



## **Workshop 11 – 2018 Nordic Implementation Conference**

### **Tackling Complexity: Tailoring Implementation to Context**

*Presenters: Per Nilsen (Linköping University, Sweden); Alexandra Ziemann (King's College, U.K.); Ditte Ehrenreich (The Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment); Tom van Yperen (Netherlands Youth Institute)*

---

#### **Presentation 1: Context matters in implementation science (Per Nilsen)**

##### *Background*

The importance of the context of implementation is widely recognized in implementation science. The relevance of the context is reflected in the numerous theories, models and frameworks (referred to here as checklists) used in this field. However, it is not known whether these checklists conceptualize context in a similar way or to what extent they highlight different dimensions of the context.

##### *Project aim*

The aim was to investigate checklists to address four issues: how were they developed, what terms do they use to denote contextual influences on implementation, how is the context conceptualized and what are commonly applied context dimensions across the checklists. Greater conceptual and terminological clarity and consistency can enhance transparency, improve communication among researchers and facilitate exchange of data and comparative evaluations.

##### *Project methods*

Narrative review

##### *Project results*

18 checklists were included. They were developed in 3 ways: literature reviews of empirical studies and of other checklists; the authors' own implementation experiences and/or studies; and existing theory. 5 of the checklists explicitly refer to "context", whereas the other 13 checklists employ a broad range of terms to denote various contextual influences. Few of the checklists provide specific definitions of context, instead defining it by means of describing a number of contextual influences that together make up the context. More results will be presented at the conference.

##### *Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion*

Context in implementation science is an inconsistently defined concept, yet it is possible to identify common dimensions of this concept based on the checklists. It is difficult to capture all potentially relevant influences in any given study, yet recognition of core context dimensions can facilitate research that incorporates a theory of context, i.e. assumptions about how different dimensions may influence each other and impact on implementation outcomes.



## Presentation 2: Influence of external context factors on implementation - A best-fit framework synthesis (Alexandra Ziemann)

### *Background*

When transferring, scaling-up or spreading interventions that worked in one place to other places we frequently observe variability of effectiveness in new sites. Characteristics of the external context in different sites such as political and socio-cultural context, history and geography influence implementation outcome but we have limited understanding how.

### *Project aim*

Previous work has identified several external context factors that influence certain parts of the implementation process, concern certain stakeholders at different levels and different types of interventions and implementation strategies. We aim at developing a consolidated framework of the influence of external context factors on the implementation of health and social care interventions applying a best-fit framework synthesis of the existing qualitative evidence published in scientific and grey literature. The developed framework can subsequently be tested in empirical research.

### *Project methods*

The first stage of the two-stage review examines existing frameworks, models and theories from different disciplines and synthesises the concepts for external context factors and their influence on implementation in an a-priori framework. In the second stage of the review, the a-priori framework is tested and adjusted by analysing qualitative evidence from purposefully selected, data-rich primary implementation studies focusing on health and social care interventions that were transferred from other contexts. The concepts derived from both reviews are synthesised into a final framework.

### *Project results*

The review is currently underway and results are not yet available but we will be able to present the results at the conference.

### *Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion*

Conclusions will be presented at the conference.



## Presentation 3: Better Implementation through practice involvement (Ditte Ehrenreich)

### *Background*

Legislation, regulation and policy initiatives do not always operate as expected when reality hits. It is important to continuously retrieve feedback and insights from practice in all phases of a policy development and implementation process. Two approaches, developed by the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment, will be the focus of this presentation: 'Implementability Analysis' and 'Practice Check', in each of which practice knowledge is gained through high levels of active practice involvement.

### *Project aim*

The 'Implementability Analysis' helps to ensure that an intervention that is part of a project can be adjusted as needed and supported through adequate implementation support techniques that contribute to successful implementation processes at job centres and other organisations supporting the unemployed. The purpose of 'Practice Check' is to involve target populations and other key stakeholders to a regulation or policy to better understand how these might work in practice and identify needs and opportunities for their adjustment. Both approaches help the agency to prepare solutions that are easier to implement in practice.

### *Project methods*

A workshop is at the centre of the 'Implementability Analysis'. In a dialogue with representatives from practice, barriers and facilitators to the implementation of a given initiative are examined together with factors implementation research has identified as important for implementation processes.

I praksistjekket undersøger vi på 2-4 dage en given problemstilling kvalitativt ved at inddrage og indhente viden fra praktikere. Ved at bearbejde den viden får vi på kort tid at få større indsigt i, hvordan problemstillingen opleves og fungerer i praksis og 'straks omsætte' denne viden.

### *Project results*

The 'Implementability Analysis' functions as a quality insurance mechanism that helps ease the implementation of core elements of an initiative in practice. The involvement of practice creates greater ownership to the implementation among job centres and other key stakeholder organisations and lets them be ambassadors for an initiative even before it begins. 'Practice Checks' provide a better knowledge base around initiatives that contribute to them being of better quality from the get go.

### *Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion:*

We are interested in discussing with attendees whether our approach to an 'Implementability Analysis' relies on the right parameters or whether others should be considered. Moreover, are there other pathways towards involvement and integration of practice expertise?



## Presentation 4: The next phase in implementation science: incorporating the learning perspective? (Tom van Yperen)

### *Background*

Evidence-based programs are often not used or used with only limited integrity. This is usually referred to as 'the implementation gap'. At the same time, a call for a more personalized approach in practicing the programs is found in the literature. This raises many questions about the traditional concepts of implementation. How do these concepts match with a personalized practice?

### *Project aim*

The project is aimed at integrating the concepts of what works in implementation with a more tailored approach in prevention and Child and Youth Care (CYC). This should lead to clear suggestions for leaders and practitioners in the field about how to position and use evidence-based programs in improving their practices.

### *Project methods*

For formulating the suggestions, we summarized the main concepts and developments in the literature on implementation, transformational learning of professionals, learning organizations, and transformational leadership. We integrated the concepts in a perspective that helps to initiate the concrete improvement of professional practices, and explains why some implementation trajectories are more successful than others. We organized in a great variety of settings to test and discuss the integrated approach.

### *Project results*

Preliminary results show that, in practice, concepts of implementation are often associated with a 'one way' ('top-down') dissemination and application of programs. Combining insights of what works in implementation with concepts of transformational learning of professionals, learning teams/organizations, and transformational leadership results in a framework that productively combines the available evidence-based programs and the call for a personalized approach. Working with outcome indicators and reflection on outcomes are key in forming this productive combination.

### *Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion*

In the coming years, implementation science will increasingly encounter concepts of personalizing programs and transformational learning of professionals, teams and organizations. In bringing these two different worlds together, many questions raise. What is the function of evidence-based programs? Is 'treatment integrity' still important? Can the 'personalizing' and 'learning' perspective be linked to 'implementation strategies'? The answers may form the bridge.