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Evaluation of Local Development Processes in the ASP-project - a combination of different evaluation models

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Abstract

This paper is the last in a series of fourteen electronic publications about the Danish research project “Action competences in pedagogical work with socially endangered children and youths – effort and effect” (The ASP-project).

The material presented here is developed as part of the ASP-project and outlines a range of considerations concerning ways to evaluate effects and processes in a pedagogical interventions project as the ASP-project. Firstly, the paper examines the fundamental question: What is evaluation? Central elements of the concept of evaluation are discussed, and three types of evaluation are presented as particularly suitable to evaluate development processes in general and in the ASP-project which examines the implementation processes and effects of the ASP-intervention. The three types are: 1) *process evaluation*, 2) *competence evaluation* and 3) *effect evaluation*.

Secondly, the paper offers an outline of different types of evaluation and discusses whether to select between various types of evaluation or whether a combination of evaluation models is more constructive. Learning, development and effect constitute the underlying key concepts of the three models of evaluation presented in this paper. *Process evaluation* is about involving the employees in executing the effort and evaluating the correlations between the participants’ problem understandings, the effort and its implementation. The evaluation method must be able to capture the experiences of the processes and the content. In *competence evaluation* the purpose is to qualify the employees’ competences in handling the task. Thus, within this type of evaluation the employees who are in direct contact with the children are given the position as managers of the development of new ideas and strategies for the implementation of the task. The evaluation sheds light on how to increase the possibility of bringing the employees’ new ideas into play. The *effect evaluation* is a matter of investigating ‘what works’, i.e. the evaluation not only concerns whether something works but also why it works. The outline of the models seeks to offer a specific outline of models and methods to be used, further developed and applied in development projects in organisations and institutions. Moreover, the outline of the models concentrates on the process of developing the evaluation as a managerial and organisational tool for use in organisations.

Thirdly, the article recapitulates considerations of how effect evaluation can connect the aspect of change (as a consequence of the ASP-intervention) with the evaluations that are tied to the different research elements in the project.