time should the utilisation be examined? Is the utilisation apparent immediately or in the long-term?
2.8.2 Structural change

An analysis of how an organisation changes on a more structural level can be attempted from different perspectives. From a technical and economic perspective, organisations can be regarded as rational systems, working towards the realisation of publicly stated goals. Learning and change are primarily in this respect, how different rules and directives can lead to beneficial improvements in effectiveness. It is supposed that such beneficial effects are the result of system integration and co-ordination. Barriers or, inadequacies in this perspective are defined as a failure in the system of management and a lack of clarity in the allocation of responsibility, unclear goals...etc.

From a political perspective, organisations are regarded as a place for conflicts of interest and conflicts when individuals and groups attempt to realise their values and desires in the allocation of scarce resources. When structural change and learning are to be analysed from a political perspective this means that power and influence between different levels of the organisation and between different interest groups become a central topic.

Yet another example of a perspective on change is to regard the organisation as a culture held together by certain shared conceptions of functions and tasks. In this case, learning and development are a question of influencing and changing these conceptions. An example of analysis of a structural change based upon cultural perspective looks to the symbolic actions in the organisation. (Alvesson, 2001). A certain activity, for example a program of education, can often be used to raise motivation and contribute to the realisation of the organisation’s goal. The initiative can also have a symbolic value, providing a signal to employees and others a change and development is taking place in the organisation. From such a perspective the question can be raised. Does the program of education contribute to the realisation of the goal in the first instance, or is it more the case that it conceals the cracks in the organisation by holding up a positive activity signalising high ambitions and a willingness to change, rather than real action?

The arguments about utilisation and structural change provide a number of approaches that can be used to analyse traditions in Swedish and Russian social services. These make it clear how different ways of managing and setting priorities determine the dominant values, attitudes and relation to the services offered, and so on. Reflecting upon the similarities and differences, with respect to these points, can be the source of an additional understanding of the preconditions, implementation and results of the change and developmental work initiated by the co-operation between the two countries.
3 Design and methods

In the previous chapter, a description was provided of a number of questions and points of departure for the analysis and examination of the program of training’s preconditions implementation and results. In this chapter, a presentation is given of the research perspective and methods adopted in the evaluation. At the end of the chapter, the relevance and reliability of the results are discussed.

3.1 Research perspectives

From a scientific point of view, the evaluation can be placed in a critical hermeneutic perspective. This entails looking towards the question of how people experience and interpret different phenomena and relations in their life world, for example, in terms of what learning means to a person. What than makes this reflection critical? Brookfield’s (2002) view is worth quoting:

Critical reflection on experience certainly tends to lead to the uncovering of paradigmatic, structuring assumptions, But the depth of a reflective effort does not, in and itself, make it critical. For me the word critical is sacred and I object to its being thrown around indiscriminately. For something to count as an example of critical learning, critical analysis, or critical reflection, I believe that the person concerned must engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context in which learning is happening. They must also try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interest of others: that is, hegemonic assumptions. (p 127)

The interpretation of what is meaningful knowledge occurs in relation to the learner’s situation. This means that a certain content of knowledge doesn’t have to be just as meaningful for all the participants in a program, even though the teacher might regard the content, as something all should know. This is where the critical research perspective enters the picture. A critical perspective is characterised by a reluctance to regard the dominant form of thinking and existing social situation as natural, neutral and rational or an assertion of how things ought to be. To adopt a critical stance involves searching for alternative interpretations in order to see other perspectives (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994).
3.1.1 A critical dialogue

An important element in such a critical interpretation and learning based evaluation is dialogue. Here I mean not only the dialogue between parties concerned with conducting the evaluation but also the dialogue between the evaluator and the evaluation discourse tradition that is a source of ideas on what it means to be an evaluator. Through dialogue and reflection conditions can be created to better understand how different parties create their understanding of the object or topic under evaluation. It is a process involving pedagogy, as it not only forms an understanding of the evaluation object but also influence self-understanding. This means that dialogue does not only concern the object for evaluation but also the participants in the evaluation.

The aim of this critical examination is to develop a deeper understanding of what the program means for different stakeholders in terms of limitations and possibilities, and to reach greater insight and clarity into the foundations of one’s own judgements and those of others.

3.2 Formative and summative evaluation design

An important goal for the evaluation is to support the change and development of the social services in the county. A second goal is to summarise the results, which have been achieved. This is why the evaluation has a design, which is in its first phase “formative” and in its final phase is ”summative”. The formative phase entails the evaluation taking place during the program 1999-2000, in order to contribute to making improvements in the program. The summative phase’s goal is that the evaluation carried out in 2001 should reveal the results of the program of education.

3.3 Methods for data collections

In the actual collection of data several methods have been appropriated, so that several aspects of the program of education could be investigated. An advantage with this is that weaknesses in one methodology can be compensated by strengths in another, thereby increasing the level of reliability and validity of the data and results. In the table below, the main methods used in the evaluation are presented and how they have been used to investigate different parts of the program.
Table 2: Methods adopted in the collection of data

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<tr>
<td>Program of education’s preconditions (situated need for learning in the social services)</td>
<td>Result of the program of education in the form of individual, collective, organisational learning and change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration of the program of education and results (participatory learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The dissemination and utilisation of results from the program of education in different social services.</td>
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**Methods:**

- Document, literature and statistics
- Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3
- Interviews
- Observations
- Questionnaires 4
- Case studies
- Interviews
- Observations
- County conference I.
- County conference II.
- Questionnaires 5

In addition to these methods data has also been collected in the form of photographs of venues and buildings, video-films from the social services, different tape recordings and ongoing notes from fieldwork.

### 3.3.1 Documents, statistics and literature

An important source of data for the evaluation is the material collected from local municipal officers. The data consists of accounts about the activities and statistics describing the social conditions and the particular projects in the municipalities. To gain an impression of the social situation in the county, statistics have also been collected from the from the Work and Social Security committee. Finally, literature in the form of reports and books on methodology has been used to complete a picture of Russian social development.

### 3.3.2 Questionnaires

Several questionnaires were carried out during the evaluation’s formative and summary phases. Investigation of the formative phase 1999-2000 was done with questionnaire 1: Investigating the local municipal projects; questionnaire 2: The social conditions in the county and in the local municipalities; questionnaire 3: The participant’s expectations of the course, and questionnaire 4: Evaluation of the course. Investigation during the formative phase in 2001 was done with questionnaire 5: Views of the evaluation report. (See appendix for detail information on the questionnaires).
3.3.3 Cases studies

Case studies have been used in the formative and summary phases of the evaluation. The approach is appropriate for studying the projects in their natural environments and for studying how knowledge is implemented after the education. Four case studies were carried out in four local municipalities in Leningrad County. The number is related partly, to the cost and time plan, and partly to the desire to do a case study in each problem area identified in the main course: (1) The elderly and the disabled, (2) Children with limited opportunities, (3) Children and families and, (4) Drug preventative initiatives for children and youth. (See appendix for detail information on the case studies).

3.3.4 Interviews

Interviews have been an important method for collecting data, both during the formative and the summary phase of the evaluation. The interviews have been carried out with individuals or with groups of staff. (See appendix for more detail information on the interviews).

3.3.5 Observations

In both the formative phase and in the summary phase case studies, observations have been used to complement the interviews. During the visits to the different institutions it was usually the leader who acted as a guide. During the study excursion there were opportunities to meet the personnel and to see the buildings, facilities and technical equipment. The staff described their methods of working and the evaluator was able to ask questions and document impressions and information about the places according to the appropriateness of the situation. The most normal method was for the evaluators to write up their notes immediately or directly after the respective visit. Occasionally, the comments and questions were taken up on tape.

Participant observation has also been used as a method to investigate how the program of education in Sweden had been conducted in practice. The observations were carried out in education course 4 and 5, during spring 2000. The evaluator acted as a participant observer in the lectures and study excursions in Södermanland County, taking notes on what the course participants considered interesting and the questions they asked. After the visits, conversations were held with participants about their experiences.

3.3.6 Participants at the county conferences

On the 29th of February 2000, the Work and Social Security Committee arranged a conference at St. Petersburg to make an inventory of the local mu-
nicipal work and the results achieved in the social services. At the conference, representatives participated from 29 local municipalities in the county. During the conference the municipalities gave examples of results from different projects, drawing connections with the program of education. The evaluator was present at the conference and took notes on the presentations. The documentation acted to complement the picture of which problems the municipalities encountered in the social services, at the same time important results from the program of education were highlighted.

On the 27th of September 2001 a further conference was arranged with participants from all of the county’s municipalities. The goal was to hear about the results from the ongoing development projects in the local municipalities. At this conference a preliminary evaluation report was presented and participants were given the opportunity to make comments and at the same time check the figures on the social situation and social services in the county.

3.4 Sample of respondents

One of the goals with the sample of respondents in the evaluations different investigations has been to obtain a good cross-sectional sample of data from different decision-making levels and professions within the social services in the county and between the different municipalities. 29 municipalities participated with representatives in the program of education and also provided assistance in the case studies during the formative phase. With respect to the case studies in the summary phase, 24 municipalities took part. The interviews in the four case study municipalities have included representatives from the top tier of management, middle management, and from the staff. (See appendix for detail information on the sample of respondents).

3.5 Processing the data

The main source of data in this study consists of texts in the form of information and reports from the local municipalities in the county, along with transcripts from the questionnaires and interviews. The data collection has been carried out to examine what kind of learning and change occurs and what knowledge from the education is applied in practice. This means that the questions have focused on such key words as knowledge, development and change, as well as the preconditions and barriers to this. The results have been written up in Swedish and the text gives an account of how the respondents view these questions on the basis of their experiences. This doesn’t mean that the data collected and analysed was primarily in the form of simple questions and answers. Instead, the material was mainly composed of
accounts from respondents about different relations, thoughts and events on specific groups of questions.

3.5.1 Analysis of the topics

The processing of the data begins by reducing the amount of information considered essential to answer the evaluator’s questions. The analysis of the data can be done in different ways. One is to use a theory of the subject, with already formulated analytical categories. Another is to go from the empirical data and look for topics based upon what the respondents say. A third way, is to apply a thematic analysis methodology (Zoglowek, 1999). This method can be regarded as abductive, which means that the researcher avoids the one-sided application of either a theoretical or an empirical perspective. Instead both perspectives are combined.

The analytical work consists in making the analytical units more precise on the basis of the empirical data and in making the analytical topic more precise on the basis of the theory (Karpatschouf, 1984).

The work can begin with the interpretation of an empirical statement (the analytical unit), for example a statement from a respondent, which is seen as a way of learning. The analysis can also take as its starting point a theoretical analytical topic, for example from theories on different types of learning, and seek to find statements in the interview material that can clarify the topic. By changing between these perspectives the material can be analysed in an authentic manner, while at the same time maintaining a focus upon certain theoretical topics.

In this study the method of analysis through topics has been the point of departure. Schematically, the work of analysis can be described in the following stages. First, the text material was read in order to identify prominent aspects (analytical units). They can be central formulations with meaning (“precise formulations” or “core formulations”) that capture what the respondent is expressing. Stage two involves a summary of the results in order to make the main part of the interview (or questionnaire) clear. It is possible for the material to be reduced so that more of an overview is obtained and further analysis is possible. The third stage entails a re-reading of the material with certain analytical topics from the theoretical perspective kept in mind.

For example, the participant’s view of the goal with the education, the content and forms of how one views personal and collective learning, as well as changes connected with this learning. Results are compared and this shows what exists in terms of the total amount of material around central theoretical concepts. The fourth stage involves the formulation of a single text, which describes what has been revealed in answer to the questions posed by the evaluator. The text provides a foundation for a first hand inter-
interpretation based upon an organisation and presentation of results around the topic and central issues. The fifth stage in the analysis entails the analysis and discussion of results on a higher level. Namely, by relating them to research and theories in the area, through so-called “analytical generalisation” (Yin, 1994). The goal, using concepts from the theoretical framework and other theories considered relevant, is to broaden the understanding of the problem beyond the first level of interpretation and description of interesting statements.

3.6 The quality of results

The quality of results can be measured in different ways. One requirement is that it should be possible to test the results against alternative interpretations. Such a testing is dependent on a clear presentation of the interpretations and theories, which have been used. A second requirement is that the results should yield something new, which the reader didn’t already know (Larsson, 1994). Having presented earlier research in chapter three, my view is that this study highlights important aspects increasing the knowledge and understanding of Russian social services, and also contributing to the general level of knowledge on the question of learning and evaluation. Further quality assurance criteria are that the results should have an empirical basis, such that they can are appropriate for analysis. It is also important that the information (the respondents different statements) has an identifiable and valid source. The testing of this internal validity has been carried out in different ways. The material can be written down and compared with its original sources, for example the tape recordings of the interviews.

A special factor in this study is that it to a large extent builds upon information translated from Russian into Swedish. This results in a risk that nuances in the statements of respondents can be lost on translation. Nevertheless, since one of the assistants to the evaluator speaks Swedish and Russian it is possible to get help to avoid misunderstandings in the material. In translating the goal has been to note the totality situation in which things have been said, in order to achieve an interpretation, which is a more correct version of what the respondents have said, than is achieved with a literal translation. Besides, such a strategy leads to greater understanding.

3.6.1 Generalisability

A central question when it comes to the quality of the results is if they can be generalised. This can be ensured in two ways. On the one hand, a statistical generalisation means that the researcher works with a sample, which is considered representative (for example, a random sample) and ensures that the results can be generalised to a larger population or group. On the other hand,
Evaluation as learning

an analytical-theoretical generalisation is possible. This involves the researcher attempting a generalisation by connecting the result to a more comprehensive theory than the one used in the particular case study or situations. (Yin, 1994). In this study, the attempt has been made to pursue the latter option.

The analytical-theoretical generalisation is based upon a deep going and thorough analysis of a single case, rather than upon a desire for breadth and representativeness. The alert reader might ask why so much emphasis is placed upon securing a wide base material, obtained from a large distribution of respondents, when the goal is not to demonstrate statistical representativeness. The answer is that with qualitative studies it is also possible to show how different groups can have a varied conception of the phenomenon or particular situation. A large variation increases the possibility of seeing alternative views of the phenomenon. A generalisation of the results doesn’t then deal with the issue of statistically demonstrating that these views are representative for the respondents. It is more a question of how the view presented function for the reader, as they recognise themselves and are able to draw lessons applicable to their own specific situation, or put it differently, a theoretical generalisation can be made.

A further quality assurance criterion concerns the study’s ethical position. In the evaluation an emphasis has been placed upon telling informants that ethic rules for Swedish research have been followed. The evaluator has made this clear at the outset in each case and obtained the permission of people, at the same time ensuring that they have had the opportunity to make their own comments. Besides, the information is treated in a confidential manner by the evaluator and none of the material is used for other than the stated goals, i.e. those stipulated in the evaluation.
4 Results

The first evaluation question concerns the pre-conditions for the program of education. With this as the main concern, the question addressed in this chapter is about what the social situation is like in Leningrad County? The description is based upon the study excursions to the local municipalities, interviews with Russian participants when they have attended the program in Sweden, and partly upon information gained at the Work and Social Security Committee’s annual conference held in St. Petersburg on the 29th of Feb. 2000. At the conference public statistics were presented, as well as information on the social situation in the county and the different ways in which, current problems were being tackled. It should be noted that the statistical material from the conference is not completely reliable and some of the figures can contradict each other. Therefore, it is important that this kind of data is crosschecked with data from other sources, such as the Internet, Russian literature, and so on.

4.1 The social situation in Leningrad County

Leningrad County has a population of 1.6 million. The County is divided into 29 local municipalities, in which there in total 38 suburban centres and 3167 villages. From the Work and Social Security Committee’s description of the social situation it is clear that the most deprived groups are pensioners, families with many children and single parents i.e. people, who because of their age or present life situation have few opportunities of earning extra income. These are the living conditions faced by around 30 percent of the county’s population. The registered number of unemployed rose in 1999 to almost 12 percent, but this figure conceals the many others who are in reality without work or income. Moreover, since many people have been unemployed for many years and not included in the statistics the true figure is even higher.

On the 1st of January 2000, 364 655 families and 604 315 persons were registered in the county’s local municipalities. In 1999 there were 2276 written applications for social security; representing an increase of 43 percent compared with 1998. The birth rate has fallen dramatically and many children are born with different types of deficiency or indications of the like, such that they require some kind of treatment and diagnosis. Possible explanations are the worsening social conditions and the ecological problems found in the living environments of families. A problem giving rise to anxiety is the increasing level of violence experienced by women and its connection with prob-
Evaluation as learning

lems with partners and a worrying level of drug abuse. These are social problems made visible through the so-called "confidential telephone line", which makes it possible for citizens to turn to social services for psychological help. The telephone line is one example of an initiative provided by social institutions in the county. The Committee’s annual statistics show that 25 percent of all registered telephone calls concern women who are the victim of violence and problems with partners.

In recent years, the number of refugees has markedly increased. They come from Tjetenien, Kaukasus, Afghanistan and the Baltic countries. To manage the daily cost of living many of the poor and those with several children in the family have also sold their apartments in St. Petersburg. They have used the sum of money obtained to move to smaller municipalities in the county, where they believe the cost of living will be lower. This has often been a short time solution for the family’s economy and many soon become dependent on social security. In the period 1998-2000, approx. 5000 families including 7000 dependants moved out to the different municipalities in the county. This, along with the refugees, represents an increased work burden for the social services in these municipalities, and they don’t necessarily receive sufficient funding from the state as compensation.

Lacking the state contribution to their social services, municipalities have been robbed of the opportunity to meet the challenges. The Work and Social Security Committee states that social services in the county in 2000 received 1 million Roubles in state subsidy, instead of the 9 million they were entitled to according to the stipulated level of allocation. The social institutions in the county financed by the state have received 79 percent of their budget. The shortfall in state finance has led to a reduction in the norm for among other things, food served in the institutions and the level of medication.

A big problem is the maintenance of one of the social service’s basic forms of organisation: large, total care institutions with 200-300 places. Many of the institutions were built in the 1930-40s and need to be modernised. Further examples are the lack of technical aids for the disabled and the need to make administration more effective through computerisation.

4.1.1 Reasons for the social problems

The relatively bleak picture of the social situation in the county, as suggested at the Work and Social Security Committee’s conference and by other information about the county, was also confirmed by participants in the program in interviews carried out in 1999. Respondents highlight different reasons for the social problems; the most normal being poverty, deteriorating health and unemployment. In the majority of the answers (approx. 70 percent) there is talk of “social stress” in the description of their own local municipalities.
Some answers draw attention to a number of indicators of social deterioration in the form of increased youth crime, the lack of belief in the future, inflation, together with the difficulty of maintaining social security payments for exposed groups. The low levels of economic support for dependent groups and social services stands in marked contrast to the high price of food, commodities and medicine. Another disturbing issue raised in some of the answers is the case of pensioners who face steadily increasing living costs without the necessary means.

Loneliness among the elderly is a serious social problem. A large proportion of pensioners and the disabled live in the countryside, often without relatives or contact with the nearest population centre. Many of the elderly have also become the victims of property fraud and lost their apartments. The number of economically vulnerable groups is on the increase, including lone mothers, families with several children and pensioners. There exist certain parts of the county where child assistance has not been paid. The number of homeless and children living on the street, as well as the level of crime connected with drug abuse is on the increase. Some of the respondents highlighted the lack of adequate material and technical resources, leading to deterioration in the standard of living for pensioners and the disabled.

Nearly all the respondents in our survey underlined that the state contribution to the finance of social institutions is inadequate and that the local budget only managed to cover staffing costs, the cost of food for those in need and some medicine. To enlist the support of benevolent groups as a source of social assistance is difficult because of the complicated system of taxation. The shortfall of sufficient municipal finance has made it difficult for local municipalities to deal with growing problems and develop social service initiatives.

4.2 The organisational framework to deal with social problems

An important premise for working with these problems is the organisational framework of the social services. As already noted, social services are governed by state authorities and receive much of their funding from these sources. Moreover, the local municipalities have gained more freedom to control parts of the social services. The county has in total 181 functioning social institutions, of which 165 are on the local municipal level and 16 on the regional level. Some of the normal institutional forms are described below.

Total care institutions. These are a form of state institution with a long history, and they played a central role in social care during the Soviet period. In Leningrad County, there are 12 such institutions (- there are 1000 in the whole of Russia). The institutions are large buildings with architecturally different interiors; each is capable of taking between 200-300 people who are
mentally unstable, elderly or disabled. In recent years attempts have been made to develop social services on the municipal level. One example is the so-called mini-institution with 15-30 places. It is located in the municipality, with the intention of bringing the client closer to their home environment.

Social service centres for the elderly and adults with disabilities. These centres are organised to provide different types of social services and located administratively under different departments. The department for temporary accommodation, where the client can receive food, clothing and a roof over their heads for up to two months per year. This service is very important for the elderly in the rural districts of the county, especially in the winter when they can face problems with electricity and water. During the daytime the elderly can stay at day centres and receive different social services and participate in cultural events. At acute departments, help is offered to people in acute situations, and assistance often consists of food, clothes, money, as well as medicine. The department for social rehabilitation offers individual work therapy and individually tailored rehabilitation programs to ensure adjustment to normal life again.

Home services are usually organised by one of the centres described above. Home services involve a large part of the social services in the county, providing the population in central areas and in the villages with social, psychological and juridical assistance. Their activities are of great importance to the elderly and for those who are alone in the villages. In addition to assistance provided on temporary visits to the centres, there are also mobile doctors, specialist teams and social worker teams. In 1999, 760 people received medical care in their homes; this represents a doubling compared with the figure for 1998.

Social family centres work with deprived families, lone parents, families with a large number of children, children from economically deprived families, the pregnant and with women in need of employment, women who have been the victims of violence. The services provided include the provision of psychological, therapeutic and educational assistance for families with disabled children, as well as the "confidential telephone" providing psychological counselling and advice.

The social hotel is for children and youth who have had traumatic experiences or have had to leave home because of a destructive family situation. At the "hotel" pregnancy tests are offered, as well as information on contraception and abortion. There also exists a department for social rehabilitation, where staff works with children and parents following different rehabilitation programs, as well as a day centre, where children can be visited in the daytime. Besides, the hotel has a foster home, which gathers documentation on the children and examines their health.
Rehabilitation centres for children and youth with limited opportunities. These kinds of centres have some or several of the following services: medical, psychological and educational help for children and youth with development problems or functional disabilities, sensory development for children with early autism, preventative treatment for young children and social rehabilitation with an emphasis on work therapy. The centres are responsible for diagnosis and proposing individual programs for rehabilitation. Within the centres there is a department for social and medical help providing physiotherapy, massage, health treatment and other social services. At some of the centres there is also a department for consultation, a department for preventative work with babies, as well as a department for social help for the elderly and disabled situated (also sited at the day centres), offering different activities, such as gymnastics.

4.3 The need for education

The presentation of the forms of organisation shows that the social services in Russia are dominated by a structure based upon large institutions covering many different activities. The purpose of this relatively detailed presentation is to give a picture of what supposed to be changed by the education project. Changing these structures and institutions is a task requiring initiatives on both individual and institutional levels, as well on the over-ordinate county tier of organisation. The problems that have to be addressed involve a series of social and medical needs across all age groups. Knowledge of methods are required, in order to systematically map out and arrive at a list of social need priorities. Also needed is a range of different policies to improve people’s quality of life.

The description of the social situation in Leningrad County reveals that policies to meet the social and economic needs of different groups are an urgent priority. The extents of the problems are documented in the statistical data and in the accounts given by different respondents in the interviews and case studies. The most severe problem is the lack of resources to run an effective system of social services. There is also a considerable need to develop knowledge and different forms of expertise to deal with the growing social problems.

Representatives from the different tiers of the social services offered criticism of the present structure of the Russian social services. The most important point raised was the need to change the large institutions serving the social needs of the population. Critics want more ideas and attempts to reorganise in smaller units. These will work more closely with people and can be administered and led in a more effective manner.
5 The participant’s views of the program

In what follows, a presentation is given of what the respondents have said about the education and its effects. To begin with, the participant’s views of the program are given, as well as examples of what they have learnt. Thereafter, a presentation is given of how they have applied their knowledge. Describing the results from the four case studies does this. After this, examples are given of how the participants have disseminated their knowledge in their own workplaces, in the local municipality and in the county. Lastly, a description is given of the different changes in the social services, as described in the accounts given by the respondents and their connection with the program of education.

The results presented in this chapter are descriptive in character and build upon what Alvesson and Deetz (2000, p205) have called “first hand interpretations” of what the respondents have actually said. This means that the interpretations rely upon a lower level of abstraction than the analysis presented in chapter 6, where a connection is drawn to the theoretical framework of reference.

5.1 Opinions on the education program

The program of education was held eight times with in total 160 participants. The participants represented all the municipalities in the county and an attempt was made to ensure that the sample of participants on each course was spread across the social services, maximising in a similar manner the geographical distribution. In sum, eight education courses have been held with some months in between. The first began in autumn 1998 and the last in spring 2001.

According to the participant’s evaluations the courses have been run in a constructive and well-intentioned manner. Some of the participants described the atmosphere on the courses with the following terms: Engaging, confident, deserving respect, understanding, warm atmosphere, high professional competence, all-round interest, everyday approach, a lot of good translating. A comparison of all of the answers reveals that the participants appreciated the time spent on the courses and the manner in which they were run. The majority considers two weeks to be enough, and that it was the optimal and effectively used. Some of the participants would have liked more free time. Others meant that two weeks was too long, in relation to the course’s intensity and proposed a shorter course of approximately ten days.
The evaluation found that participants missed written material in Russian from the lectures, which they could later present in their own social services. They wanted all the different material to be collected in a compendium and the videos could be used to assist in course presentation. Some participants felt that the lectures should deal not just with past and contemporary situation, but also include future perspectives, new projects in social work and the development of the Swedish welfare state. Some experienced the lectures as too abstract and difficult to understand, for example those on community work. (This lecture was discontinued after the second course) One view expressed during the evaluation was that the equivalent concept didn’t exist in Russia. When it comes to the number of lectures, the majority considered that it was adequate. However, some felt that the number could have been reduced. A couple would have liked more lectures, for example on social work in different countries and on the education system. Some wanted more detailed knowledge about how to work with families with different kinds of problems and some desired an increase the number of lectures closer to the topic of social work. One view also clearly expressed was that the lectures provided a good overview of practice in Sweden.

Most believed that the course allocated enough time for discussions on topical questions. However, some felt that they lacked the opportunity to delve more deeply into certain topics. Some felt that this was difficult because of the different forms of organisation in the two countries, for example in Russia there were forms of organisation that didn’t exist in Sweden. Two of the participants missed discussion of the following: medical rehabilitation, the employment of people with limited opportunities and the employer’s position on these questions. What several missed was more information about Swedish social law.

5.1.1 The study excursions

The majority of the participants liked the study excursions. Several experienced a good balance between the lectures and study excursions, and that the two forms complemented each other. Some meant however, that certain visits were, such as to similar social services and that this could have been avoided. Most expressed the wish for more study excursions and more ”meetings around the table” with Swedish professionals. Some said that some of the study excursions were too short and that the time reserved for discussions was inadequate. The questions asked by the participants during the visits differed and covered the following: the budget of the municipality and the particular activity, the organisation of the social service, the wage level of staff, their education and field of competence...etc.
Some of the things which made a strong impression on the participants during the study excursions were the standard and provision of technical equipment and the enthusiasm of the staff, their working conditions, way of working and view of the disabled and elderly. The allocation of the study excursions according to the participant’s present area of work was criticised by some of the participants. This was because the majority of the participants wanted to visit social services outside their field of competence, crossing normal boundaries in the process. Others had no specific field in particular and were interested in all social services. Some also commented that the division into groups didn’t take into consideration the fact that politicians and mayors weren’t directly involved in the provision of the social services, and dealt more with issues on a more general level.

5.2 What have the course participants learnt?

What kind of new knowledge has been acquired from the program and what has it meant for the development of your own practice? These are questions posed to the participants on the different courses. The answers reveal a great deal of variation in points of view. One participant wrote for example, “I haven’t found anything new to learn, but have on the other hand, gained the insight that a great deal can be tired in the conditions in Russia”. Another participant wrote, “for me with 30 years of experience, the course couldn’t provide anything new”. Others meant they had been able to confirm what they already knew, so they knew that they are following “the correct path” in their work. One participant thought that Russian social workers had a higher competence and level of education than their Swedish counterparts.

However, most of the participants said that the course had improved their knowledge and given them a broad overview of Swedish social services and about how to distinguish between work methods in social work. Participants mention that they have gained increased insight and greater knowledge of Swedish social policy and how the social security system appears to the population. Furthermore, knowledge of the following has been acquired. The organisation of home services, preventive work for children and youth, working with lone mothers, how to run preventive initiatives in the struggle against abuse, the rehabilitation of disabled children, on living in groups, as well as knowledge about alternative ways of working. Several raised the importance of knowledge and experiences of working to integrate different social service targets groups in society. Mention is also made of working with people who have functional barriers or psychological difficulties in Sweden, and how they represent good examples to take home and use in their daily work. Furthermore, it is said that they have acquired knowledge about alternative methods of working in social work and knowledge about how work
methods can be developed in response to actual needs. At the same time knowledge has been gained about how much can be expected from staff and the importance of working in a professional manner.

What opportunities for self-development have the course provided? Results from our questionnaires to participants indicate that for some the course has meant a lot for their personal development. Several talk of the Swedish social worker’s humanist conception as the most important lesson. Two thought the course had given them the opportunity to reflect over their own activity and the chances it offered for development. Some said the course had given them the opportunity of comparing different ways of looking at the social services in Sweden and in Russia. Several participants meant that social workers in Russia should learn to get closer to their clients and their individual, concrete needs.

5.3 The utilisation of the results

Can this knowledge from Sweden be applied in the Russian social services, and if so, how can it be imparted to Russian staff in their respective social services? Several of the participants answered that implementing things from the Swedish method of working in Russia, for example different forms of home services in child rehabilitation, ought to be possible. Further initiatives, which can be mentioned, are the organisation of family homes, action in the event of crises and day centres, as well as daily employment for the elderly and the disabled. Two participants said that the implementation of Swedish experiences and knowledge in Russian social services can only occur if there are changes in law and state finance. In some replies one finds the view that there are many points of similarity between Russian and Swedish social work, with respect to their organisation and content. At the same time, it is confirmed that differences reflect the wide disparity in resources available.

When it comes to the question of how participants plan to disseminate knowledge and experiences in their own social services, most answer that their intention is to inform staff or leaders and create time for discussions about how the knowledge can be applied. Some participants described how important it was to present, in a written manner, all proposals about how municipal social services might be developed. Seminars, general meetings, staff meetings, discussions with colleagues, meeting local politicians and also lectures about what had been seen and learnt, are examples of forms mentioned by participants as ways of presenting and discussing knowledge and experiences from the program.
5.4 Results from the case studies in 1999-2000

What have participants done in practice? As indicated by the questionnaires from the program, participants drew attention to the importance of the program for social work in their respective municipalities. In order to show how the results from the education were connected with practical activity, four case studies were carried out within the four selected problem areas: the elderly and disabled; families and children with problems; drug problems among children and youth; the rehabilitation of children with limited opportunities. Results from the case studies are presented below.

5.4.1 Elderly and disabled

The first case study concerned a social project about the development of care for the elderly and social services for the disabled. A Centre for social services ran the project for the elderly and disabled, in one of the oldest local municipalities in the county with a population of about 85000. One of the most prominent social problems faced by the municipality is the difficulty of meeting the needs of the growing number of elderly and disabled. The question of an effective and comprehensive service for these groups has been a topic of discussion for a long time among staff and their leaders. With this background, and despite limited resources at the Centre, a project has been started with the goal of trying out alternative ways of working.

The project’s concrete goal has been to identify and gain an overview of the elderly and disabled in need of social services. A second goal has been to develop social services tailored to the different needs of the individual. A third goal has been to increase the individual’s sense of self-worth and psychological well being by letting them participate in the open activities on offer: motion, work therapy and food at subsidised prices. A fourth goal has been to complete the establishment of sheltered accommodation for the elderly in one of the smaller local municipality’s. It is expected that work towards these goals will lead to increased quality, effectiveness and a wide choice of social services. The project leader is also in charge of the Centre.

What does the case study show?

The case study reveals that it is has not been easy to develop activities when there is limited funding. At the start of the project it was difficult to persuade local politicians that a more broad provision of services was important. The head of social services expressed himself metaphorically in his description of the resistance to change. “Water doesn’t run under flat stones”, and in order to achieve some progress “we had to raise the stones”. Today, politicians regard co-operation as an important development strategy and in the municipality there exists the clear awareness that collective problems require collec-
tive solutions, said the head of social services. Both the head and the project leader asserted that if there had been such an understanding from the beginning they would have achieved greater progress.

The development work is founded upon the active co-operation of religious and public organisations, the municipal association for the disabled, two local enterprises, as well as the local women’s organisation. An important partner in the project is the church, who runs a hostel for the homeless. In addition, the church assists in the provision of special apartments for groups. The shortfall in resources makes it important to obtain external sponsors who are willing to make contributions. The case study shows that this is difficult. However, there are examples of organisations from U.S., Switzerland, Canada and Finland who have worked to support different social projects in the municipal social services.

The importance of the education program

According to the head of the social services and the leader of the Centre, who have both taken part in one of the education courses, the education has been of decisive importance for developments at the Centre. With Russian social work exposed to an overwhelming change in ideas, knowledge and experience from Sweden are useful and instructive in the attempt to broaden the perspective, admitted the head of social services. A step in the direction towards realising the project has been to identify the needs of the elderly. The leader of the Centre is full of praise for experiences from Swedish social work, and how they can help understand the importance of developing home services to support the elderly. A further argument in favour of home services has been that they don’t require a large investment in buildings. A developed home service makes it possible for people to receive help in their home environment, where they feel at ease and the level of care received is good and reliable.

The head of the Centre told how the Centre staff had become familiar with experiences from Swedish social work, such that a team of professionals had been formed to identify pressing needs and carry out medical examinations. A second step has dealt with the development of social rehabilitation. Certain concrete changes have been introduced when it comes to educating staff in issues concerned with organisation and ways of working in the home services. Co-operation with so-called “social chemists” who buy in bulk has meant that rebates and benefits could be given to those purchasing medicine. During the current year, the first apartments for the elderly were to be opened. They are a form of organisation with roots in experiences from Sweden.

A further result from the education course is the offering of psychological help to the elderly and the lonely. Before, it was not considered necessary to
offer psychological help to solve social problems. Such problems were to be resolved discreetly within the family. A respondent described the situation:

Russians have looked after their elderly, it is a part of their historical tradition and they feel ashamed if they put their parents in institutions when they are old. Today, circumstances have changed, and many families have experienced an increasingly difficult economic situation and the old collective one had has disappeared. From such a perspective, perestrojka is a sign of economic and also moral decay. People today live in economic and moral poverty and don’t trust in their own abilities, relying instead on the state for support.

Something raised in the case study was "the insight into the humanist conception of man held by the Swedes". The leadership as well as the staff believe that even though the whole of the Swedish way of working might never be applied in Russia, something might be learnt in Russian social work by placing the human in the centre and looking for the resources to make it possible for them to live their everyday lives in a satisfactory manner.

5.4.2 Families and children with problems

The second case study dealt with a project for children and families with problems. The project took place within a Family Centre in a municipality with a population of 60000. Half of the residents live in the central area; the remainder lives in the surrounding rural district. The economic situation in the municipality has improved somewhat, mainly due to a favourable situation in one of the municipality’s large enterprises in recent years. "For the time being wages are paid on time, something which was difficult earlier", told the mayor. A problem still faced is the delay in the payment of pensions by the state. As many pensioners are without means, a large amount of the local municipal budget is used to provide wood, transport and housing benefits for these people.

According to figures from the social services, the number of disabled children in the local municipality is large. Many children suffer from developmental difficulties, somatic complaints, asthma, and diabetics or have damaged sight and hearing. A large number of families with children and a large number who are refugees live under difficult social conditions. The development project and the municipal Family Centre target these groups. The goal is to co-operate with public and state organisations in order to identify the living conditions under which these families live and to offer them economic, medical, social, psychological, educational and legal assistance. The development of social work initiatives and preventive measures for homeless children are also important goals.

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What does the case study show?

In order to meet the goal, two social initiatives have been merged, namely, the Centre for the rehabilitation of disabled children and the municipal foster home. In the beginning, the process of integration encountered certain difficulties, but the view today is that the merger represents a large step forwards, says the leader. "It has been difficult to persuade the staff. Staff have concentrated on the children in their own particular activity and to begin with didn’t understand the importance of the merger for all of the children". One of the heads of departments at the centre confirmed this picture. "It took time for us to realise that all the children would benefit. Gradually, we understood the importance of the merger and what it meant for the children", he said.

It has also been difficult explaining the Centre’s activity to the general public, in terms of the kind of issues addressed and the kinds of children attend the Centre. ”The social environment sees and regards the disabled children as deviant and different”, says its manager. The head of social services gives a second example of this. He told how many parents were against healthy and disabled children mixing with each other:

What is lacking is adequate understanding and empathy for human problems. Disabled children are not often seen on the streets. A further example of how difficult it is to change the way in which the disabled are perceived deals with the parental attitudes. Parents are of the opinion that nothing needs to be changed; things have functioned well to some extent, so why make changes.

To try and overcome these difficulties staffs have invested a lot of time and energy in information work at the Centre and in schools...etc. As a consequence, co-operating with different public bodies, such as the culture committee and education committee, has become increasingly important. The political leadership in the municipality have played a positive role in the integration and provided active support to staff and the leaders of the initiative throughout the process. ”Up until now, nobody has said no and there has not been anything which the administration has refused. The level of funding is insufficient, but that is unfortunately something over which we have no control”, said one departmental head at the Centre.

The importance of the education program

In the opinion of the head of social services and the leader of the Centre, who both took part in the education in Sweden, knowledge of Swedish social work has been important in the process of integrating the different social services. ”There, we saw the importance of a more complex and total form of assistance”, asserted the head of social services. According to staff, during the period of the project working with parents was given high priority. This, it is
Evaluation as learning

believed, is something learnt from the Swedish methods of family and social work. It is important that children and parents learn to communicate with each other and that this in turn supports the process of rehabilitation, assert the staff. At the same time, they note "difficulties are persistent, since it is difficult to break with old stereotypes".

There are also differences when it comes to technical equipment and the humanist conception of man. The staff felt, "even though the Russian social workers are positive and helpful and want to improve the situation of the elderly and disabled, their working conditions are different". Some of the interviewees said that despite changes in social policy in Russia during the last decade, they still didn't have the same humanist conception of man as in Sweden. For example, the view that all are the same and have an equal right to support and help, irrespective of their disablement or for other reasons. An explanation, according to one of the heads of department, is that people in Russia for a long time have been occupied with their own everyday problems and haven't bothered about the problems of others. In this respect, people have lacked an insight into disabled children as a collective responsibility requiring support from social institutions. "There are still people who wonder why it is even necessary to help such children, since they won't improve with help", said the staff.

As a consequence, respondents believe that the already initiated work on the project will continue to develop on the basis of the activity’s own assumptions. It can be seen as part of a larger process says the leader. One ambition mentioned is to co-operate in the best interests of the child and on the basis of their needs. Future plans include the opening of a crisis centre, continuing work with parents and children, increased work in the field, the development of family homes, the continued education of disabled children and the involvement of sponsors. The staff and leadership are well aware that the project is dependent upon the input of significant resources, but there is still optimism about the prospect of working in the future towards improved competence and alternative ways of work.

5.4.3 Drug problems among children and youth

The third case study concerns a project on drug prevention among children and youth. The project is based at a social family centre in a one of the county's municipalities. The municipality was founded 25 years ago and has a population of 65000. The population is relatively young with median age of 33 years. High technology industry, education and research dominate the enterprise sector. The municipal infrastructure and social services are well developed with respect to education, issues relating to the environment and municipal childcare. At the same time, the political leadership in our inter-
view, were of the opinion that what was needed, was the development of social services in all areas. Unemployment exists among many families and many face difficult economic and social conditions. A large problem is the increasing prevalence of drug abuse among children and youth in the municipality. An increasing number of calls to the centre on the confidential telephone deal with drug and alcohol problems. This is clear if a comparison is made of all the conversations staff have had for the whole of 1999. In order to tackle this increasing problem a project for drug prevention and treatment has been started in the family centre.

The goal of the project is to change perceptions of drugs, develop a drug program of action for children and youth and train staff in implementing this program. Furthermore, the intention is to identify groups at risk and initiate preventive work in co-operation with parents, schools, public organisations and the police.

What does the case study show?
The project is run, partly at the family centre and partly, at a newly established home for youth with drug problems. The home for social rehabilitation lies on the outskirts of the municipality and is managed by staff at the centre and by youth themselves. The goal is to get them to enter a rehabilitation program. The respondents say that the project represents a good initiative, resulting in new thinking. "It is important for the general public to recognise the importance of such an initiative, drug abuse is not a medical problem as it was believed under Soviet times, it is a social problem", says one of the staff. There have been, however, significant problems when it comes to realising the project. Primarily, there is a lack of funding to hire trained staff. Funds are also lacking when it comes to meeting the cost of disseminating information about drug problems and paying for the Internet connection. Nor, is there an adequate amount of equipment in the home. The staff and leaders have themselves renovated the centre and the home for social rehabilitation.

Within the framework of the project the staff co-operate with the hospital, schools and parents. Consultations and counselling is offered according to strict guidelines. For staff and leaders it is decisive that the participation of their clients is based upon their own free will and own initiative. Clients are first and foremost youth. The staff noted that the distinction between staff and clients is not so clear as in the large institutions, where youth are regarded as "just narcs". What make the home totally unique is its character and the way the youth living there are valued, it is asserted. "To live and work together, to help each other in difficult situations and to trust each other is the best kind of rehabilitation", said one of the youth at the home in our interview, and another comments, "here one feels at home".
The importance of the education program

The leader said that the experiences of Swedish social work had been decisive for the start of the project. On the study excursion to Sörmland she had had the idea of starting a social initiative in a small home instead of in a large institution. Experiences from Sweden confirmed that “building giant buildings if one wanted to work with people in difficult situations” was no solution. The leader also emphasised the importance of creating a home atmosphere. “No prison is to be built, instead it is to be a home where people thrive”, were her words.

The initial phase in the project began after the leader had taken part in the education course. A first ambition was to persuade the political leadership about the importance of creating a home for the social rehabilitation of children and youth with drug problems. A second stage in the project involved gaining adequate information about the problem. The staff and leadership approached the different centres for drug addiction in big places, as well as the voluntary organisations involved in such issues. “Informing the staff about knowledge and experiences of preventive work in Sweden has also been important”, reflected the leader. The way in which, drug addicts are treated and rehabilitated in Sweden has been the topic of several seminars and meetings. The staff said that the humanist conception of man in Sweden should be introduced into the Russian context. One said, “in order to do this, information and knowledge of the drug problem and its consequences are required”.

A third stage has involved a preliminary program of action describing how the initiative is to take shape and function. The leader described how he began formulating this program of action after the education. Today the program is under continual renewal and staffs try to keep themselves up to date on developments in the field. A normal comment from the staff who I talked with was that it is not possible to implement all the ideas from each other’s activity and this isn’t necessary either. “We must plant our own seeds in the ground, water them with our own water, we live here and you live there”, as the leader expressed it.

5.4.4 Rehabilitation of children with limited opportunities

The fourth case study dealt with a project run from within a rehabilitation centre for children with limited opportunities. The centre lies in a small municipality with a population of 17000 inhabitants. The municipality became self-governing in 1997, a precondition favouring development and giving greater freedom of action, noted the head of social services. Today, the centre functions as an experimental arena for the development of social services and experiences from work, and in addition to having a relationship to the mu-
municipality, it will also function as a support for the development of child re-
habilitation in the county. Furthermore, at the rehabilitation centre there is a
newly opened office for hiring out labour services to the disabled, as well as a
canteen serving food to children from poor families.

The development project has as its goal improving the social rehabilita-
tion of children with limited opportunities and is run from within an institu-
tion. The goal is to identify these children and to map their need for rehabili-
tation and for social help along with their families, as well as their need for
help from the rehabilitation program in their homes. An important element
of the rehabilitation work concerns children with significant development
problems. Staff work devise plans of action specially tailored for these chil-
dren and rehabilitation is organised together with their parents.

What does the case study show?
A decisive factor in the creation of the rehabilitation centre has been co-
operation with a similar activity in a Finnish municipality. Many of the ideas
around methods of work and action have their origin in the Finnish example
of rehabilitation, and at the same time they have been strongly influenced by
Russian rehabilitation, the staff could tell. Moreover, help is also received
in the form of furniture, toys, technical aids and other things from Finland. On
the other hand, there is no regular help from sponsors. The first stage in the
development of the centre began in 1995. The process started with a vibrant
interest in rehabilitation and a desire to set up an activity to meet the needs of
the population. The centre started after two years of planning and discus-
sions about how an activity of this kind should function, what needs should
receive priority and which groups should be the primarily target. Through
this process the centre’s foundation has been laid and then developed. The
original goal has also been developed the whole time, say both the leadership
and staff. They assert that municipal support has played a decisive role in the
development of the activity. ”The centre would not have existed if it had not
been for the help and support of the administration”, say the staff.

The significance of the education program
The leader asserts that knowledge from the education course in Sweden has
been a great help in the formulation of the project’s goal. Experiences from
the course have been applied in the formulation of the activity for more
groups and in the introduction of work therapy as an appropriate method of
rehabilitation. They have also influenced the view of how to integrate the
disabled in society and the importance of meeting the needs of each unique
individual. These are conceptions, which are associated with the humanist
conception found in the Swedish social services.
A vision for the future shared by the leader and deputy leader is to create a linked system of social help following the Swedish model, with social services from cradle to grave. What is envisaged is a progressive move towards an effective and appropriate system compared with the old form of sheltered accommodation. A concrete example, meant the leader, is to organise collective living for disabled youth in modified apartments. "Such an initiative is more humane than sheltered accommodation, where all are treated like animals”.

Many of the rehabilitation programs used are also strongly influenced by Swedish rehabilitation work. At the same time, several of the people we talked with commented on the long tradition of rehabilitation in Russia. The staff themselves on the basis of the needs of the individual children has devised a large part of the program. As the leader put it, ”good co-operation with the parents contributes to the child’s psychological and social development”. He continued, ”parents feel ashamed over their children or don’t give them room for an independent life. For successful work, everything must go via the heart and each child must be met with empathy and understanding". The leader felt he had seen this during the study excursions in Sweden.

The leader told how co-operation with parents sometimes becomes difficult if the parents lack an educated view of their children. Support and education are important for the child, as well as counselling and advice for the parents. All of these things are part of the rehabilitation desired at the centre. A priority is also the socialisation of the older children. The children then learn to live an independent life without their parents and others experiencing them as a burden. ”Social rehabilitation and work therapy go hand in hand in the way they work in Sweden”, said the leader.

5.5 Results from the case studies in 2001

During May 2001, one year after the first round of case studies, the second round of case studies were carried out in four municipalities. The results are presented below and are based upon 14 interviews with respondents on different levels of municipal decision-making. The presentation of the results include examples that collect together what respondents meant about the dissemination of knowledge from the education and about the process of transformation taking place in the municipalities. The first examples are from staff in the social services, and thereafter examples are presented from the municipal level. To finish, a summary is given of the interview with the chairwoman of the Work and Social Security Committee in the county.
5.5.1 Dissemination of knowledge from the education program

The question covering how knowledge of the education program has been spread is central to this evaluation. The following example shows how participants have attempted to communicate the ideas and experiences from the program.

The staff experience of learning

I interviewed two social workers who had not taken part in the program in Sweden. They told how their leader had been on the education program and had afterwards started a staff seminar discussing the different problems, which might be met in the encounter with clients. The staff believed the seminar was connected with the leader having participated in the education in Sweden. The goal of the seminar was to let old and new social workers meet each other, so they could discuss and reflect over what one might be done in order to develop their work. As a basis for the discussions, many different real cases or work situations could be drawn upon. I asked the social workers working in the home visit services to tell me about some of the cases discussed in the seminar. One social worker said:

I have an older client. A lonely woman living alone who has collected a lot of things in her home, everything from furniture to newspapers. It is not easy to enter the house and it is very difficult to keep it clean and to give help. I wanted the old person to throw out some of the things she didn’t need, so that it might be possible to manage. At the seminar we discussed different ways of persuading the old woman to change. Some proposed that one should take up with her how it could damage her health to have things as she had them, that there were families and children who would appreciate the things which she didn’t need…etc. Even though this might sound like a trivial problem, it can be difficult to know if one is acting correctly or wrongly. I think it is important to talk with others about such things if one has thought about them for a time.

Her colleague also described a case they had discussed at the seminar:

I had a client, a woman who was not that old, 61 years, but who had psychological problems and a persecution complex, where one stole things from her the whole time. She was very insecure and saw everybody who visited her as thieves. One day when I visited her, she was very disturbed. I asked her what had happened and she said that there had been a thief in the apartment and taken all of her documents, and she had to find them. I asked her if we could sit down and talk about it, and asked her when was the last time she had seen the documents. She maintained that the documents were gone. In such a situation, one cannot begin looking oneself. One cannot begin opening other people’s cupboards, bathroom cabinets, to see if the things are there. The danger is that she will say she saw me take them. Instead, I tried to calm her and make her to give
up her thoughts of a break-in, and to begin thinking about where she usually keeps her things. But, she continued and wanted to go to the police and report that she had been robbed. As I saw no signs of forced entry, my view was that she had herself forgotten, where she had put her papers. Then her daughter came and we could together all search for the documents. It became easier when a relative was present, who could be a witness and see where we looked. At the seminar we discussed how to deal with such a situation and how important it was to listen and reflect over one’s role in the client’s home.

**The spreading of knowledge in the institution**

In one of the interviews with a leader, who had taken part in the education in Sweden, she told of her work spreading knowledge in her institution. To explain to others how one thinks and to make one’s ideas clear so others can understand and respond to them, is an educational task, said the leader. One of the issues she brought back with her from Sweden was putting the child in the centre and involving parents in the treatment of the child. In order to make it clear for her staff she constructed a model with a triangle. At each corner she placed one of the main parties: mother – child – specialist. With this model as the starting point, she discussed with the staff what one should have the greatest weight, with respect to needs, responsibility…etc. The traditional view is that the specialist has the best knowledge of what should be done, for example, for a disabled child. What the leader contributed to the discussion was how the role of the parents could be strengthened and that the child should always be in the centre. She meant that the discussions in Sweden gave her the inspiration and ideas to more actively influence her staff, so they would change their attitudes and view of whose needs were being met.

A second leader gave the following example of imparting knowledge:

First and foremost, in our group we had a lot of material from Sweden, she said. There are our own notes, video films, as well as material from lectures and study excursions translated into Russian. Our institution has seven departments. I have held a number of day seminars for heads of departments and staff. The two first seminars were for the heads of departments and lasted for a day, where my impressions and knowledge from Sweden were presented. In the second half of the day, we discussed the different issues raised. After the seminar the heads of department were given the task of going through what the information meant for them, in terms of ideas that might be used in the development of their activity. Furthermore, I held a seminar with all staff in order to give them an account of my impressions of social services in Sweden. The result today, is that the departments have drawn up development plans describing the issues to be worked upon.
I asked how the staff had reacted. The leader said that one of the first questions asked, was how much social workers in Sweden earn:

When they heard that they earn so much, one understood why the activities were so good and the staffs were so enthusiastic. Some said that it would not be possible to change our services if we didn’t receive better wages. I wanted us to discuss how one can look at quality, and that it wasn’t just a question of wages if one wanted to be interested and enthusiastic about one’s work. We also agreed that in our activity we placed a great emphasis upon having many places, a high turnover, while the issue of quality didn’t receive adequate attention.

Has there been any kind of change in staff attitudes? The leader said that there weren’t so many of the staffs who were sceptical:

As I mentioned when we met during your first visit in 1999, we had just integrated two social services under the same roof. At the time the staffs were highly critical and said that mixing the rehabilitation department for the disabled with services for the non-disabled wouldn’t function. Today, I don’t hear such arguments any longer. But, it was no easy matter, persuading staff and parents of the advantages of integration. Parents were afraid that their children would be vulnerable and receive less help. A strong argument was that I could tell of the good experiences of integration of disabled children in Sweden. This was a great help in relaxing the parents. Today, we can confirm that it functions well. Let me just mention one concrete effect. Before, we had the kitchen and refractory separate, while today they are collective. This means that we can save on resources, which can be used in an effective manner elsewhere in the activity. But, the most important thing is not that we have changed the organisation, it is that there has been a change in the fundamental conception of the disabled child among staff and parents. This is my greatest victory and sign of progress.

A second participant also took up how the conception of the disabled and made a comparison with experiences from Sweden:

When I was in Sweden I was a member of the group studying the care of the elderly. Something, which made a strong impression on me, was the different services called upon to employ those with development problems. We don’t have such things. After the education in Sweden, we have changed the focus of our activity for the disabled and we now try to employ those of different ages. Earlier, we only cared for the elderly, but now we have extended the age group and accordingly, have activities for youth over 18 years old. This is a concrete example of how we have changed our service since the education.

Spreading knowledge in the municipality
The description above has primarily dealt with how participants in the education program have attempted to disseminate knowledge in their own institutions. I also asked different respondents if they had made any attempts to
spread knowledge to selected groups in the municipality. One respondent
told how she worked to inform school children about drugs and alcohol. She
said she had gained the inspiration and foundation for the information work
from the education in Sweden, where there had been a meeting with a social
worker who worked with preventive measures for children and youth. In the
work he used a video film, which showed how youth drunk alcohol.

In the first sequence of the film there has not arisen any problem of drunk
and disorderly behaviour. When the film is shown to youth the teacher stops
it after this sequence and discusses what is happening. The youth think that
everything is progressing in an admirable way. Then the rest of the film is
shown where the situation gets out of hand and the youth portrayed in the
video experience big problems. The reaction among the youth watching is
totally changed and the discussion often moves in an unexpected direction.
The respondents told how she was very impressed and interested in the film
and she received a copy and material to take with her. She has since met yo-
uth in schools in the municipality on several occasions and shown the film, as
did the teacher in Sweden. She says that there has been a lot of interest and
fruitful discussions, where youth say that they have had an experience mak-
ing them wake-up. She is of the opinion that the information will play an im-
portant role in the preventive work against drug and alcohol abuse.

A second example of endeavours made to spread knowledge was seen in
a centre I visited in one of the municipalities, where they co-operated with
the local television station to make a program for parents. The program dealt
with the different things parents can do to stimulate the development of their
children and also with what can be done to help children with different prob-
lems. At the centre, different kinds of information material have
been produced for distribution to parents. One example is the material for
new mothers containing information about how to deal with the different
problems after birth. In the centre’s out-reach activity one of the social ser-
ices involves visiting schools and youth organisations to offer advice on
contraception, healthy living and so on. The person who has taken an interest
in this work is a trained gynaecologist and she regards this task as part of her
professional responsibility. The leader believes that the gynaecologist has
been inspired by the education program in Sweden, with the result that she
has begun to think in new directions. She has become conscious of the impor-
tance of trying to reach the different groups in the municipality, who need
social support and help and are not used to visiting an institution for support
until the problem has perhaps become more serious.

Networks for disseminating results
A head of social services told how they had collected material from the dif-
ferent participants in the municipality, who had been to Sweden, so that they
would have a complete set of material. She would also like the county to collect material on different topics or fields of activity, which could be circulated to the municipalities. Furthermore, she told how she had personal contact with colleagues she had met on the course in Sweden. The course provided opportunities for making contacts said the head of social services and added:

We have now begun with regular seminars between different municipalities, where we take up different problems and summarise our experiences and pass on information about further contacts. Earlier, we had these contacts between municipalities solely on the unofficial plan. The courses in Sweden have resulted in our getting to know each other and we have gained contacts, which didn’t previously exist between the municipalities. We have built up a personal network as a result of the courses. On the courses we have made friends and contacts, which aren’t so formal. These personal contacts are important when one wants to share experiences with each other. It is also inspiring when to see that others have succeeded with a change. Then, one wants to try the idea in one’s own municipality. One knows that contact can be made to hear about difficulties, solutions and experiences, which the others have had.

5.5.2 A program against narcotics

Change and development of the social services is an issue, which also requires action on an overarching plan. For this reason I took contact with leaders in the municipality in order to find out what they were working with, and how this might have been connected with the education program in Sweden. One example is the work done in the municipality to develop a policy and program of action to fight against narcotics. I met the deputy mayor in the municipality with responsibility for the program. She has been a participant in the education program in Sweden and says that a lot of the program’s ideas are traceable to Swedish experiences.

The program has been developed together with researchers and entails different steps in the fight against narcotics. Occupying a central position in the municipality is the specially created co-ordinating committee with representatives from the different organisations and authorities. The municipality has also employed four co-ordinators, who organise the program under my leadership, says the deputy mayor. An important point in the program is the preventive work carried out in schools and among children and youth. A second point is the direct work with the addict and their family. Furthermore, a central point in the program is the co-ordination of efforts against narcotics with other municipalities and authorities in the county. The deputy mayor could tell that a decision had been made on the county level to disseminate experiences from the municipality to other municipalities, and even on a national level the program had gained attention. This meant that a decision had been made to make information available to others about how to
work against narcotics. Such information was ready (May 2001) for discussion by the different parties.

One question, is how this work is connected with the education program in Sweden? The deputy mayor said that the visit to Sweden made her aware of the importance of developing a comprehensive policy in the field in which change was desired. The example from Sweden, with preventive work in schools and among groups of children had therefore, played an important role. To close, she mentioned the legal aspects of the narcotics issue. “In Russia, we haven’t any clear laws on how to deal with these issues and it is necessary to develop them soon. Swedish experiences are here relevant”, the deputy mayor said.

5.5.3 Development work in the municipalities

As highlighted in the opening chapter, the evaluation shows that exposed groups, the sick, disabled, unemployed and others have a great need of social services in the municipalities. The basis for this judgement is founded, first and foremost, upon the data collected in 1999-2000. In the case studies in 2001, I asked those responsible in the municipalities about social conditions, and if the situation on the labour market had changed in recent years. The total picture is that there have been a lot of small changes. Unemployment is dangerously high and social problems are likewise large. Besides, the drug problem among youth has recently shown a drastic increased. The head of the social services gave this description:

To be unemployed in such a small place is difficult and to solve problems it happens that one sells one’s flat, gradually becoming dependent on social services. The longer one is unemployed and homeless, the more vulnerable one is to different problems. What is at issue, is trying to work in a preventive way, which is no easy task.

The deputy mayor I interviewed said that the municipality faced significant problems when it came to giving pensioners an adequate daily life:

Today, a large proportion of pensioners live under the minimum subsistence level and you should know that those who live above this minimum level don’t have much of a life either. We do our best to support this category of people, but the big problem is financial. It has been typical of the situation in recent decades that those higher up in the state administration don’t understand that we cannot manage this on the local level without support and help. Up until now, centrally, one has not successfully divided functions that belong to the federal and the municipal levels, even if this has been done on paper. Certain services placed on the federal level are without finance, which means that the municipal level must itself take responsibility for these institutions. One can say that we are the last link in the chain and stand for the costs. In our municipality, there are still 10
percent of the population who live under reasonably good living conditions. But, we aren’t complaining, we will manage, even if the future costs are going to be high. At the same time, there are a number of disturbing signals from the central authorities, who discuss municipalities completely financing themselves. Today, the municipalities pay 30% and the rest is met by the state. A change on this point will create many difficulties for us in the municipalities, and it worries us. You should know that our government has three sources of income from us; income tax on people’s earnings, value added tax, as well as property tax. But, don’t misunderstand me; we love our government, the deputy mayor says. As we say to the question, how are you living; I’m “not dead”, he adds with an ironic smile.

Democratic leadership

An example of change, which can be useful, was given by one of the heads of social services in a municipality. We were talking about how the leadership in the municipality had recently changed. What has happened in this municipality was that a new mayor had taken office in the last few months? The head of the social services told about what used to happen when the head of administration and the mayor had planning meetings:

You know when we have an apparatus meeting1 – it is called this when all of the leadership in the municipality is called to a meeting. At such meetings, all the participates are leaders. What is new is that we sit together with the new mayor around a round table, as you normally do internationally. The meeting takes place in the form of a discussion and not as before, in a closed, formal form. I can raise my problems in the social services and everybody comments and provides opinions and proposals, says the head of social services.

The new mayor has successfully introduced a new way of working together. He has also employed different experts to devise development programs in the municipality together with the different leaders of the services. Different groups have been established to discuss what needs to be done to develop the municipality. "I think this was an important strategy, laying the foundation for a different way of working than earlier", said the head of social services:

The groups have made different proposals, which we consider. The interesting thing is that the best proposals in the different areas have not always come from those who work in the activity, but from those outside. A consequence of this is that we have decided to work more on co-ordination between the different ad-

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1 A concept from Soviet times notes the interpreter. The head of social services laughs with the interpreter about it. "One doesn’t think of such concepts when one has them, one only uses them", he says.
ministrations. An important aspect of the work is that the mayor takes part in the discussions with the working groups. It is interesting to think that we, who are responsible for the activities, have had a view of knowledge based upon coming to meetings and waiting for new orders telling us what we are to do. Besides, we have thought that time was too precious to sit and listen to each other’s problems, when each of us wanted to go back to our department and work on our own tasks. What we have realised, is that there exist alternative ways of looking at a case. Without necessarily having then decided which one to choose, she adds.

The mayor’s comments
I met the mayor the day after the meeting with the head of social services and he began by telling me about the municipality. He said that the social conditions had become better in recent years. Primarily, it is unemployment, which has declined from 14% in 1998 to 4.5%. Moreover, wages and pensions in the population have risen compared with 1998, while the prices for the “consumer basket” have also risen as much. “So, it has become better”, says the mayor and adds that one has of course significant problems and one is familiar with these. A priority area is social services:

Our task is to support and help the elderly and disabled, people and families with drug and alcohol related problems. It is important that these groups feel that they are understood and that they have the support of society. But, it is even more important that people, who can work, gain employment enabling them to support themselves. We also have a great deal of activity on the youth policy front, with respect to sport and youth activities. As recently as yesterday, I discussed with our governor about the construction of our sports arenas, which we already have, but have not finished building. We are going to do this, even if it costs us a lot. That is my analysis of the situation today.

After this introduction I ask the mayor about the model of work with the discussion covering administrative boundaries. He said:

I wanted to start a discussion about all sorts of problems in the municipality and not just about the economy. It is a case of getting the support of staff who wants to take part in the process of change. My first step was to set in motion a process of learning with my heads of departments and staff. From next week we are really going to discuss our problems and formulate strategic plans for how we can master them. We have to understand ourselves what we want to do and how we are to reach our goals. I want to do development work, so that each specialist understands why he does his work and doesn’t just obey my instructions or what I say.

To my question about how he gets his staff to take part in a democratic process, the mayor answers:
You will have to excuse me, but I don’t have any deep idea about how the democratic process will develop in the state or society. From my own experience of the work, I have seen that a large amount of the progress in what one does depends on the leader’s style. You know, when I worked as a worker in production I understood this. I believe that it is of decisive importance how one is received by one’s leaders and what one gets in return for this trust.

State barriers to change
The mayor wanted to engage his staff by delegating responsibility to lower echelons in the organisation. How do you see the relation between the state authorities and the municipalities? Does there exist a desire for increased local freedom and decentralisation? A topic that repeated itself in my interviews with those responsible in the municipalities was how to improvise and find new ways of meeting the great need for services. State regulations act as a limit on changing initiatives. Respondents highlighted how much they felt governed by them. This is because the social services are partly financed by the state budget and central authorities must give their approval before new social services can be established, which is a time demanding and bureaucratic process.

At the same time, the local municipalities face a situation, where even more efforts are required to meet the acute needs of their inhabitants. To meet these needs, there is a desire to start new social services in partly new forms, which are more local and which try new ideas...etc. In this respect the red tape of regulations is a great hindrance. To get around these bureaucratic hindrances, social services have been started and called branches of already established forms of institutions, for which permission from the state has been granted. Here, there is a desire to give municipal leaders greater freedom to devise and develop local forms of services and reference is made to the Swedish system, where co-ordination between authorities is based upon the important principle of decentralising the right to make decisions to the municipalities.

5.5.4 Viewpoints from the county level
As indicated in Chapter 1, Socialt projekt i Leningrads län (the Social Project in Leningrad County) is a joint project, with the local authorities in the county of Sörmland as the Swedish co-ordinator. The chairwoman of the Work and Social Security Committee is the leader of the joint project in Russia. The following is an account of an interview with her.

Project expectations and anxieties
I met the chairwoman at her office in St. Petersburg. My first question was if she could describe how it all began and how she regards the project’s state of
development today. The chairwoman described her thoughts and why she was hesitant about the project:

To be perfectly honest I was extremely sceptical in the beginning, with respect to the project itself and how it might exert an influence on our services. We were well aware of that Sweden has a well-thought out system of social services. And not merely this, there is co-operation between the municipalities and the state authorities and that this system has functioned for many, many years. From such a perspective, our social system is completely new. The second reason for my caution was that we had a poor economy at the time of the project’s start. I was therefore, doubtful if it would be possible to introduce the Swedish ideas in our services with such a lack of funding.

One more reason for my hesitation is that Sweden has well-trained specialists in the social services, while we don’t have the same level of education amongst our staff. I was therefore, unsure how our staff would be able to use Swedish experiences and how they would react after seeing the well-equipped and well-functioning Swedish system. Would they see how well they had it and how bad we had it? Such a reaction would not lead to any practical result, quite the contrary. And then I as the head of social services would lose the little we had achieved. You know, from where I stood it was really taking a risk three years ago when we agreed to the project.

The fourth reason for my caution was that Sweden and Russia have completely different laws. Even if we have in general the same goals, the new represents totally different structures and completely different principles for how to build and establish these social services. An additional reason for my ambivalent attitude was that we could not manage to introduce a Swedish system, which entails long-term guarantees of social care. You have to keep in mind that three years ago one in four people in the county were a pensioner. This means that with 1.6 million inhabitants, 440000 were pensioners of different ages. Three years ago, between 70-90% of these pensioners had a pension, which was lower than the minimum existence level. And you know the minimum level was only enough to survive. So, introducing the Swedish levels of social security for these, and other groups, is something we can’t manage just now.

Furthermore, we had no experience of working with projects according to this model. We had heard that there were social projects between St. Petersburg and Stockholm, where participants travelled and saw a lot of things, but did nothing. The experiences we had mostly involved hearing about certain services, but to take part in an education project in such a systematic manner was something of which we had little experience.

Results achieved up until now

I asked the chairwoman if she had seen any results from the education she had talked about. She said that all of those who had followed the education
could now clearly see different ways of developing the social services and decide which would be the most suitable. She continued:

Already, from the beginning we decided to place the greatest emphasis on the care of the elderly, home services and everything to make sure that one can live as long as possible in one’s own home. Earlier, we had another policy. We used to put the sick, elderly, disabled who couldn’t look after themselves, in closed institutions. But, as you understand, this costs a lot of money and it is not so good for the particular individual. So, the difference today is that we want to move away from large institutions and instead use new forms in our work, such as the type of home services we now have, which suits us well. Besides, we have systematised our way of working by introducing need assessment, so that we can better differentiate our efforts. This means in turn that we devise different work instructions to specify how to judge needs. In some municipalities we now have a new system, based upon a “home help” who visits the elderly and looks after them in their own homes. We are doing this as an experiment in six municipalities. Since, we have introduced this as an experiment; we don’t need to seek the permission of higher authorities when it comes to introducing changes in different normative documents.

Making the care of the elderly and disabled children a priority.
An area of priority is the care of the elderly and another is disabled children. In one of the municipalities, Swedish experience has been introduced when it comes to early intervention in the health care of children, which is a kind of preventive activity. In one case study some of the respondents said they thought that there are more rehabilitation centres working according to the same method. I asked if she could you comment on that. The chairwoman answered:

We are in contact with the Institute for Early Intervention in St. Petersburg and send our specialists to courses and education at this institute. The agreement we have with the Institute for Early Intervention has as its only condition, that we further disseminate Swedish experiences of early intervention. This policy will be further developed, since we regard it as a desirable activity in the future. A second important line of work is with children without parental care. With respect to Swedish experiences we will primarily develop the placement of children in family homes. Today, 51 children are placed in such homes in the county. Of course, the situation is different in Sweden and we don’t necessarily seek to exactly copy them. We attempt to transform and adjust their forms to suit our situation, since we can’t simply take-over the Swedish model without making adjustments. This is important, but not easy.

The problem area to be addressed
A large number of those in the different institutions have problems with alcoholism. Large proportions are homeless, sick and old with alcohol prob-
lems, which end up in institutions together with those who are developmentally disturbed. The chairwoman’s comment on this situation was:

Most are to be found in boarding houses on a grand scale with 350-400 people under one roof. You can imagine what it is like living there. Without doubt, what is needed is not just that these institutions are reconstructed and renovated. What is required is rather a total re-organisation, making it possible to introduce a different form. We need completely different ways of working with these people. Another related project is work to combat drug addiction. We have no experiences in this area, the problem came as a complete surprise and we were not prepared. Today we are looking at ways of co-operating with other authorities in order to understand our place among them and where responsibility for the issue is to lie, how we should co-ordinate our resources and so on.

How will one be able to continue the co-operation?

I asked the chairwoman if there was sufficient funding on the county level to continue developing co-operation with Sweden? The chairwoman answered:

You are touching on a sensitive point there. Many times I have said that I can’t manage it, I’m leaving, I can’t manage it. You know, today I can say that so much work remains to be done in order to proceed that a department or branch is needed to take care of our international contacts. You know that after 160 people have taken the education, it means that there are 160 social projects to be written and presented. And, this is not to just about writing and put the reports on the shelf; it is to do with putting these ideas to work in everyday life. We have these three departments to make sure that this happens. Our heads of departments have two functions, when they visit municipalities in the county: firstly, their normal work, which is extremely comprehensive. And secondly, to make sure the projects are being developed and to follow up how they are being developed. So, you are touching upon a sensitive point.

The co-ordination of needs and material

A desire voiced by different municipalities is that the county authorities should collect together all the material participants have themselves collected in Sweden. I asked the chairwoman if they had thought of doing anything like this. The chairwoman said:

We have collected all the material from our regular courses involving seminars for our third group who have been to Sweden. We also have course activity with all the heads of the municipalities, about the introduction of Swedish experiences in the social services. After the third conference has been completed, we will recommend that we collect together the most important experiences. We also plan that this project in the end will lead to material (a book) taking up our experiences. We lack theoretical material for example, which deals with material in home services, family home, …etc. In some areas we have a lot of material, for
example in early intervention, but there are areas about which, we would have liked more material. This concerns first and foremost family homes, since they have not existed in Russia. What we need is more expert literature on this area. Furthermore, this concerns the needs and problems of the disabled. There is a great lack of specialist literature when it comes to the care of the elderly. I am here talking not just about theories, but also about methodology and how to build up a service. We have no textbooks on methodology for this kind of work. For this reason, we are collecting together everything on our work in social services and day centres when it relates to geriatrics.

**Final comments**

I conclude the interview, thanking the chairwoman, who makes the following final comments:

As you can see, we have a very interesting life. I can also inform you that it looks like there is going to be a reform of our Department, i.e. the Department of Work and Social Security and our activity will change in character. So, we never know what things will look like tomorrow. We always have something to think about and keep us occupied (the respondents says this with a cunning smile). You know, there was a Russian who once said: not a day without writing a sentence and we have many sentences to write each day.
6 Analysis and discussion

The results of from the evaluation show how the program has contributed to
the development of competence, first and foremost on the level of the indivi-
dual. The main emphasis rests upon the participant’s development of their
personal and professional-technical competence. Some participants have also
gone further and describe how they have re-evaluated their fundamental
perspectives, on both a personal level and in their place of work. The dis-
semination of knowledge has mainly occurred when social service leaders
have informed their subordinates. There are also examples, where networks
to spread information have been established.

Further, the evaluation shows that the utilisation of knowledge has varied
with respect to instrumental factors connected with practical changes in eve-
day work. There are some examples of a more collective utilisation of
knowledge on an institutional level and with respect to strategic planning,
for example in the form of the program of action against drugs.

The results also show that the municipalities face significant difficulties
when the state has reduced or failed to transfer allocated of funds to the so-
cial services. The state institutions in the county haven’t received their full
state contribution, with the consequence that reductions have hit already
vulnerable groups. Another problem is that existing state rules are compli-
cated and rigid, and work against reforms. A modernisation and increase in
their effectiveness is required, and this will necessitate a fundamental trans-
formation of the bureaucratic apparatus and its way of thinking.

To begin with this chapter analyses results from the theoretical perspec-
tive presented earlier and the questions posed with the evaluation in mind:
(1) which preconditions existed for the education program in the county and
among the participants on the program? (2) Has the education program re-
sulted in particular forms of learning and knowledge for participants? (3)
Have the participants succeeded in disseminating their knowledge in their
own organisations? (4) How has this knowledge been applied to develop the
organisation? Finally the chapter ends with a discussion of the results with a
view to the future development of Russian society and the social services.

6.1 The preconditions for the program of education

The results from the evaluation of conditions in Leningrad County reveal
that there exists a great need for initiatives to meet the social and economic
needs of different groups. The magnitude of the social problems is docu-
mented in statistical material and in the form of accounts from interviews and questionnaires. A great problem is the lack of resources to run effective social services. Greater knowledge and competence is required to deal with the increasing social problems. The evaluation shows at the same time that there is a clearly stated desire on the part of decision-makers at the county level to give priority to problems requiring swift policy.

The problems revealed by the evaluation’s survey of social reform work in Leningrad County are characterised by a complex of increasing social and economic problems. A big problem experienced by many is the non-payment or reduction in the state subsidy to social services, which makes it difficult for municipalities to improve the situation of vulnerable groups. In 2000, the social services in the county received 1 million Roubles in state subsidy, instead of the 9 million Roubles they were entitled to. As to the state-financed institutions in the county, upon which the municipalities are dependent for the running of their own social services, they received 79 percent of their allocated state subsidy. The consequences of this have been a reduction in the activity of institutions, for example with respect to medication and food. The lack of adequate financing has made it difficult for municipalities to address growing problems and develop their social services.

What can be confirmed is that the state authorities have not in practice managed to successfully delegate functions to the federal and municipal levels, even if this has been done on paper. Certain initiatives, which are considered to be responsibility of the federal tier, have not been included on the federal budget, with the result that municipalities have had to intervene and take responsibility for these institutions. The municipalities are the last link in the chain and must stand for the costs, said one of the municipal leaders. There are also disturbing signals on the central level, with plans to introduce greater municipal funding of housing. In the present system, the municipalities are responsible for 30 percent of housing costs and the remainder is covered by the state budget. A change in the direction of reduced state subsidies will create significant difficulties for municipalities.

The results also contain criticism of today’s social services in the county. It was voiced by central decision-makers in the county, as well as by representatives in the municipalities. What has to be changed according to critics is the dominance of large institutions in meeting the social needs of the population. Many are looking for ideas and experiments in re-organisation in smaller units, which can work more closely with people and can be administered and led in an effective manner. There is also a need to find new and alternative initiatives and ways of working. This is where education, learning and the exchange of experiences enter the picture as important factors.

What is clear, is that many improvements could be made by increasing the effectiveness of the public sector, resulting in a better use of existing re
sources. The problem in this connection is the resistance to change in existing structures.

6.2 Is there a need for an educational program?

That there exists a well-documented need for education in the social services in Leningrad County is clear. How has the actual education program met these needs? The question can be answered by analysing what participants said about the running and content of the education. The results indicate that participants were in general satisfied with the content of the education. What was missed, was more detailed knowledge about how to work with families suffering from different problems and also written material from the lectures translated into Russian, which could be used in their own work. Some participants wanted more discussions with Swedish colleagues, about future development plans and projects in social welfare work in Sweden. One desired more detailed analyses of social work in other countries.

Some felt that certain lectures were too abstract and difficult to follow because of differences in the conceptual apparatuses between the countries when it comes to how one talk about social work and social services. With respect to the manner in which the education program was run, participants said that good space was reserved for discussion in groups and in the lectures. There were also participants who desired more thorough knowledge of the methods used by Swedish colleagues in their work.

The evaluation has followed the training program on the different occasions when it has been held and it can be confirmed that participants received comprehensive information in the lectures and on study excursions. A problem was that the information had a general content. Even if the content was ambitious, it could be experienced as superficial and having enough time for the presentations meant that there was not time for discussions and more detailed elaboration’s. With future training programs in mind it will be important to discuss what should be part of the program.

In my opinion, the program should try alternative forms of pedagogy in order to stimulate more active participation in discussions and seminars. The goal should be to increase the participant’s participation and opportunity to exert an influence on content. At the same time, it is clear that language constitutes a practical barrier in this connection; it slows down direct contact between Swedish and Russian social workers, leaders and politicians.

6.3 The participant’s preconditions for learning

An important element in evaluating the pre-conditions for the program of education involves understanding the prior knowledge and expectations of
the different participating groups. In this respect, the case studies reveal that course participants, with some exceptions, had limited experience of working with foreign partners on projects of social change. On the other hand, all were involved in at least one social project in their own local municipalities. The round of questioning also revealed that the participants regarded the education as a way of deepening their understanding of new forms of social work and a way of becoming familiar with appropriate organisational forms and methods. The participants expected to gain knowledge in Sweden, which they could implement in their own activity.

In chapter two important preconditions for learning were described: That participants can understand what is being said, that one is willing to learn and that there exist real possibilities or preconditions supporting change (Lundquist, 1987). The first precondition deals both with participant’s prior knowledge and if the education is organised so that its content can be understood. The evaluation of the education in Sweden indicates that participants were positive to the content and that they understood what was presented. As to if the participant’s prior knowledge was adequate and could be used in the education is more difficult to answer. The education level of the participants varies. Some have an academic education in their area of practice, however this is rarely in the social work field because social worker education doesn’t exist in Russia. Instead, many have a technical education and others are doctors, teachers, care workers. This means, that in terms of knowledge one should possess the necessary preconditions to understand the content of the education. At the same time, the understanding of Swedish knowledge and experiences also has a cultural dimension. In this respect, we have been able to confirm that there exist different views of the individual, family, society and state’s role and responsibility for social services. There even exist differences in the concepts used by Russian and Swedish services in the different professional groups.

The second precondition mentioned by Lundquist (1987) concerns the participant’s willingness to learn, embrace new ideas and revise old knowledge. The evaluation shows that the participant’s motivation for the education is high. In almost all of the questionnaires and in the interviews, the participants talk about how important it is to have taken this education and how much it meant for their continued work. The interest for learning and exchanging experiences concerns how the social services can be organised and financed and how the practical activity can be developed, as well as how to work in a preventive manner and involve relatives in different kinds of rehabilitation. Participants wanted to learn new forms of work and methods in social work and besides, get to know organisational forms and the different methods used. They hope to implement this knowledge in their own activity.
The third precondition concerns participants and the real opportunities they have of applying their new knowledge in their own social services. The results from the evaluation show that there exists a large need for resources, among other things for technical helping aids, which can support caring, but also resources to continue education and increase the competence of staff. The non-payment or severe reduction of the state subsidy, along with rising needs, for example in the care of the elderly, mean that municipalities face the task of making tough decisions on priorities. Economic difficulties mean that the desire to make use of knowledge from the education must in many cases lose out in the competition to meet other, more acute needs faced by the social services.

6.4 Learning among the participants

There exists a big difference between what participants would like to do and the resources they have to reach their goals. In my opinion, this might with time become a big problem because the motivation and enthusiasm participants have to disseminate their knowledge and bring about developments, is broken if they aren’t given the opportunity to practice what they have learnt. The result can be that the usefulness of the education declines. Leaders with respect to the future allocation of resources to support developmental work should note this risk.

According to my judgement, the education program has first and foremost resulted in the development of competence on the level of the individual. The main emphasis lies on the participant’s development of their personal competence and professional competence. There were examples of participants who had developed more cultural competence by comparing the different ways of working represented by the Swedish and Russian social services. Some went further, and described how they had revised several of their fundamental conceptions, both on the personal level and in the workplace, in the light of experiences and knowledge acquired on the program. There were also some examples of changes, which have taken place on the group level. In one workplace, a description was given of how the personnel had changed their way of working, putting the needs of the individual child in the centre in a more active way than previously and ensuring that the work of change took place on the basis of collective staff discussions.

6.4.1 Development of knowledge and competence

When it comes to the result of learning one can distinguish between knowledge and competence. Lundmark (1998) has identified different types of competence. Personal competence deals with conception of life, motivation and attitudes. Professional, technical competence focuses upon fundamental
knowledge and skills. Social competence deals with the issue of teamwork and being able to put oneself in the other’s position. Strategic competence involves being able to interpret the goal of the organisation and judging how it is to be reached under certain conditions. With this background, the question that can be asked: has the education improved the competence of the participants?

The dominant impression from the material empirical material is that it is primarily technical, instrumental or practically applied knowledge that participants mention when they describe what they have learnt in Sweden. But the descriptions also contain examples of how the education has positively influenced their personal competence and attitude to change. Several describe how the education has meant a lot for their own development and how the humanist conception found in Swedish social work was the most important thing learnt. Some described how they had gained knowledge of other ways of looking at social work, human needs and rights. Several participants were of the opinion that social workers in Russia should learn to get closer to the client and look at the needs of the individual. This indicates that the education has led to a change in the occupational competence of social worker’s and their view of their own professional role.

There were examples of the development of strategic competence with respect to an increased consciousness of the different ways of interpreting the goal of their activity and the kind of changes needed. Two were grateful for the course giving them the opportunity to reflect over their own activity and the opportunities for development. The course created the opportunity to compare different ways of working in the social services in Sweden and in Russia. Examples seen in Sweden of care in the home led one leader with the care of the elderly to reflect over the need to change his own organisation and not see institutional care as the only alternative.

6.5 Disseminating knowledge

The third question posed in the evaluation, and at the beginning of the chapter, concerned how the participants spread new knowledge in their own organisation. As Stein (1996) found, the dissemination of knowledge in an organisation requires that a co-ordination of the different parties take place. Information can be spread from the leadership to subordinate levels. A second way is the dissemination of information between colleagues on the same level of the organisation and a third is the building of a network between participants from a number of work places and municipalities.

The results from the evaluation show that a normal form of information dissemination involves devising new rules to instruct on ideas and methods. On the municipal level and on the county level work is being done to devise
different guidelines and rules on judging the needs of those receiving care. The guidelines are designed to help determine priorities between different needs and how a more effective use of resources can be achieved. There also exists a desire to increase the control of work forms through rules. Rule based steering is a way of spreading information and it has long tradition. The method is formal and based upon the desire to reach everybody because all are expected to know which rules are applicable in their work. At the same, there is a problem with this method when recipients are meant to experience a development of knowledge. For this to happen more interactive forms are required, entailing the opportunity exists to pose critical questions and clarify what the information means.

A normal method employed to spread ideas and knowledge was for people in managerial positions to call staff to a meeting and inform them about the education in Sweden. A central issue in this connection is if staffs in the activity are in a position to understand what they are being told. The core requirement is the ability to present new knowledge in an understandable fashion. One example of this was given by a leader who wanted to start a discussion on who should stand at the centre of caring work. The leader proposed an educational model in order to explain his key point about the main parties involved in the task (parents-children-specialists). Another example is the seminar activity started by a leader at his institution with the aim of discussing central principles in their work. Staffs were able to raise concrete problems in their work during the seminar discussions, and the development of knowledge progressed according to a kind of “problem-based learning”. The results show that there exists awareness that information must be processed by its recipients if they are to make it their own.

It is also possible to talk of so-called lateral information dissemination, i.e. approaching people on the same level of the organisation or in the workplace in order to communicate knowledge (Stein, 1996). The advantage is that it can stimulate a high level of participation and interest because those approached know that “this is relevant to their department”. There were examples of lateral information dissemination through seminars, meetings, staff meetings and contact with colleagues, where knowledge and experience from the education was discussed. In one interview with the evaluator, a social worker said that the leader who had attended the education program had introduced seminar activity, where the different problems connected with client contact were discussed. The goal was to bring new and old social workers together, so they could discuss and reflect over how they went about developing their work.

Several disseminated information through different types of network. Some participants told of the networks they had formed between colleagues in different municipalities in the county, often after having met each other on
the program. Through the networks, contacts were maintained and experiences exchanged about each other’s projects. Networks represent a new form of knowledge dissemination in the county. One head of social services told how the network was an important resource in the discussion of both small and large issue. The activity showed that it was possible to build up several new channels to spread knowledge. Their maintenance however, is first and foremost dependent upon leaders who have access to the networks. What remains to be done, is to use resources to ensure that staff in the services can hold contact with colleagues in other municipalities, so that they can discuss their work.

My judgement is that the dissemination of knowledge has in the first instance rested upon the leaders in the social services and the manner in which, they have informed those under them of their experiences from the education. This means that information has passed primarily along the lines found in the traditional hierarchical conception of an organisation, where communication takes place between levels, from the leaders to those below. There are also examples of networks formed to spread information. Even in these though, it is mostly representatives for the leadership who dominate among participants. It is therefore, important that the practically active staff have a greater chance of becoming involved in the spread of knowledge. Making the dissemination of information more democratic will provide space for lateral forms of co-operation between involved staff.

6.6 The utilisation of knowledge

The fourth question posed in the evaluation was how knowledge and experience from the education was applied in practice and if any changes had taken place. How participants apply their knowledge from the education can be analysed by distinguishing between instrumental, cognitive and socio-cultural forms of utilisation (Nydén, 1992). An instrumental use of knowledge is often expressed in direct actions, while cognitive utilisation deals with new ideas and ways of thinking. Socio-cultural utilisation involves changing the activity’s self-identity or culture.

The results from observations in the field together with the evaluator’s case studies provide examples of how knowledge from Sweden has been practically applied. Study excursions to several of the institutions in the Russian cases studies showed how staff had created enclosed areas for parental contact, conversations with psychologists, children’s play and other social services. The staff also showed how the physical environment at different institutions had been made more homely in order to reduce the institutional character. An example of cognitive utilisation of the education was a person’s account of how they had been inspired to start a project based upon the
Swedish model’s integration of several selected groups. This involved a reformulation of the goals for the project activity, so that it included more groups than originally planned. Certain work therapy methods seen in Sweden have also been introduced. The education has also exerted an influence on the view of the integration of the disabled in society and led to an increased awareness of the needs of each individual.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural utilisation of knowledge from the education was seen among staff who had revised their way of working. At one workplace, staff could tell that they had discussed how important it was that work with the elderly should not be described only in terms of professionalism, if this meant excluding empathy. On the organisational level, there were examples of changes, which indicated the implementation of Swedish methods of work in home services and child rehabilitation. Still further examples can be mentioned, such as the organisation of family homes, crisis centres and day centres, as well as the daily employment of the elderly and disabled. An example of the strategic utilisation of knowledge is the development of a program of action against narcotics, with the aim of establishing coordination between different administrative bodies in the municipality.

The utilisation of knowledge also has a time aspect; it can be immediate or long-term (Nydén, 1992). A leader described how the staffs were to begin with sceptical to some of the ideas he had presented from the Swedish social services. For example, the integration of different groups with different forms of disablement. However, the leader described that the staff after a time had revised their views on how different forms of the activity should be run and which groups should be integrated. From being against the integration of disabled children with other children, a change had taken place. In this concrete case, staff showed that they were willing to try new ways of working, but not that they would unreservedly accept a new idea without first having had time to think over its consequences. This critical way of looking at things mustn’t necessarily to be interpreted in a negative manner. It reveals instead a shared scepticism about throwing oneself into something without undue thought.

My opinion is that the utilisation of knowledge from the education program has primarily been of an instrumental character. When questioned about utilisation, the participants provided many examples of different practical solutions introduced after the time spent in Sweden. It was in the first instance individuals who described how they had introduced results from the education in their own work. Some provided examples of a more collective utilisation on the institutional level, for example, with the introduction of more integrative forms of activity. In developmental work in the future it will also be important to support the examples of collective and strategic utilisa-
tion, which can assist in change of a more fundamental character in the social services.

6.7 Conclusions on learning and change

According to the concepts presented in chapter three (see Table 1 “Type of learning on different levels of the organisation”) the training program has first and foremost resulted in the development of competence on the level of the individual. The main emphasis lies on the participant’s development of their own personal competence and professional competence. There were examples of participants who had developed greater cultural competence by comparing the different ways of working represented by the Swedish and Russian social services. Some went further, and described how they had revised several of their fundamental conceptions, both on the personal level and in the workplace, in the light of experiences and knowledge acquired on the program. There were also some examples of changes, which had taken place on the group level. In one workplace, a description was given of how the personnel had changed their way of working, putting the needs of the individual child in the centre in a more active way than previously and ensuring that the work of change took place on the basis of collective staff discussions.

My considered judgement is that the application of knowledge from the training program has primarily been of an instrumental character. When questioned about application, the participants provided many examples of different practical solutions introduced after the education in Sweden. It was in the first instance individuals who described how they had introduced results from the training in their own work. Some provided examples of a more collective application on the institutional level, for example, with the introduction of more integrative forms of activity. In developmental work in the future it will also be important to support the examples of collective and strategic application, which can assist in change of a more fundamental character in the social services.

6.8 The need for fewer rules

As social institutions are financed by the state budget, and central authorities must give their permission to open new initiatives, their introduction becomes a time demanding and bureaucratic process. The difficult social situation in many municipalities means that one has to find new ways of meeting acute needs. To avoid being stopped by state rules, municipalities choose to start branches of already established social services, which have received permission from the state. When these new social services have after a time
established themselves and are running, the state bureaucracy is confronted with the fact. Initiatives of this kind show that there exists a great need to reform the system of rules and to decrease managerial control through details. At the same time, it is not easy to change old rules because this will necessitate a fundamental transformation in the way the bureaucratic apparatus thinks.

There are many reasons for why such a transformation is not easy. Skott (2001) describes how the Soviet period has had its own characteristic view of society and the human being. An experience, which dates from this time and still evident is that the person who reports some kind of problem risks endangering their future and perhaps, also their health. This means that the willingness to openly question and suggest proposals has been repressed for many years. Under such circumstances people choose to keep a “low profile”. The Soviet mentality is in this respect part of today’s heritage and exerts an influence upon how people think when it comes to the question of taking an initiative to change and criticising dominant ways of working. Many are afraid that showing initiative will draw attention and can be perceived as a threat to those in power. This accounts for part of the mentality found among the population and among those who work in the social services. It explains why making developments can be a slow and laborious process.

6.9 Positive indications of development

The picture of development painted above is relatively dark. It can therefore, be important to also note that there are examples of gradual democratisation and reform of old structures. In one of the municipalities that participated in the evaluation a description was given of how the leadership in the municipality had changed in recent times. From having earlier had the unconditional support of the different social services in the municipality, the new municipal leadership has broken with established patterns. A new form of co-operation has been introduced, based upon a program of development involving all the different leaders of the social services. The new democratic forms of work ensure the participation of all municipal services and different interest groups, such as voluntary associations, the church, as well as those interested in discussing what needs to be done to develop the municipality. The leader’s intention is to in this manner set in motion a discussion about all sorts of problems in the municipality and not just those involving the economy. The hope is that people will participate in the work of transformation. It is not to steer by the central authorities and a priority is placed upon development as a learning process for all parties.

The chairwoman of the Work and Social Security Committee illustrates a further example of new thinking in the different managerial levels in the
public sector. In her description of her own decision making. From first hav-
ing reacted with some hesitation and doubt about the co-operation with Sweden and Swedish social services, she later became convinced of the pos-
sibilities of carrying out a program of reform, even if it might involve a great deal of work before reaching the goal.

An optimist interpretation of examples of this kind is that the lack of will-
ingness to change, which has characterised Russian society under commu-
nism, is about to change. The evaluation shows that change can easily stop if there is a lack of mutual trust between the parties in an international project such as this one. It takes time to build such trust and once created, it is impor-
tant to maintain and develop the co-operation.
7 Evaluation as learning

In this chapter, the focus changes from the evaluation of the education program to the evaluation itself. As the fifth goal of the evaluation suggests, the task has also been to judge character of the learning and the processes of change that have been assisted by the evaluation. The traditional picture of how learning takes place in evaluation looks at the presentation of the results in the evaluation report. Another way of looking at learning in evaluation is to focus upon the interaction between the evaluator and the participants in the evaluation and understand how the learning process has developed through this interaction.

In the course of carrying out the evaluation, one of the learning goals has been touched upon by different respondents. This has been that the evaluation should function as a source of ideas and contribute to learning. This has been realised through my participation as an evaluator in each round of the education course, by lectures given on evaluation as a methodology and through the information given on the actual evaluation. In the course of these activities participants have been able to ask questions and discuss different results from the evaluation, as well as give their opinions on the ongoing evaluation. The evaluation has also had an educational function through its dissemination of ideas to the municipalities and participants. It has functioned as a forum for critical investigation and dialogue when the evaluation has drawn attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the education program and how its results might be applied.

7.1 What is characteristic of evaluation as learning?

When the object of discussion is evaluation as learning the point of departure is that evaluation has different functions. Chelimsky (1997, p 100) offers a useful summary of the various purposes served by evaluation:

- Evaluation for accountability (e.g. measuring results or efficiency);
- Evaluation for development (e.g. providing evaluative help to strengthen institutions); and
- Evaluation for knowledge (e.g. obtaining a deeper understanding in some specific area or policy field).

In the first case, evaluation deals with the need for results and answering the questions raised by decision-makers with respect to effectiveness and effi-
ciency, as well as evidence of cause and effect. With a developmental perspective on evaluation the question is how to improve institutional performance. The third category for an evaluation distinguishes itself from the other two, by in the first instance, looking at the knowledge perspective. For many researchers working with evaluation the goal is to generate knowledge and understanding and the questions are up to the evaluator: “it is he or she who decides what will be asked and answered in a study, and the topic generally follows from his or her prior research” (et al p 102).

When we are talking of evaluation as learning, the focus is first and foremost upon contributing to development, but also about developing knowledge. The goal is partly to strengthen the learning, which is taking place, partly to stimulate a form of learning that deals with judgement, reflection and a critical investigation of the activity in order to gain an insight into its strong and weak sides. It also involves becoming aware of the norms and judgments made in determining what is good quality. The evaluator’s role in the evaluation is less that of being an inspector and instance of control, and more one of being a teacher, consultant and critical friend in a dialogue which stimulates reflection, evaluation, critical insight and looking at the activity from new perspectives. One element in this is to compare different cultures (between organisations, municipal councils, and so on), in order to become aware of the different views on what is hold to be quality. To this it can be added that researchers who discuss evaluation as a learning process often assert that ”dialogue, reflection, asking questions and identifying and clarifying values, beliefs, assumptions and knowledge are critical to learning from evaluative inquiry” (Prescill and Torres, 1999, p 43).

Reflection is a process that provides individuals and groups with the opportunity of investigating their ideas, understanding and experiences. When one reflects over conceptions and experiences, it becomes possible to understand how and why things are as they are. On becoming involved in discussion and reflection with others information can be gathered to interpret one’s own experiences. The interpretation can involve seeing the individual event from a larger perspective, so that an opportunity is created to better understanding one’s influence and how others exert an influence on the organisation. In this connection it is important ask questions and to have the chance of doing this. If fellow workers don’t look into what is behind the ideas and way of thinking in the organisation, then there is a risk that a great deal of work continues as it always has done and the opportunity to learn and change are limited. The final conclusion is that if individuals and organisations are to learn, then they must be given the opportunity to take part in dialogue, ask questions, examine decisions and evaluations, conceptions, and the “truths” valid in the given activity.
Evaluation as learning

It is worth noticing that learning in an evaluation is not just about gaining information about the activity under examination. In addition, there is a meta-learning of norms, ideals, evaluations are made about what is important knowledge, what is considered a skill...etc. Learning in evaluation assumes a political character when it highlights what is considered important and less important knowledge. It means that relations established in the evaluation ought to be based upon democratic values such as justice, equality, inclusiveness and show mutual tolerance through an acceptance of diversity. It is also important for the evaluator to understand that he/she is a learner with their own pre-conceptions of events. Failure to recognise this risks ignoring this aspect of learning.

It is also possible to identify an instrumental view of evaluation and learning, connected with economic and political principles designed to increase the level of effectiveness and ability to compete. Here we can recognise concepts such as the learning organisation, feedback, self-control, ensuring quality. A second perspective describes learning as a process liberating the individual’s capacity to reflect upon their personal development and ability to cope with everyday political problems.

Some of the most central concepts are therefore dialogue, social interaction and democratic participation. With respect to the last mentioned, the focus is directed towards how learning as a process can come about. Learning is then less about acquiring knowledge of goals achieved and more a learning process - a learning without an endpoint.

7.2 Evaluation from a Russian perspective

It is important to understand how the concept of evaluation reflects different cultural and political contexts. A dominant impression from my contact with different decision makers in the municipalities and from the central tier in Leningrad County is that the predominant view of evaluation is, in the words of Chelimsky (1997), ‘Evaluation for accountability (e.g. measuring results or efficiency)’. In this Russian view of evaluation control from the subordinate to lower echelons in the organisation is a dominant conception, along with the concepts of legitimacy, criticism and inspection. This view is supported by a belief in the value of hierarchy, power in the hands of the few and management by command.

This is also a picture described by Hyatt and Simons (1999) who mean that, 'Looking at Chelimsky’s three main perspectives, we would suggest that the current and prevalent understanding of the purpose of evaluation in Central and Eastern Europe is accountability rather than development or knowledge' (p 30). This view of accountability is perhaps founded upon the effect of contacts since 1989, which different parties in the west have had with
the World Bank, EU, USAID, SIDA and so on. The consequence has been an emphasis upon efficiency, with evaluation viewed as a function of accountability for financial management and cost effectiveness.

As an alternative to this I have tried to understand evaluation more in terms of development and knowledge, along with concepts such as self-evaluation (internal need), learning, understanding and change. The difficulties faced by such a perspective in the Russian context are the main focus of analysis in the remainder of this chapter.

7.3 Perspectives in the analysis of evaluation as learning

The analysis of evaluation as learning is possible from different perspectives. House (1981) has described three perspectives on innovation and learning: the technological, political and cultural.

The technological perspective has focused on the innovation itself, on its characteristics and component parts, on how to produce and introduce it. The technique and its effect are the focal points. The political perspective has focused on the innovation in context, on the relationships between sponsors and recipients, on rewards and costs and their distribution. Power and authority relationships are the focal points. The cultural perspective has focused on the context, on how work is structured and life is lived, on how the innovation is interpreted and relationships disturbed. Meanings and values are the focal points. (House 1981, p 28)

House argues that a perspective represents a “way of seeing” a problem rather than a rigid set of rules and procedures” (p 20). The three perspectives support different interests and focus on different parts of innovation. The technical perspective is normally found among sponsors of innovation; the cultural perspective covers those involved and the political perspective mediates between these interests. The analysis and discussion of the evaluation of the Swedish-Russian co-operation on the development of their social services is based primarily upon a cultural perspective with a focus upon “inside-information” and indigenous definitions and values. There is also a focus upon a political perspective describing how interest conflicts are dealt with in the evaluation.

7.4 To understand and interpret different perspectives

To use culture as an analytical concept is not without problems since it is the source of different interpretations. According to Schein (1996, p 11) “culture is a set of basic assumptions about how the world is and ought to be that a group of people share and that determines their perceptions, thoughts, feel-
ings, and, to some degree, their behaviour.” Hyatt and Simons (1999) says that the inter-relationship between the levels and hence the understanding of culture is often expressed through the use of codes. They describe codes as a secret system of words, symbols or behaviour used to convey messages that are contextually bound. The cultural codes can be applied consciously and unconsciously and have a specific relevance for members in designated groups.

The codes can be expressed in an observable manner, through linguistic and non-linguistic means, but they are at the same time an effect of an interaction with underlying, more deep rooted levels in the culture. This means that what can be observed can often be difficult for an outsider to understand, for example an external evaluator as I was in the Russian context. To understand the cultural codes can involve years of experience of the historical tradition in which the codes are embedded. Hyatt and Simons point out that different contexts are open to a greater or lesser extent to outsiders seeking to understand how cultural codes in Eastern Europe are more intricately locked than in others and specific to their “closed” histories. This is a challenge to contemporary evaluation when it is bounded by a limited time period, often too short to discern the underlying codes governing social and political action. Different mother tongues are a further factor making it difficult to understand another culture, since the meaning of expressions can vary and a precise meaning in one language can be distorted or lost on translation into another language. If we are besides dealing with a professional language built upon long explanations, problems increase for outsiders when they attempt to understand what is being said.

With these background reflections it becomes possible for evaluation as learning in the Russian-Swedish project to be analysed on the basis of what is observed, identifying how individuals and groups think and react, how they interpret attributes and evaluations that exist on the basis of explicit symbols, rituals and signs in organisations and groups. Finally, an analysis can be made, such that these attributes and evaluations are interpreted as an expression of tacit knowledge, unconsciously held by the organisation and the group (Hyatt & Simons, 1999).

7.5 Cultural codes and Political power in evaluation

Some examples are given below to show experiences of evaluation as learning from a cultural and a political perspective. First, some comments on using an interpreter in evaluation. The second example looks at the cultural and political encounter in the opening phases of the evaluation. The third example focuses upon situations during the evaluation and the collection of data.
Finally, there is a discussion of Russian participant’s reactions to the results of the evaluation.

7.5.1 The language in communication and data collection

A practice based evaluation places demands upon communication between different involved parties. If the evaluator doesn’t speak the language spoken in the particular situation then securing the necessary assistance becomes of decisive importance. The evaluator in the foreign environment can be compared with a person suffering from a visual impediment who needs a guide to help them with orientation. At the same, it is important to recognise that as a rule it is not possible to totally compensate for an inability to communicate in a full worthy manner in the new environment. Accordingly, it becomes important to reflect over the interpretation of results. In this evaluation, the Russian interpreter functioned as the evaluator’s guide. The interpreter had long prior experience of interpreting in realistic fieldwork situations in the county. She also had significant knowledge of Swedish social services and social service provision in Russia. Her professional attitude meant that all parties respected her. Fundamental pre-conditions were therefore met for carrying out the evaluation in close contact with practitioners in the respective municipalities.

During fieldwork, when data was collected on the different activities, qualitative methods were chosen (interviews, observations). A lesson from fieldwork was that the interpreter functioned as a moderating factor in contact with different respondents. The presence of a third person who didn’t represent a source of authority, to my experience, had a neutralising and harmony inducing effect upon the interview situation. Another observation that I did was that using the interpreter in interviewing resulted in a change in the communicative relation between the interviewer and respondent. The pace and sense of direct contact changed, and this was an expected negative effect. What was more surprising was that the change in communication also had qualitative advantages. The short pauses that arose between communicative exchanges created the opportunity for reflection, for both the interviewer and the respondent. It was also considered easier (and more legitimate) to ask for a further explanation of questions and answers, which weren’t understood. A further positive quality factor was the increasing attention devoted towards non-verbal communication between parties. Body language assisting in confirming an answer, and it also communicated discomfort and tension.

These are signals that are always found in communication between people. When the interview takes place with an interpreter, attention is increased towards these signals because other details in language are absent when the
same mother tongue is not spoken. In a certain respect consciousness of the interpretation given to the communication is heightened, which can be a positive factor, increasing the validity and relevance of the results.

7.5.2 The focus of the evaluation

The perspective changes when we investigate the meeting between the evaluator and representative for the Russian authorities responsible for social services in the county. After some preliminary contacts via fax and mail to clarify the conditions for the evaluation and commission from Sida, a first meeting was arranged with Russian representatives in St. Petersburg in autumn 1999. I emphasised the desire for a dialogue about carrying out the evaluation. The questions I wanted to raise were among other things, which initiatives could be visited, the kind of information to which I would like to have access, as well as the opportunity of making field observations and holding interviews with different local representatives.

Demonstrating power and authority

The meeting in St. Petersburg began with the Russian representatives presenting a comprehensive list of questions they wanted to raise, which they then proceeded to do. When I had an opportunity to ask my questions it was approaching lunchtime. The Russians proposed that my questions could be answered during lunch. During the meal the Russians took turns expressing gratitude and praising the Swedish-Russian bond of friendship. This gave our conversation a different form than the formal negotiations, which had characterised the meeting in the morning. But, this setting gave no opportunity either for dialogue between equal parties. The program continued with different cultural activities and study excursions. They were motivated by the desire to show me as much as possible under my short visit. Even during these events the opportunity for conversation on a “one to one” basis was limited. A guide accompanied me on all the visits. In the end, I only gained the opportunity to answer the most acute questions, which enabled me to proceed to the next stage of the planned evaluation. I learnt from this experience of demonstration of power and authority and at the next meeting in St. Petersburg some month later I was more emphatic in demanding a say on the agenda for the visit. This strategy was not totally successful, even if the Russian control of the meeting was toned down.

I was able to confirm that the Russian representatives were accustomed to brushing aside the negotiations or giving limited opportunity for discussion and dialogue on the question of the evaluator’s demands. A normal strategy was to say that they did understand when my demands were too clearly expressed, or an answer was given that totally unrelated to the question. I can
confirm that my endeavours to establish a dialogue between equal parties were unsuccessful in the Russian negotiating context, where the tactic was to gain and maintain control of the agenda, with the result that I had limited influence on the issues addressed. My persistent efforts risked being interpreted as a sign of weakness as a negotiator in a relation where the goal was to take hold of and keep the initiative.

My interpretation is that such a strategy supports a culture where authorities continue to dictate the circumstances for co-operation. They are able to control the flow of decisions, for example, opposing decisions and events which might lead to a change in the existing structure of things.

The situation described above can be compared with the interview I held with the Russian representative approximately two years later when the evaluation approached its conclusion. Before the interview I had spent ten days visiting the activities in the four case study municipalities gaining a picture of the development. The goal of the final interview with the mayor was to hear the leadership’s total judgement of the evaluation and the project. The mayor’s attitude was now considerably more positive than at the evaluation’s outset in 1999. The mayor described (see chapter five) how her doubt and scepticism had changed and she now had a much more positive view of co-operation with Sweden.

This transformation can be interpreted in different ways. As confirmed above, the evaluation from a Russian perspective was first and foremost about the upper levels of power controlling subordinates. It is not hard to understand how the evaluation as learning was somewhat alien to the mayor when I presented this to her in the autumn in 1999. Thereafter, the evaluation work in the municipalities involved actual examples of how evaluation as learning and dialogue could be carried out and achieve good results. The mayor must have registered this and become more positive to the idea.

A second and more critical interpretation is that the mayor’s different attitude rested on the fact that other things were in focus by the time of the final interview. The interview in spring 2001 occurred before the evaluator’s final report. The questions no longer concerned what information was to be released and what institutions were to be visited, but what would be contained in the final report. Faced with such a situation it is not hard to imagine that the mayor thought a positive opinion of how the Russians saw the project might exert an influence on Swedish interest in future involvement. A further explanation for the mayor’s positive attitude can be that she had heard reports of my study visits from municipal officers, such that their reports gave a favourable picture of what I had seen.
7.5.3 The control of the evaluation

It had been made clear by the municipalities that I would not be allowed to make these visits without an accompanying municipal officer. My study excursions were therefore always undertaken under the watchful eye of a representative for the central leadership in the county. The representative’s task was ”to address all the practical questions” arising in the course of the visits. In my first visit to the municipalities in the spring 2000 I wanted to hold some individual interviews with staff in the activities involved in the project. The county officer introduced me to the first person to be interviewed and remained in the room in order to, as she put it, ”learn how scientific interviews were carried out”. I accepted this without further thought, but soon my respondent reacted with a nervous look towards the county representative, who besides intervened and corrected some of the answers given by the respondent. At the next interview I asked the county officer to leave the room. She protested and meant that her task was to also check what staff said about their activities. Her view was that it was ”a waste of staff time” holding separate interviews. I refused to drop my demand and the representative left the room under protest.

This example illustrates how the presence of a controlling person was an attempt to control what information was made accessible to outsiders. A second strategy was to arrange for the context of the interview such that the questions and the possibilities for an equal dialogue were neutralised. At one place the intention was to interview the leader of an initiative. This person had taken part in the education in Sweden. I arrived at the actual activity together with the interpreter and the representative from the county. We were met by the leader who took us to a meeting room, where she had arranged for all the staff, about 30, to be present. After we had presented ourselves, I was to hold the interview with the leader and it was her intention that the rest of staff should remain present to hear. Surprised by the situation I accepted and we sat at a table with 30 people in the public. To my questions about the centre’s activity the leader replied with well-prepared answers which were more in the form of lectures for the staff, than a presentation of her personal views of the activity and education in Sweden, as I had hoped.

The examples above can be interpreted as an attempt to cover over actual problems and present a good façade. Now, it can be asserted that such a tendency, to show a well-painted picture and positive aspects, is scarcely specific to a Russian context. In the literature on evaluation this is a well-known reaction to external evaluations, where the control aspect is the goal. What is clear is that this tendency is more in evidence in Russia with its history of a closed, controlled and centrally governed society. Traditionally it is a society, which is reluctant when it comes to disclosing anything that might reveal
difficulties and problems. The first reaction when something is revealed is to hide and deny it until one is absolutely forced to make and admission.

Against this background the attempt to achieve evaluation as learning can be difficult to practice. Partly because informants can be uncertain about what will happen with the information they provide – even if the evaluator gives assurances of confidentiality – partly because evaluation as learning doesn’t match their picture of evaluation as (central) control.

7.6 The participants view on the evaluation

In order to obtain the participant’s view of the evaluation as learning, an evaluation was made after each meeting between the evaluator and participants. This “evaluation of the evaluation” involved discussing the impression participants had of the evaluation and what should be improved for the next occasion. Also, after each meeting with staff and other respondents, the evaluator made a preliminary assessment of his impressions. A more systematic analysis of evaluation as learning was carried out after the first half of the project period and presented in the report, ”Learning Across Boundaries” (Karlsson & Hopstadius, 2000). The report was translated into Russian and sent in December 2000 to all municipalities in Leningrad County. The goal was to provide feedback about the results of the evaluation. A questionnaire was carried out, in order to collect this information in the form of comments from the municipalities. A total of all 29 municipalities in the County took part in the survey and 24 have answered it. The five missing questionnaires were from differing sized municipalities spread over the county. This means that their non-inclusion was not a source of systematic bias, and should therefore, not have any effect upon the results. In what follows, a short presentation is given of what they said. (See appendix for detail information on the questionnaire five).

The result shows that a large majority of the replies praise the report for its thorough attention to detail. It is said that the report is easy to understand and matches their view of the situation. The analysis devotes attention to the Russian context and all the information presented, in the form of statistics and descriptions, is correct. The report has met our expectations; assert many in their answers.

There were also criticisms of the report. When it comes to its format, some say that it should have been shorter; in order to serve as a textbook on methodology. A second wish was for a more detailed presentation of some of the points outlined below. One respondent to the questionnaire felt that the name of the municipalities participating in the case studies should have been given. A second respondent meant that with respect to the content in the report, what was lacking was concrete guidance on how to conduct the project.
In the report, no alternative proposals were offered for speeding up developments, it was said. Another said a brief presentation should be given of the local project’s goal, content, realisation and if the project work had changed in the course of the education. Comparisons with other municipalities were also missed, and how this would have provided a way of measuring the value of an initiative.

There was also the view that more space should have been devoted to the description of the Russian people’s mentality. One also missed recommendations on the county level. Another respondent meant that criticism of state social policy had been omitted. For example, the extremely low level of support given to the elderly who have lived a hard life.

7.6.1 Comments on the results

The participant’s opinions show that they had very concrete expectations of the evaluation. I will comment on some of the claims. First, it is obvious after contact with different actors in the project that there exists a great need for literature in Russia on the theory and methods of evaluation. It is however important to point out that the first evaluation report, (Karlsson & Hopstadius, 2000), was not meant to be a teaching manual on methods, even if it does in fact provide such knowledge.

With respect to the identity of the municipalities who participated as case studies, I think it is important to underline that a decision must be taken if their names are not to be in principle kept confidential. It is also important to keep in mind that the goal in the evaluation has not been to make comparisons, or to rank the municipalities. The object of the case studies has been to find good examples of project work and to thereby provide knowledge on how practical project work can be done. Obtaining such knowledge is not dependent upon revealing the name of the municipalities involved. On the contrary, it can be asserted that revealing the name can fix a specific municipality in the mind of the reader, so that a comparison is made with how they themselves think it functions. The general and the fundamental in the results might then recede into the background. There are also those who claim that the evaluation should provide a clear criticism of national social service policy and should allocate more space to describe the Russian people’s mentality. I would like to close by reflecting upon this last point.

7.7 Lessons learned

What I have done as an evaluator from a foreign country is to try and understand Russian culture and social policy in a serious manner, and to thereby provide a more sensitive picture of differences between the two countries and their traditions. I have recognised that Russia is still a somewhat closed
society, where the authorities still systematically deny all mistakes and problems until it is obvious that the truth cannot be hidden.

What we have been able to see, not least in the tragic terror attack and liberation of hostages at the theatre in Moscow, is that the Russian people are prepared to sacrifice human life in order to maintain a declared policy line. If the authorities believe that it is best for the country, then human life can be sacrificed without it giving rise to strong protests from citizens, as might be the case in the West. There exists patience, perhaps even a resignation, in the way the population regard events. This can be interpreted as an expression of the Russian people’s mentality. A less psychological and prejudiced explanation is that it is the result of several centuries of one party and totalitarian regimes. Such a view doesn’t identify different “national traits”. Instead, emphasis is placed upon different political and historical traditions which influence how people conceive of the state and the role of authorities as sources of power.

Has the totalitarian structure and culture disappeared since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989? Barany and Volgyes (1995) writes of how quickly all signs of the old society in the form of symbols such as Lenin statues, red flags with the hammer and sickle have disappeared from the public view. I believe however, that this is a change on the surface and it has yet to reach the underlying structures of Russian society. An example can illustrate this. I met those sitting with power in the county for an interview in one of their offices. The room was furnished for formal meetings. A large bookcase with glass doors dominated one of the walls. Behind the mayor’s desk there was a map of the region on a wall and a Russian flag. What wasn’t so visible from the visitor’s position, but clearly visible to the mayor, was a big bust of Lenin on a pedestal hidden, or misplaced, behind one side of the bookcase. It was first noticed when we took a break to stretch our legs that I moved around the room. You could also see clearly on the carpet where the bust had been placed in the front of the flag. This reminded me that the Communist regime was not a distant experience and that there were still those in power who have yet to distance themselves from such symbols.

It is commonly said that Russian society has not the same view of democracy as Sweden. As mentioned in the introduction of this report, Sida, in a letter (12.9.98), asserted the importance to pay particular attention to historical and cultural differences and also to incorporate ideas of democracy, effectiveness and to address the issue of equality. Sida asserted that these principles were not necessarily transferred into Russian society a simple and straightforward manner.

This makes it important to ask if evaluation as learning based upon openness, dialogue, the right of all interests to be heard and so on, will function in a context that is not democratic? The question is if certain democratic
pre-conditions are necessary, such as freedom of expression and the absence of fear of punishment when contrary or opposing views are expressed? These are some of the issues and questions raised on the basis of working with evaluation in a Russian context.

Hyatt and Simons (1999) have discussed their experiences of evaluation in Eastern Europe and the importance of attempting to understand each other’s cultures through recognition and attention to the cultural codes that steer social and political life. There exist traditions of either being open or closed and accompanying social systems influence our cultural perceptions, codes and worldviews. To work in Eastern Europe normally means entering a formal partnership with a large number of groups or institutions, whose clearly defined boundaries, rules and standards control formal relations in project work or the evaluation. Hyatt and Simons mean that choices can be made according to the kind of relation desired between partners. They say that the most important factor for creating a creative partnership is that is there exists trust between the parties, but they also note that this takes time and it is important that individuals are willing to take risks by trying new ideas, which break with traditional practice. Fukuyama (1996) also notes that it takes a long time to change cultures and this the time factor therefore has an impact on processes of change.

Nevertheless having said this, even the West must critically examine its own conceptions about the East, since their exists a strong tendency to idealise the domestic situation in the West through comparison with the East. An example is the education this evaluation has investigated. On many occasions, in my opinion, an idealised picture of Swedish social services was presented. What is overlooked is the fact that many elements of the education model don’t necessarily function in the domestic context. If this insight is lacking there is a risk that the social services under evaluation in the Russian context are interpreted as a lack of capacity in the municipality’s efforts to introduce the Swedish model. What should instead be in focus is the question of an unsuccessful theory, where criticism is directed towards the model held up as the ideal.

Than the blame on an unsuccessful implementation be analysed more critically with an opportunity to learn also from a Swedish perspective what to change in the model.
8 Bibliography


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9 Appendix – methods in the evaluation

9.1 Introduction

In this section I give a more detailed presentation of the methods and results from the collection of data to give the reader an opportunity to judge the reliability and validity of the evaluation results.

9.2 Questionnaires

Several questionnaires were carried out during the evaluation’s formative and summary phases. Investigation of the formative phase 1999-2000 was done with the following four questionnaires.

9.2.1 Questionnaire 1: Investigating the local municipal projects

The first questionnaire was carried out in April 1999 and completed by all the 20 participants on the program’s second group. The aim was to obtain knowledge of the different projects starting in the municipalities and to gain a basis for selecting a preliminary sample of projects to be studied more closely as cases. All the participants answered the questionnaire, which took up the following groups of questions:

1. The individual project’s goal and intention
2. The present status of the project
3. The project’s expected result

9.2.2 Questionnaire 2: The social conditions in the county and in the local municipalities

The second questionnaire was carried out in the summer 1999 and sent to all of the 60 participants on the first three courses of the program. Participants represented 18 of the 29 local municipalities in Leningrad County. The aim was to obtain more developed knowledge of the social conditions in the county and the municipalities, where the case studies were planned. All the participants answered the questionnaire, which took up the following groups of questions:

1. The social activity’s condition and circumstances in the municipality
2. The individual project’s goal and intention
3. The description of the project and how it is carried out
4. The project’s present results
5. Expectations and hesitations

9.2.3 Questionnaire 3: The participant’s expectations of the course

The third questionnaire was carried out during March and August 2000 and sent to all of the 40 participants on education courses five and six before it commenced. The goal was to gain an impression of the participant’s expectation of the program in Sweden. The questionnaire was sent in the post to the participants within two weeks of the start of the course. All the participants answered the questionnaire, which took up the following groups of questions:

1. Has the course’s content been discussed beforehand?
2. Which concrete issues did the participants want to raise during the course?
3. Which concrete questions did the participants hope the course would answer?
4. Had they any prior knowledge of Swedish social work?
5. How is it imagined that knowledge and experiences from the course can be applied in their own practice?
6. What kind of opinion do they have of the program?

9.2.4 Questionnaire 4: Evaluation of the course

The fourth questionnaire was carried out in March and August 2000 and offered to all of the 40 participants on education course 5 and 6 after the courses had been completed. The aim was to find out if the participant’s expectations to the education in Sweden had been fulfilled. The questionnaire was completed during the participant’s last day in Eskiltuna. All the participants answered the questionnaire, which took up the following groups of questions:

1. What important knowledge has the course given?
2. Have your questions been answered?
3. What kind of knowledge and experiences from Swedish social work can be implemented in your own practice?
4. How can such a transfer take place in your own practice?

In addition, after each education course the project leaders have carried out their own evaluations with a questionnaire. The evaluation has had access to their results.
9.2.5 Questionnaire 5: Views of the evaluation report

The results from the formative evaluation of the education program and from the first case studies in 1999 and 2000 are presented in the evaluation report, "Learning Across Boundaries", published in December 2000. The report was translated into Russian and sent to all the local municipalities in the county in January 2001. The goal was circulate knowledge of the evaluation’s results and also to give the evaluator feedback on the ongoing work of evaluation. In order to know what the recipients think of the report a questionnaire was carried out in the local municipalities and the following series of questions were asked:

1. Information about who has answered the questionnaire (local municipality, position, number of participants who answered from the group)
2. View of the reports presentation and content
3. The program of education’s significance for your own local municipality, project, activity?
4. Which need for education still exists in the different area of activity and among the staff?
5. What changes have taken place in the local municipality in 2000 and what are their plans for the future?

The questionnaire was given to representatives for the leadership and staff in the local municipalities and to the Work and Social Security Committee on the county level. A total of all 29 municipalities in the County took part in the survey, some with a population of 60-90000 and some who were smaller communities or towns. Each municipality was given three questionnaires. 88 questionnaires in total were sent to the municipalities and to the county authorities. The targets were the central leadership in the municipalities (mayors, deputy mayors, and heads of social services), the local leaders (directors, managers, and heads of departments), as well as professional practitioners in the social services (specialists, such as doctors, teachers and social workers).

The Work and Social Security Committee sent one reply. From the local municipalities 24 municipalities have answered the questionnaires and that answers were missing from five local municipalities. In more detail, the missing questionnaires were from differing sized municipalities spread over the county. This means that their non-inclusion was not a source of systematic bias, and should therefore, not have any effect upon the results.

To answer the questionnaires, the municipalities have formed groups of different sizes, covering different levels of decision making. Groups with staff from the social services have had the greatest number of participants, 7-8 in number. Thereafter, come groups from the local leadership, with 3-5 people.
Evaluation as learning

On the central level the groups consist of mayors, deputy mayors, and heads and deputy heads of social services.

Table 3: Number of replies and participants in questionnaire 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>County level and central leadership in the municipalities</th>
<th>Local project leadership</th>
<th>Staff in the project</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of questionnaires</td>
<td>15 questionnaires (44%)</td>
<td>11 questionnaires (32%)</td>
<td>8 questionnaires (24%)</td>
<td>34 questionnaires (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants in the questionnaires</td>
<td>27 (1+26) participants (20%)</td>
<td>45 participants (34 %)</td>
<td>61 participants (46 %)</td>
<td>133 participants (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table indicates a good distribution on different levels of the social services. The distribution is also quite good between different sizes of local municipality and throughout the county. It can be noted that although the number of questionnaire (8) from staff is the lowest, the number of participants was the highest (61 people). This means that the replies from the staff have been based upon a comparatively large proportion of group discussions, with 7-8 in each group.

9.3 Cases studies

The selection of the case study sample took place in stages. The first stage involved delimiting the possible local project according to the following criteria:

1. The project was to involve one of the four problem areas described above
2. The project was to be in an implementation phase i.e. it was to have already begun
3. The project was to involve new initiatives and not deal just with already existing tasks.

On the basis of these criteria and the information gained from questionnaire 1, a preliminary sample of four projects was proposed. As the amount of information was limited (all the municipalities and projects were not described in the replies from the questionnaires) the sample proposal and the evaluator’s criteria were sent to the Work and Social Security Committee in Leningrad County for comments. Their response resulted in changing two of the projects for others, which were able to better fit the evaluator’s criteria. This meant that in the end the sample consisted of four projects. The first project
concerned the development of the care for the elderly and the disabled in the social services. The second project dealt with drug preventative work among children and youth. The third involved work with families and children with problems. The fourth project concerned the development of perspectives and problems connected with the social rehabilitation of children and youth with limited opportunities.

That the sample of projects was based in the last instance upon the project’s topic and not upon which municipality was responsible, was partly related to the evaluator’s desire to ensure the anonymity of respondents in the interviews in the municipalities, and partly to do with the view that it was not essential for the reader to know the municipality in order to judge the results from the particular case study. On the contrary, it can be asserted that knowledge of which municipality has been selected can in fact weaken the generalisability of the results.

The goal of the case studies was to obtain concrete examples of how the program of education had given results, if at all, in the form of learning and change in the practical activity. The goal was therefore, not to judge if the municipality manages its project work better or worse than others.

The four municipalities were informed of the evaluator’s desire to study their project. All the municipalities were sent an invitation to be evaluated. Moreover, they sent descriptions of their respective projects prior to the visits. The case studies were built around two visits to each municipality, with approximately one year between each. Each visit lasted for two days. The first time was during the courses, in autumn 1999 and February/March 2000. The second occasion was in May 2001.

A plan for the interviews and field studies was sent to the municipalities before the visits. The mayor, deputy mayor, heads of social services, project leaders/managers, as well as the representatives, as well as representatives for the staff in the project were interviewed. Furthermore, the study excursions to the project social services provided the opportunity to make observations of the buildings, facilities and ways of working. The observations and fieldwork visits were documented by tape recordings, photographs and notes. The report covering the results from the field studies during the formative phase of the evaluation were presented in the preliminary report at the turn of the year 2001/2001. The results from the case studies during the summary evaluation are presented in this report.

9.4 Interviews

The interviews were based upon questions taken from the following interview guides:
Interview guide used during the formative phase:

1. The conditions in the municipality and priorities for dealing with different social problems.
2. Information about how the project is run and how it was initiated.
3. The project’s goal. Implementation and anticipated result.
4. Expectations of the program of education.
5. Earlier experiences of exchange work and the international exchange of knowledge within the social services.
6. Views on the program of education and the role it played for participation and for the work on the project.
7. Already existing plans to make use of knowledge acquired in the education.

Interview guide used during the summary phase:

1. Changes in the social services, which the respondent has participated in and/or observed during the last year.
2. How experiences and knowledge from Sweden have influenced these changes and developments in work.
3. How knowledge from Sweden has spread itself to different groups in the social services.
4. How the respondent has acted to support change and development.
5. Plans for concrete development and change, which exist in the social services and show connections with experiences from Sweden.

These groups of questions have been adjusted to match the different respondents. For example, the interviews conducted with the mayors and heads of social services involved questions about changes in the whole municipality, while the questions had a more local character in the interviews conducted with project leaders and staff. For the remainder, questions were also adjusted to match their particular tasks and function in the organisation. A distinction has been made with respect to questions asked during the formative phase, directed towards the different factors influencing the projects, as well as the priorities made during the program of education. With the interviews conducted in the summative phase, the focus was more upon actual outcomes and plans for the future.

9.4.1 Conducting the interviews

Each interview commenced with a short presentation of the goal of the evaluation and a statement about how its results would be presented and applied. As those being interviewed might regard the evaluator as a controller working on behalf of the leadership, the evaluator made it clear that he
held an independent position in relation to the project leadership. The respondents were also informed that their interviews were to be used in the evaluation and that their identities would be concealed in the presentation of results. However, the head of the Work and Social Security Committee could be identified, since her position was unique. She was informed about this before the interview and gave her permission for the interview to be presented in the report.

The interviews adopted a relaxed conversational form, rather than a more structured question-answer method with prepared questions. The respondent was given the opportunity to influence what was taken up and time was allocated if necessary for discussions to elaborate and clarify an answer. The interviews were held in the respondent’s working environment. The interviews with the mayors and the heads of the social services were conducted with interpreters and on some occasions with the Russian speaking evaluator. The Russian speaking evaluator also conducted the interviews with the project leaders and representatives for the staff. The interviews took approximately one and a half-hours and were recorded on tape. They were translated and thereafter transcribed in Swedish.

9.5 Sample of respondents

The respondents represent different levels of organisation in the Russian social services. On the county level there were representatives for the Work and Social Security Committee for Leningrad County. On the local municipal leadership level there were mayors, deputy mayors, and heads deputy heads of the social services. On the level of project leadership or in the social service, there were leaders and heads of departments, and on the staff level representation included social workers, teachers, doctors, physiotherapists, and so on.

In the table below a comparison is made of the number and proportion of replies from the different decision-making levels. Participation concerns the evaluation’s questionnaires and interviews, in both the formative and summary phases.
Table 4: The number of participants from the different levels of the social services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>County level</th>
<th>Central leadership in the local municipality</th>
<th>Local leadership in the project</th>
<th>Staff in the project</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants in the questionnaires 1-4 (formative phase).</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in questionnaire 5 (summative phase)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of participants per level</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in interview I (formative phase)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in interview II (summative phase)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of respondents per level</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of answers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of participants per level</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the proportion of respondents in the education groups has been based on the list of participants from the different courses, there can be a certain error in the figures. This has no influence on the final results because there is a good distribution of participants in different positions and different work tasks in the social services. During the formative phase 137 respondents completed the evaluation’s questionnaires or held interviews. Of these, 120 were participants in the education courses and answered first and foremost the questionnaires. 17 respondents were interviewed in first part of the case studies. During the summary phase, in total 147 respondents took part in the questionnaires and interviews. Of these, 133 answered the questionnaires on views of the evaluation report from the formative phase. 14 respondents participated in interviews during the second part of the case studies. There were 284 replies to the evaluation questionnaires and interviews. Since some of these respondents can have contributed to both sources of data, the total number of participants is somewhat lower. A cautious figure is that between 200-230 people have taken part in the evaluation’s different investigations.
Utgivna rapporter i skriftserie A


Utgivna rapporter i skriftserie B


| Nr 19, 2000 | Lieberg, Mats, Forsberg, Mats och McDonald, Sine. *Youth Housing and Exclusion in Sweden. All reports.* Maj 2000. (Även som pdf-fil.) |


Utgivna rapporter i skriftserie C


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Nr 9, 2002 Sidebäck, Göran, Sundbom, Lars och Svensson, Roland (red.). *Projektarbete i lokala samverkansgrupper – Dokumentation från en utvärderingscirkel för projektledare och projektmedarbetare i lokala samverkansprojekt*. April 2002. (Även som pdf-fil.)


Reports and other kind of information can be found at these address:

http://www.mdh.se/isb/mea
http://www.mdh.se/isb/cvf
The results presented in this report are based upon an evaluation of the "Social project in Leningrad County". The project ran between 1998-2001 and was carried out by the social services in Sörmland County and Leningrad County, with financial support from Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The overarching goal of the project was to provide support and direction in the development of social services in Russia. The project involved 160 social workers from Leningrad County who took part in a professional development education program in Sweden. The program functioned as a support for local social service projects in Leningrad County. The goal of the evaluation was to examine the program of education and the manner in which participants used their acquired knowledge and experiences in their own projects.

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