Make sense of sensegiving - How external change agents make sense of a sector change

**Background knowledge**

A quality register is an automated and structured gathering of information about persons with the specific purpose of systematic and continuous development and securing of the quality of health care. The collected data can also be used in research, to produce statistics and to facilitate comparisons. The Swedish government has, together with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) signed a joint strategy concerning quality registers. The agreement is based on the vision that quality registers are widespread and well entrenched in all relevant parts of the Swedish health care.

**Local problem**

The poster (and the working-paper) deals with how a quality register (Senior alert) used external change agents to implement the register nation-wide. The largest challenge was to find relevant units within each affiliated organisation and to inspire concerned staff to work accordingly to the register. The external change agents functioned as sensegivers; their task was to influence the sensemaking of the staff.

**Intended improvement**

The basis for the poster (and the working paper) is an organization engaging external change agents to minimize the “implementation gap”. The intended improvement was that all relevant organizations started to use Senior alert systematically. The external change agents played an important role and this was at the time a new approach for spreading a quality register.

**Study question**

The purpose is to describe how external change agents make sense of their sensegiving. Additionally, the purpose is to describe how the sensemaking emerges over time. The research questions are twofold:

- How do external change agents make sense of their sensegiving?
- How does the sensemaking develop over time?

**Methods**

This is a qualitative, inductive, longitudinal interview study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The primary data collection technique is semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2003). The external change agents had differing employment time and to ensure the longitude aspects of the study, only change agents that participated at the first interview, and still had an employment one year later, were selected for the study. All together eight external change agents and 16 interviews were included. Each interview was ended by the reflective question “What is Senior alert, actually?”, and this is a key-question in the study. All interviews are transcribed and will be analysed by using conventional content analysis.

**Preliminary results**

In the years 2010-2012 all county councils/regions and 280 of 290 municipalities affiliated to the register and the numbers of persons working with Senior alert increased from approx. 1000 to 18 000. Preliminary data indicate that the external change agent change their sensemaking over time. The tendency seems to be that the change agents at the time of the first interview emphasize an organizational perspective for their sensemaking and that they at the time of the second interview use an elderly-perspective for their sensemaking. Additionally they come to use fewer and more similar words, for their sensemaking. The next step in this study will be to complete the analysis and to continue with discussion, interpretations and conclusions.

**Reference**