

Case study of employees' experiences with co-creation

A qualitative inquiry about co-creation with kindergartens

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INTRODUCTION

As a part of the preparation for the master thesis, we at Industrial Design at NTNU write a review article. The subject of my article was co-creation in public service design. Co-creation is gaining more and more interest, but like Bowen et al. (2013) I found few studies examining the experiences of participants and what motivates them in a co-creation project. We know that uncooperativeness, participants stepping down before the project is finished, and difficulties with implementation are challenges faced in service innovation projects today (Bowen, Dearden, Wolstenholme, & Cobb, 2011; Nilsen, Dugstad, Eide, Gullslett, & Eide, 2016). Additionally, if we as designers want co-creation to become normal practice, we should strive to make sure that everyone involved would want to recommend it to others, and be willing to do it again themselves. My hypothesis is that by looking at how employees of services experience co-creative design projects, we can learn more about how we can keep them engaged throughout the project. Therefore, the review article specifically investigated how to engage participants in co-creation projects, and what implications this may have for the design approach. Based in theory about ownership, and motivation, the result of the article was insight into what engages employees in these types of projects and how the insights might relate to each other.

Writing the article made me want to inquire into whether the article could explain aspects of co-creation projects not investigated before in regards to motivation among the participants. Therefore, the goal of this case study is to investigate how employees in a service experienced participating in a co-creation project, analyse these results against the results in the review article, and discuss what implications this might have for co-creation in service design.

The case

The case is a project regarding kindergartens in a district in Oslo, Norway, done by the municipality and service design consultant Comte Bureau. It started in April and ended in June, 2016. The context of the engagement is that the district has a high percentage of inhabitants that do not have Norwegian as their first language, in addition to the constant pressure to digitalize. The project investigated how to improve communication and relations with parents, primarily so that children's language learning could better be followed up at home as well as in the kindergarten. Three pilot kindergartens were picked out to participate. The solutions were a revised week planner, information

zones in the kindergartens and a dialog card. The dialog card has since been revised and implemented in more kindergartens.

METHOD

First, I did a literature review on employees' motivation in co-creation, which is summarized in the theory part of this report. Then, an overview of the project was established in conversation with Comte and by reading their report on the project. The post-project evaluation consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews where the questions were inspired by the literature review. The interviewees were picked to try to reflect the composition of the project group. They were contacted and interviews scheduled through an employee in the municipality. Before the interviews were conducted, I sent an email to the interviewees informing them about their secured anonymity, but that position could be mentioned and that rough categorizations in regards to people could be made if necessary. I also asked them if I could record the interview, which everyone agreed to. The interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 50 minutes. At the end of each interview I asked if they had any other things they wanted to add. All of the interviews were conducted in Norwegian, and have been translated to English for this report.

Given the nature of the project and the scope of this study, there are some limitations as to what can be inquired about. The project happened 18 months ago, so details about the experiences have somewhat faded. The project sought to incrementally improve details of an already existing service, not solve a highly complex problem. The end-users (parents) were interviewed but they did not participate in the co-creation, therefore this study cannot discuss the tensions that might arise from collaboration between service users and service providers. Similarly, all the participants were employees within the district kindergarten, so problems regarding language and culture barriers between people from different fields are not present either. There were only two co-creative workshops, which included different people, and no defined teamwork, hence the study cannot investigate the issues of being part of a team over a longer period. Seeing that this is a qualitative study about experiences, I have sometimes had to read between the lines of what has been said.

LITERATURE

Co-creation in service design

Sanders and Stappers (2008, p. 6) explain co-creation as "any act of collective creativity." They suggest that co-design is a subcategory of co-creation, and refers to "collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process." According to Sangiorgi and Prendiville (2017) in their book *Designing for Service*, service design can be defined as 'the activity of planning and organizing people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service in order to improve its quality and the interaction between service provider and customers'. The service design process can simply put be described as three phases: Exploration, creation and reflection, and implementation (Schneider, Stickdorn, Bisset, Andrews, & Lawrence, 2012, pp. 122, 123). The goal of the exploration phase is to gather information about the service, about experiences and challenges. In the 'creation and reflection' phase, the goal is to come up with ideas for solutions and improve them iteratively. Lastly, the implementation phase seeks to successfully implement the solutions resulting from the previous stages.

Service design is an interdisciplinary approach and is fundamentally user centered. Schneider et al. (2012) list five principles of service design thinking:

- User-centered: Designing through the customer's eyes.

- Co-creative: All stakeholders should be included in the process.
- Sequencing: The service should be visualized as a sequence of related actions.
- Evidencing: The service should be visualized in terms of physical artefacts.
- Holistic: The entire environment of a service should be considered.

According to Schneider et al. (2012), service design utilizes the service user's language as a common language, as a way to create a common understanding between participants. Facilitating idea generation and evaluation in heterogeneous groups representative of the stakeholders is fundamental to service design. They also state that integrating stakeholders as early as possible in the project development process is required for a successful service design project (Schneider et al., 2012).

Employees' co-creation experience

There are many challenges in involving both users and employees, but little has been written about the outcomes of co-creation and the experiences of participants (Bowen et al., 2013; Hasu, Saari, & Mattelmäki, 2011). Bowen et al. (2013) did a series of interviews after a co-design project done with the UK National Health Service. They investigated how the participants experienced the process. It was revealed that in general, participants began with mostly negative attitudes and expectations. This was due to disappointing experiences with previous projects, and an uncertainty of value vs cost. Another issue mentioned was time. Even though funding was provided for replacements, some employees felt like they could not justify the time spent on the co-design sessions. In public services, and especially hospitals, this can be a challenge. Culture and attitudes in the organization also affect participation. The article reports that non-participating coworkers complained about the participants' absence from their regular work, resulting in a pressure to step down from the project.

From looking at several case studies about co-design, it appears that the main reason employees participate in co-creation sessions is that they were told to do so. The second, seems to be a desire to improve own work situation and quality of the service. Bowen et al. (2013) state that participants initially saw their roles as reporting problems in 'the hope that the researchers would do something about it'. In another case study, Steen, Manschot, and Koning (2011) tried to motivate the employees by making them feel a sense of urgency to improve their service by giving them a 'teaser' before the workshop. In the way they communicated with the employees, they made them experience how their customers felt in their current service.

Hasu et al. (2011) writes that one lesson learned from their case study was that service employees were eager to act as innovators of their own services when given the permission, time, space and tools to create innovations. However, they also note the challenge that different employees experienced the process differently.

Lastly, there is the issue of whether the participants feel like they are participating, or just being consulted. According to Bowen et al. (2013), most participants experienced having the role of a consultant, rather than a designer or innovator. Although, in another article about the same project, they write that some of the participants saw their role change from reporting problems to taking ownership of issues and potential changes.

Self-determination theory

To be motivated is said to be moved to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Most theories about motivation views motivation as a unitary phenomenon, but it varies both in amount and in type. Self-determination theory (SDT) has provided empirical support for the idea that all humans have three universal psychological needs: Competence, autonomy and relatedness. These must be continually satisfied for people to maintain optimal performance and well-being, and has been showed to extend to workplaces as well (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

STD states that there are two types of motivation: Intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction, rather than a reward. It is the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to explore, and to learn. Satisfying the basic psychological needs facilitates intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). A sub theory of SDT is Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET). It specifies that unless a sense of autonomy is present, feelings of competence will not enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Extrinsic motivation is doing an activity to obtain a goal that is separated from the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation can vary in terms of internalization and integration (Table 1). Internalization is the process of taking in a value or regulation, and integration is the process when individuals transform the regulation into their own so that it comes from their sense of self (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

The different types of motivation ranges from amotivation to intrinsic motivation, with extrinsic as a spectrum in between, as shown in Table 1 (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). External regulation and introjection involve more external influence and are considered forms of controlled regulation. Autonomous regulation has been demonstrated to lead to higher levels of performance, persistence, initiative, and creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). According to SDT, contexts that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness have been found to facilitate greater internalization and integration than contexts that do not satisfy these needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

STD proposes that internalization is more likely to happen when feelings of relatedness are present. You feel relatedness if you feel connected to, and cared for by significant others. Perceived competence also affects internalization. A feeling of mastery, or feeling capable of producing a desired effect, makes people more likely to adopt an activity. Feedback on positive performance has been showed to enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Finally, autonomy is a critical element for a regulation to be integrated. For people to feel autonomous they

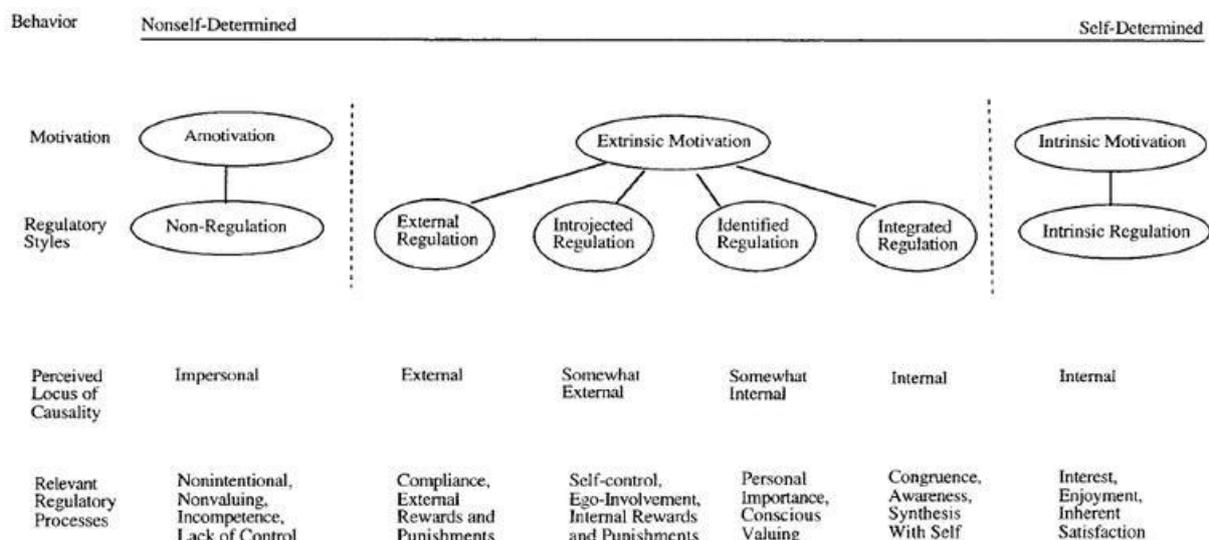


Table 1 (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 61)

must grasp the activity's meaning, and align that meaning with their own goals and values, thus making the activity feel meaningful. This is facilitated by a feeling of choice, and freedom.

SDT and work motivation

In the workplace, autonomous motivation has been shown to facilitate effective performance and well-being, whereas controlled motivation can diminish those outcomes, especially if the task requires creativity, cognitive flexibility, or deep processing of information (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Managerial autonomy support, defined as managers acknowledging their subordinates' perspectives, providing relevant information in a non-controlling way, offering choice, and encouraging self-initiation rather than pressuring subordinates to behave in specified ways, has been found to be associated with employees being more satisfied with their jobs, having a higher level of trust in corporate management, and displaying other positive work-related attitudes (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Giving employees choices about task engagements and providing meaningful rationales tend to enhance feelings of autonomy and facilitate internalization and integration. Giving people an overview over their own work in relation to the whole gives a greater sense of the importance of their work because they can see how the various parts of the jobs fit together into a meaningful unit. Research has shown that extrinsic factors such as competition and evaluations can be harmful to outcomes like creativity, cognitive flexibility, and problem solving (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Optimally challenging activities have been shown to be highly intrinsically motivating (Danner & Lonky, 1981). Positive feedback facilitates intrinsic motivation when people feel responsible for their successful performance, by promoting a sense of competence (Fisher, 1978). Negative feedback that decreased perceived competence was found to undermine both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, leaving people amotivated (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Structuring work to allow interdependence among employees and identification with work groups, as well as being respectful and concerned about each employee, may have a positive effect on internalization of autonomous motivation and work outcomes. SDT also suggests that the interpersonal style of supervisors and managers is important (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Google did a huge study on teams that went over two years. They concluded that the 'who' mattered less than 'how' the teams worked together, and they identified five key dynamics for motivated and successful teams (Rozovsky, 2015):

- Psychological safety: Can the member take risks on the team without feeling insecure or embarrassed?
- Dependability: Can the members count on each other to do high quality work on time?
- Structure and clarity: Are goals, roles, and execution plans on the team clear?
- Meaning of work: Are the members working on something that is personally important for each of them?
- Impact of work: Do the members fundamentally believe that the work they are doing matters?

Out of these, psychological safety is the most important one, underpinning the others.

Ownership

Pierce et al. (2001) defines ownership as the feeling of possessiveness and of being psychologically tied to an object. They identify three routes to the feeling of ownership as being in control of, have intimate knowledge of, and having invested oneself into something. Investment of the self comes in many forms, like investing one's time, ideas, skills, and physical, psychological, and intellectual energies (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). Still, according to Rochberg-Halton (1984), it's not enough

to just invest yourself in something, you also need to feel your own presence in its existence. To create ownership, people need to feel like their contributions are included in the outcome.

Ownership in turn gives an expectation of rights, and presumed responsibility. In short, it makes someone care about something, either because they feel a responsibility, or because they feel a need to be in control of it. It can promote the willingness to change, if the change is self-initiated, evolutionary or additive, but it can also have negative effects. Under certain conditions (e.g. high need for personal control or ownership gained through control versus knowing), ownership can give negative outcomes, like failing to delegate authority and share information, which leads to poor teamwork, and cooperation (Pierce et al., 2001).

In the Handbook in EDI (Allforsk, Handelsdepartementet, IRIS, NTNU, & Fiskeridepartementet, 2011) they explain ownership as the result of knowledge and responsibility. This means knowledge about the company, awareness of one's responsibility to improve one's workplace, and the knowledge that one's contributions matter.

THE PROJECT

The project was done by Comte Bureau on tender from a district in Oslo. The goals were to analyse the customer journey, improve relations with parents, initiate standardisations across kindergartens, and give the municipality tools to continue the work on improvements after the project ended. First, there was a meeting with Comte and the district administration where three pilot kindergartens were picked out to participate. Comte did a literature review, observations and interviews with employees and parents, and formed insights based on the information gathered. They held an ideation workshop that was based on the insights. Comte then formed three concepts, which were elaborated on in a design workshop. Comte tested and evaluated the solutions with the employees in the kindergartens, and made changes accordingly. According to Comte, co-creation with employees and parents was maintained throughout the whole project by keeping close communication with key stakeholders. Key stakeholders were the district administration, managers of the three kindergartens, pedagogical leaders (from now on referred to as 'ped-leaders') and parents. Ped-leaders are together with the manager responsible for the pedagogical content, and they are usually leaders of departments in the kindergartens. To illustrate the relationship between the participants, I have included Figure 1.

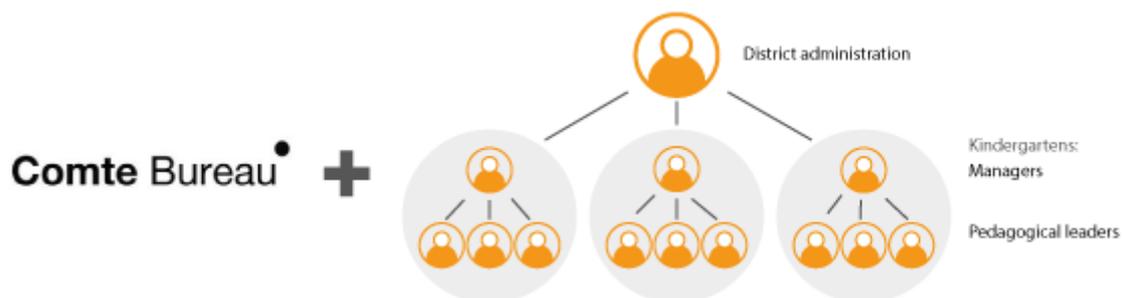


Figure 1 Relationship between participants

Timeline

Kick-off meeting – Employees from the district administration and Comte were present. Plan which kindergartens that are going to join, and how they will be involved.

Observations – In three kindergartens, as well as depth interviews with the managers in each pilot kindergarten.

Five depth interviews with parents – They tried to recruit parents with poor Norwegian. They did not perceive that the parents had too bad Norwegian to be able to have a meaningful conversation.

Ideation workshop – With managers, pedagogical leaders and representatives from the district administration, in addition to three facilitators from Comte.

Prototyping and testing – Design workshop about contents. Iterations were done in dialog with the employees in the kindergartens and district administration to arrive at realistic solutions, which the kindergartens could be enthusiastic about working on further after Comte leaves.

Insights

From the observations and interviews, Comte formulated a customer journey (Figure 2) and series of insights. The first regarded information sharing. There is a lot of information and with the current solution it might be difficult to know which information is relevant to you as a parent. Some of the information uses technical terms and language that is difficult to understand for someone who does not know the language that well. Also, they saw that at the first-time conversation with new parents, the kindergartens provided a lot of information, but there was little dialog with the parents about the child. Another insight was that different kindergartens have slightly different procedures. For example, there are no standard procedures for when a child is transferred from one kindergarten to another, and there is difference between how kindergartens communicate with the parents. The kindergartens do not offer specific advice on how parents can best facilitate their children’s language learning, even though it was found that parents appreciate tools for language learning in their own language.

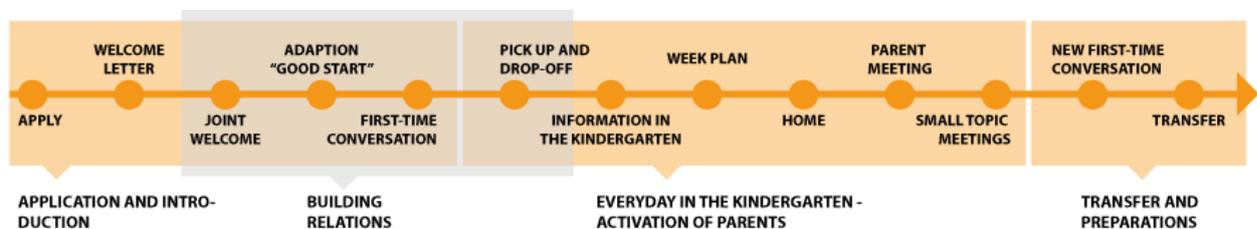


Figure 2 Map of parents journey, recreated from Comte's report

Workshops and concepts

In May, Comte did a three-hour ideation workshop with five employees: One district administrator, three managers and two pedagogical leaders. At the workshop, there were three facilitators from Comte. The participants were divided into two teams, one facilitator was on each team and the third managed the workshop. The workshop began with Comte presenting the insights they had found, including the user journey, and then laying out the plan and rules for the day. At the workshop, the participants suggested and discussed solutions to three questions Comte had formulated. Two tasks were done by first coming up with ideas individually, and then compare and discuss in the teams. The other task consisted of each participant writing an idea on a piece of paper, and then passing the sheets to the left. The next person would then build on the idea, making it either better or simpler to carry out. At the end of the workshop, the two teams presented their ideas to each other while hanging the ideas at the corresponding contact point in the user journey. The other team would then

comment on what was good, and what could be better. Lastly, every participant got two votes to put on the ideas they thought could most realistically be to put into use.

Based on the ideas from the ideation workshop and the insights, Comte suggested three concepts: A dialog card (called the “Good start” card), a revised week plan, and updated information spaces. They then did a design workshop with managers and ped-leaders on what the content in the concepts should be. They discussed what questions should be on the dialog card, and what information and colours should be in the new week plan and info zones. In my dialog with Comte, they did not refer to this design workshop as a workshop. It emerged from the interviews that the employees had considered it to be a workshop, and thus I have decided to label it as that.

The dialog card is a conversation tool with questions that are given to new parents to reflect on before the first meeting with the kindergarten. It seeks to build relations with parents through showing openness and interest. This was the concept that engaged the employees the most, and was therefore given most attention. The second concept was a week plan template. The template comes with an explanation of use, and seeks to make information given to parents more relevant, useful, and understandable across all kindergartens. Lastly, Comte suggested making a more organized information zone in the kindergartens for parents to see when they drop off or pick up their children. It includes a “new information” space, where only information that is relevant and understandable to the majority of parents should hang. Other categories are “Practical information about the kindergarten” and “Practical information about the district and municipality.” Comte made a workshop package that employees should use when they put up the new information zone, which goal was to make the employees agree on what information is important and not.

Testing and implementation

The ideas from the workshop were tested and iterated several times together with employees. Comte had continuous communication with two managers and the project leader in the district administration. Methods, insights, and possible solutions were discussed together with the stakeholders. It was difficult to agree on what the questions on the dialog card should be like, and in the end it was the district administration that made the final call.

After a year of piloting, the dialog card is now being implemented in other kindergartens. There was a gathering where the three pilot kindergartens could share their experiences with the new kindergartens. They also reviewed some of the questions at the gathering, and discussed how the card could be used in the next step on the user journey. This gathering was done without Comte. The week plan template has become the new district standard. It does not seem like the info zones have been taken into use in more kindergartens.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview questions were designed to inquire about the concepts detailed in the literature, concepts like ownership, collaboration, competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Before I asked any questions, I asked them to give an account of what they had done in the project. The interview then had three sections: before, during, and after the project. In the before part the questions regarded how they were involved, expectations, scepticism, and perceived meaningfulness. The questions asking about how it was during the project were mostly focusing on the workshop, and if they had felt competence, autonomy and relatedness. Lastly, the last section asked about the aftermath of the project, if they were satisfied with the implementation, if they would do it again, and whether they

had any advice they wanted to give if someone were to do something similar. Most of the questions were open ended to encourage the interviewees to elaborate on a thought or a feeling. Still, some questions were yes/no questions because sometimes I was looking for something specific regarding felt autonomy, competence or relatedness.

RESULTS

There were four interviews of five people, three individual and one pair. All interviewees, minus the project leader, are employed at one of the three pilot kindergartens. All interviews started similarly, but depending on the experiences of the interviewee the interviews were conducted slightly differently. Among the interviewees, there were one project leader from the district administration, one manager, and three ped-leaders. Two of the ped-leaders had been involved in testing the solutions, but not participated in the workshop.

The process

Overall, all interviewees were positive to the project and welcoming of change. Several shared the belief that projects like these are important for the kindergarten to continue to develop itself. Some said that this was because that their jobs as kindergarten employees required them to always evaluate and improve their practice, and to respond to new strategies given by the administration. Three of the interviewees stated that they had learnt a lot. The two others were the manager, who noted that she might have been made more aware of certain aspects even though she did not feel like she learnt anything new, and a ped-leader who had not participated in any of the two workshops.

The project leader was very positive, and had been excited to learn what service design was. She experienced some uncertainty about what her role would be in the project, since this was the first time she did a co-creation project. "I spent some time on getting to know what I could leave to Comte and what I should do myself. [...] In the beginning, I had more the role of a coordinator, but towards the end, I asked more questions and shared more thoughts etc."

The ped-leader who had been on the design workshop was positive to the concepts, and said "the solutions are based on the wishes from the parents that had been interviewed." She admitted that she had been skeptical to the project at first, and had been curious and excited to learn what the parents had said.

The two ped-leaders that had not been at the workshops felt that they had not been included, and had just been presented a package solution with not much other information. One of them noted that "We understand that it's difficult to involve everyone when you are a big district, but how do you inform about the project to people who have not been working on it from the beginning?" The other ped-leader said that she got some information after a while, in bits and pieces here and there. Still, compared to other projects, one of them appreciated that the administration had pursued the solutions and asked about their experiences with them, instead of never hearing about it again. "It can be frustrating, always being told what to do, because you never have enough time to do everything properly, you can't really finish it."

All of the interviewees that had participated in a workshop said they would like to participate in a similar project in the future. The ones who had not participated but worked in a pilot kindergarten said they would like to be involved next time. When asked what they might have wanted to do

differently, the district project leader said she would have liked to be more active from the beginning, questioning whether the contact points on the user journey Comte had decided to work with were the ones that would give the kindergartens most value. “My experience was that maybe we could have been more involved in the concept phase. Now we have two results that we are using and one that we are not really using.” The manager said that she thought maybe including more kindergartens in the workshops could give more diversity to the solutions, and illuminate more aspects.

The workshops

Three of the interviewees had participated in a workshop. The project leader from the district administration had participated in the ideation workshop, and the manager and ped-leader had participated in the design workshop. All had positive expectations to the workshops, being excited to try something different and curious about what they were going to work on. According to the interviews, Comte were professional and motivating, encouraging an open and constructive discussion where “anything was allowed to say.”

The project leader, who participated in the ideation workshop, felt that it was productive and a good use of time. She said that the workshop was done in a fun and creative way, and that it was reflective and inspiring, both because of the content but also because of the methods used, which she felt she could draw experience from. She felt like she could contribute to the discussion, given her experience from working in a kindergarten and because of her leader position.

The manager and ped-leader were at the design workshop. The manager felt she was there mostly to share her knowledge on the subject: “I do think that maybe they picked me because I have a lot of experience, and I have reflected on and spoken out about [the issue of relations with parents].” “It was useful, not all of us agreed, there was a huge discussion lasting three hours about what should be included [in the dialog card].” The ped-leader felt that she was there to learn. She said that “[The facilitators from Comte] were open to suggestions, they had a good dialog and interaction with us.”

Solutions and implementation

Among the interviewees there was a general consensus that the info zones were hardly interesting, the week plan was a nice update, and that the dialog card had created a lot of engagement.

One of the ped-leaders that had not participated in the workshops experienced that she was given a ‘package solution’ that she was to use. She did not see the need for a dialog card, except maybe for someone new and unexperienced. She was content with the way she did her conversations with parents from before. The ped-leader meant that the most important part of building relations with parents was talking to them when they were in the kindergarten. “I don’t think this project has improved the trust we build with parents in the everyday life, I think we build that by talking to the parents every day.” Her view on the card was that it might obstruct her in doing here job, which was to gather information. She regarded the card as a tool that needed to be used in a way that fit her work style, and that the administration trusted her to do so. “We experience a lot of it, getting directions from the administration. And I always have to ask myself, is this something I can stand for? You have to be skeptical in the beginning, but you have to try [the new solution], because you can’t lock yourself to old ways. You have to develop yourself.” The other interviewees mentioned that the dialog card helped creating a dialog, unlike before when the kindergartens had mostly provided information.

Regarding the information zones, one ped-leader that had not been on a workshop said that she did not know whether it worked or not. She said they had delegated the task of putting up the information zone to one person, and that they used it, but she was skeptical to the effect it had. “It’s super that the information is given out in a good way, but we don’t know whether the parents actually read that information or not, or what they think. Do they think the solution works?” The project leader said that the information zone was in a way outdated because of the digitalization, and that they had “felt that too when [Comte] presented the concepts to us, even though we did not say so then.” Regardless, she meant that the principles behind the information zone, about being aware of the receiver and avoid overinforming, were very useful.

Another ped-leader noted that “I didn’t have a say in [the design of the concepts], but that’s ok because I liked the solution.” After the pilot period was over, some from the pilot kindergartens were to share their experiences with the new kindergartens. The two ped-leaders that were not at the workshops were positive to this: “It was very nice to participate in introducing the solutions to the new kindergartens. It’s much easier to present a solution if you like it, and I liked it.” “We presented our experiences as pilot kindergarten to other kindergartens and that gives some ownership.”

DISCUSSION

In this section, I will discuss how different actors have experienced being a part of this project and tie that to the theory. I will also discuss what implications the findings might have for the co-creation approach. There are many factors that play a role in a project like this, from the culture in the organizations involved to individual beliefs and aspirations. First, I would like to reflect upon the kindergartens as an organization, then on how the project was set up, and finally what the participants experienced.

The organization

What is interesting to note is that the culture in the kindergartens is to be open to new things. From the interviews, I get the impression that the kindergartens often get directions from the administration, but the directions given are quite open. It seems like the municipality gives the kindergartens autonomy and expresses trust. In turn, the employees are more welcoming to try new solutions, because there is room to make the solutions you own. All interviewees, even the ones that had not attended a workshop, had the mentality that they had to try the new solutions, and try to make them work for them. Pierce et al. (2001) write that ownership can facilitate people being welcoming of changes if they are self-initiated, additive or evolutionary. It seems like the employees experienced the project as being one or more of these towards their work, which they have ownership to.

The issues of silo-mentality are not as pressing in kindergartens as it might be in other institutions because one kindergarten usually has full responsibility for one child’s journey. The only tendencies to silo-mentality reported is poor communication between different kindergartens. This affects the kindergartens’ possibility to learn from each other, and the parents will be affected by it if their child is transferred from one kindergarten to another. Still, it is not something that touches every parent’s experience, and with the new standardized dialog cards, transfers will be more predictable.

Project characteristics

Based on the definitions formulated by Sanders and Stappers (2008), this project is a co-creation project. The end users, the parents, were interviewed, but not included in the co-creation. There was

one ideation workshop, and one design workshop. At both of the workshops the participants seems to have been homogenous in terms of work and education. The nice thing about having similar participants is that there is less of a gap in terms of language and knowledge, but it comes at the expense of diversity. Would the ideas and solutions have been different if, for example, parents had been involved in the workshops? After all, one of the goals were to improve relations with parents so it would make sense to involve them. Still, involving parents would require more time and effort. The project was not very complex, and with the limitations of the tender, involving parents might have made the project more complex than it needed to be to solve the present challenge.

Experiences

All of the ones who had been at a workshop were very positive to the workshops. They all thought it was a good use of time, and that the workshops were constructive and informative. They said that they experienced the workshops as professional and engaging. One noted that “Anything was allowed to say”, and another that Comte very were motivating and engaged, and that they were open to suggestions. It seems like Comte managed to establish psychological safety at the workshops, by making an atmosphere where one could share any thoughts. I can only guess, but I think they managed it with a combination of tasks that forces everyone to contribute their thoughts and discuss ideas, and by encouraging open and sharing behavior as facilitators. Apart from Comte’s proficiency at hosting workshops, I think that there are two reasons the workshops went so well. First, the workshop participants were homogenous, so generally they spoke the same language and cared about the same things. Second, all the employees said that they are open to new ideas and solutions, and that they attended the workshops with an open mind.

According to Pierce et al. (2001), ownership is acquired through control, knowledge, and investment of effort, and makes people feel responsible for and entitled to information and control. This agrees with the experiences of the participants, but what is interesting is that the different interviewees have gotten ownership to the project in different ways. The project leader had ownership through this being her project, she has been in control, had knowledge and invested time and effort from the beginning. It is her job to do things like this, and she had a central role as coordinator between Comte and the kindergartens. The manager, on the other hand, cared a lot about the issue of having good relations with parents and had ownership to the topic from before. Since the project goal aligned with her own beliefs she seemed to automatically care about the project, and also feel responsible that the specific issue was solved in a satisfactory manner. The ped-leader who joined the design workshop said that she was a bit skeptical to the project before the workshop, but that the workshop made her agree to the importance of the issue. Given that she felt she was at the workshop to learn, it seems like knowledge and effort put into the workshop gave her a sense of ownership. Lastly, of the two ped-leaders who had not joined a workshop one was not entirely convinced while the other was positive. They were definitely the two with the least amount of ownership to the project. Still, both agreed that being able to share their experiences, provide feedback and being listened to was nice and gave them some ownership. This goes into self-determination theory. By being able to provide feedback, being listened to and acknowledged, they may have experienced increased autonomy, and by sharing their experiences they might have felt that they had competence about the solution.

Those who did not participate in the workshops wished they could have done so. After doing this case study, I think that designers who do co-creation should be aware of how being affected by a project without being involved from the beginning feels. Noticing that decisions are being made about your work situation without you present and being told what to do will be likely to diminish felt autonomy. One of the biggest challenges of co-creation is that including many people makes the

project more slow, expensive and complex, so it will not always be wise to have too many participants. When that is said, I think there is a lot to gain from being aware of how participants that are not involved from the beginning are included. One of the ped-leaders reflected on this in her interview. “[...] how do you inform about the project to people who have not been working on it from the beginning? ‘You are going to work with this, do you have any thoughts?’ You have to spend time explaining why.” From self-determination theory we have that you are more likely to be motivated if you think the goal is meaningful, so explaining why is a good idea, but I also think it is important to explain why they specifically are chosen. All the interviewees (apart from the project leader) said the same thing: “We were told we had been picked out to be part of a pilot project.” I did not get the impression that they had been told why. The manager noted that she though they had chosen her because of her engagement, knowledge and experience. I interpreted it as she had experienced being chosen as an acknowledgement, but she had not been told so. I think project leaders should answer the questions: “*Why am I doing this?*” and “*Why am I doing this?*” Informing about this might make being chosen feel more like an acknowledgement (autonomy supportive) rather than an order (not autonomy supportive).

From the interviews I get the impression that those who are affected by the project but not involved from the beginning feel like they are missing something, and want more information. Ped-leader: “Those of us who had not been on a workshop got very little information, we just got the tools and were told to use them.” One of the ped-leaders was wondering about the effectiveness of the information space, while the administration did not think the information space was that important after all. I do not know how people are affected by being surrounded by implemented solutions that are not followed up on, but according to one ped-leader it is sometimes frustrating not knowing whether the things they do actually have an impact and not getting a sense of closure. I think it is important that all participants of a project get information about the results, in order to give them closure. It could be interesting to test if regularly sharing summaries about the project with everyone affected could lessen the feeling of subjection and being left out. Still, you would run the risk of overinforming, which also can make people unmotivated.

An updated participation pyramid

In the review article, I concluded that participants could experience different levels of participation, and that the people responsible for a project should facilitate for a highest possible level (Mogstad, 2017). This conclusion was illustrated with a pyramid figure (Figure 3).



Figure 3 – Taken from (Mogstad, 2017, p. 9)

The pyramid is a hypothesis based on theory and some personal experiences, and is a simplification of complex relationships. I suggest that the figure should be understood in such a way that if participants are to stay engaged and motivated in a co-creation project for a prolonged period, they need to be at the top of the pyramid, at least some of the time.

From the interviews in this article, it seems like the manager was the one that was internally motivated the most. She was anxious that the dialog card was implemented in a good way and she cared a lot about the project. The project leader, I would place at the top of the pyramid too, although her motivation seemed to come more from wanting to improve the kindergarten generally than caring about one specific issue addressed by one of the solutions. The one ped-leader that had been to the design workshop seemed to be in the middle of the pyramid. She expressed ownership to the solutions and was enthusiastic about them.

There arises an issue with the triangle when I try to place the two last ped-leaders who had not participated in the workshops. Earlier, I wrote that they were not involved from the beginning, but the way I see it now, they were not involved directly in the co-creation. They were part of the project, they participated in testing the solutions and they provided feedback, but they did not join in the collective creativity. I think the experiences of employees that are not included in the co-creation are valuable to service designers, because they are affected by the project and they are going to be the ones using the final solutions. This means that they can be part of a resistance to the implementation, or even the project itself (Bowen et al., 2011). Additionally, looking from a moral perspective, designers should always strive to not negatively impact anyone while conducting service design. Therefore, I would like to add this aspect to the participation pyramid, and suggest that it be updated to Figure 4. By adding the 'Included' level to the pyramid, the pyramid slightly changes nature. Before, it only regarded how designers could facilitate participants to become more engaged. Now, it also addresses people who are not participants, but who nonetheless are included in the project in various ways, for example as testers, as has been reported in this study. The issues arising from these included participants are the ones mentioned earlier, that they may feel a lack of autonomy, lack of information, and a lack of closure. How to avoid this can be the subject of future studies.

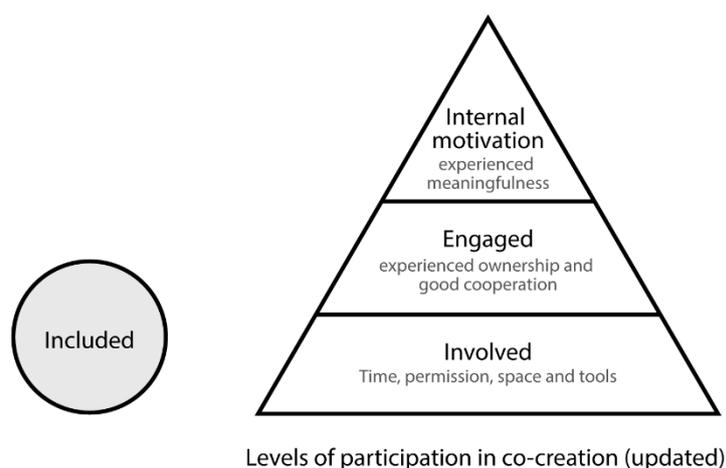


Figure 4 – original taken from (Mogstad, 2017, p. 9), updated by me

CONCLUSION

This case study has through interviews investigated how employees experienced being part of a co-creation project in a public service. Based on theory about motivation and ownership the results of the interviews have been discussed to infer implications for co-creation as a design approach. The conclusion is that these employees were generally positive to new solutions because it was experienced as a positive development. Participants who had not participated in the workshops wished that they had been included earlier, and when they eventually were involved this was not done in a satisfactory manner. They experienced a lack of information, and diminished autonomy because they were given a finished solution that they had to use. In addition, some experienced a lack of closure on the solution that was not followed up on by the administration. Based on these insight, I suggested that the Participation Pyramid I made in the review article should be updated to include employees that had been included, but not involved. I further suggest that designers look into how we can bring new participants on board in a good way, and give them closure when the project approaches its end.

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