LEAN AS A SOCIOMATERIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN GENDERED WELFARE WORK

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• RQ: How Lean is applied and how it affects public service work from a sociocultural point of view?

• DATA
  • Selected Lean textbooks
  • Lean expert interviews
  • Participating in Lean training events, workshops and classroom courses
  • Observing the Lean training of one hospital district
  • Interviews with the workers who participated the lean training
  • Follow-up interviews at workplaces (walking along)
What is Lean?

• Originated from Japanese automobile industry (Toyota Production System)

• Lean refers to several levels of work: management philosophy, model of management, organizationl doctrine, and practical tools

• Lean production has emerged in the 21st century as one of the modern organizational models of public service management for governments who struggle to do more for less
# LEAN (RE)ARRANGES PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN WELFARE WORK

## KNOWLEDGE IN WELFARE PROFESSIONS
- Situated professional knowledge
- Gendered, embodied and emotional knowledge
- Routinized knowledge and "practical sense" of how one should do work
- Hierarchical knowledge between professions
- Maintaining professional identities, cultures and dignities by protecting knowledge

## KNOWLEDGE IN LEAN MANAGEMENT
- Shared organizational knowledge: utilizes situated professional knowledge for organization’s value creation (teams)
- Standardized knowledge: breaks workers’ autonomy by transforming situated knowledge(s) into one "best practice"
- Scientific knowledge: measures the effects of new best practice in relation to the previous best practice or previous stage
- Disembodied and ungendered knowledge
SOCIOMATERIAL APPROACH
(ORLIKOWSKI 2007)

• The social and the material are constitutively entangled in organizational life
• Every organizational practice is always bound up with the material forms and spaces through which humans act and interact
• Organizational knowledge is produced and sustained through the relations of embodied human and non-human actors
Lean is conducted through assembling and coordinating of employees and work-related materialities by employing the mixture of lean principles and tools (methodologies).

- People must operate in multi-professional teams in order to find solutions for developing work practices and processes.
- People's attention is directed to different work-related materialities.
- The relationship between people and work-related materialities are governed through visual control.
(1) (RE)ARRANGING OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE: LEAN AS A COMMON SENSE

5S: Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain

I think it (5S) has been very good and practical way to start (the lean training); it is concrete, everyone understands it and amazing results have been gained by using it. It was an awesome learning experience when unit nurse and unit doctor unwrapped a situation that they needed more space for the nurse and the doctor to pass information into the book. And they were thinking that we cannot transform into square meters (...) Then they began to exploit 5S and ended up having a quiet and cozy booking room. They were clear and sensible issues (...) but one needed a common denominator (...) it is very easy for everyone to agree that it made everyone’s life better.

(An expert interviewee 1.)

https://www.creativesafetysupply.com/content/education-research/5S/index.html
“(2) (RE)ARRANGING PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE: LEAN AS AN OBSCURE ENGINEERING

“You build the whiteboard and the whole Lean seem to be reduced into it, and it is somehow so sticky and tangled and interesting to no-one, maybe because that it has been very difficult to invent interesting measures.”

“Then the midwife in charge comes and says that here you have the numbers of the day and now we go to work (...) I think this crystallises it, here you have the numbers, here we are because we are made to, and now we go back to real work and do the real things. There is no such culture here that the numbers of the day would be meaningful to people who work here.”

(An expert interviewee 2.)
SOME REFLECTIONS ON GENDER AND LEAN AS SOSIOMATERIALITY

• Sociomaterial approach provides tools for unpicking the taken for granted/naturilised assumptions about/of gendered welfare work and its "feminised nature"

• Knowledge production of/in lean may simultaneously stabilise and destabilise gendered professional working patterns, as well as disrupt and reproduce occupational boundaries between professions

• Sociomaterial approach provides a tool to grasp professional agency that is not (only) individually generated but happens in-between the embodied individuals, various material devices and flows of knowledge and information, and shows that these in-betweens can also be gendered in many ways, not only the actors

• Helps to understand the embodied load of welfare work (which is strongly female dominated)


THANK YOU!

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