

Research and Change

Call for abstracts – Nr. 2

Theme: What kinds of knowledge are needed in the professions, and what kinds of research are necessary?

In the wake of public sector reforms and other societal reforms affecting Western societies in recent decades, many professions and professional practices have been affected by change. The changes are the results of a broader societal development, from the late 90s onwards, where policy development in the public and private sector has been influenced by discourses of the so-called “knowledge society”, “innovation society” or “competitive state”. The consequential policy development is related to a specific understanding of “knowledge” as closely linked to natural science and research, expressed in terms of “evidence-based practice”, “what works” and other terms referring to “secure” and proved knowledge. In the welfare professions, this trend has had a number of effects. It has led to increased political focus on quantitative, unambiguous quality standards and measures, which are linked to performance indicators and budgetary logics. It has also led to more research in the fields of the welfare professions, increased focus on theorising knowledge and practice within these professions, and an increasing emphasis on theoretical content in a number of professional study programmes aimed at teachers, educators, nurses, social workers etc. This indicates that the “knowledge discourse” has brought about a large number of tangible effects and changes.

Over recent years, however, there have been signs of an increasing understanding of the limitations and problems related to a singular focus on standardised quality measures. The understanding of the knowledge and innovation embedded in the fact that the social world is created and recreated in ongoing processes of interaction and development has led to a rising interest in types of research that can capture and inform processual, social knowledge. The professions need knowledge that is experience-based and tested in practice to inform their actions, and they need knowledge that can be converted in more analogue and interpretation-based ways in practice in order to create meaningful change that is experienced as valuable. However, the professions are also still under pressure to deliver documentation and evaluations based on standardised measures in order to meet policy demands and to legitimise their way of working. So, the question is, how can these demands and this need be combined with the meaningful insights that are generated in the practice of the professions? What types of knowledge do the professions need in order to conduct their respective practices, and what role does research play in bringing forth that knowledge? Interpretations of the role of research in the development, change and change of practice are broad and diverse, and vary considerably across Scandinavia. Also the way we understand knowledge, development and change vary, and thus also the way in which research is conceived across the Scandinavian countries. The various questions and themes presented above will be the theme of issue no. 2 of the journal *Research and Change*.

For this issue of *Research and Change*, we would like to receive articles that empirically, theoretically and methodologically discuss and illustrate the relationship between research and knowledge within the research tradition in question. We are looking for contributions that reveal the challenges that arise when research reaches into, out to, or towards practice. The positions and demarcation lines adopted in this type of change-oriented research are many – and we welcome them all. It is essential that the articles submitted focus on the relationship between research and practice, and especially that themes and issues related to the topic of knowledge are addressed. We are thus asking for articles that discuss the following:

- What types of knowledge do the professions need?
- How does research contribute to the development of both contextual and general knowledge?
- Can we inform processual knowledge by means of research, and if so, how? And, what consequences may be implied, when we attempt to inform social change processes by means of research?
- What role does the demand for evidence, standardized performance measures and demand for documentation play for the development of knowledge?
- Where do normative and descriptive aspects of knowledge production and research belong, and where do the discussions of these aspects take place?
- What implications do research projects have in respect of value questions, and vice-versa: what implications do value questions have in respect of research projects?
- Can interactive research approaches offer alternatives to the paradigm of evidence-based practice and vice versa?
- How can change be conceptualised and inform practice in a general sense?
- Do we have examples of evidence-based practice through practice-based evidence?
- What quality criteria have to be developed in order to do research and develop knowledge about effects of change?
- With what aims and goals do we initiate change, and what role does research play?
- At what point is a change evident, and how do we evaluate this? Can we create a framework for evidence of change?

About the journal *Research and Change*

The journal, *Research and Change*, is a new double blind peer reviewed journal, published twice a year and covering specific themes in an open access web-based format. The journal will be published by Cappelen Damm and is a collaborative project involving Scandinavian university colleges and universities.

The journal will publish articles in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and English.

Research and Change calls for and publishes contributions that explicitly seek to elucidate the relationship between research and changes in practice. The journal publishes contributions that take a critical and investigative approach to what the practice relevance of research actually is, should be and could be. *Research and Change* takes an explicit and investigative stance on internal and external critical professional views on the value and contribution of research within the knowledge triangle of research, education and practice.

Basically, the journal aims to improve analytic tools, theories and methods that critically, and with a view to change, examine and discuss the contribution of research to innovation, learning and development through the collaborative sharing of knowledge between research and practice. This includes empirical and theoretical analyses of the actual or potential contribution of such collaboration to the possibility of more radical social, cultural, educational or societal change.

Research and Change is primarily concerned with elucidating the relationship between research and development, learning or change within the welfare professions. Thus, articles that examine or further qualify the importance of research for change in connected fields – such as organisation, working life, culture or design – may also be submitted.

Articles submitted for publication in the journal may illuminate the relationship between research and change empirically, theoretically, philosophically, or in terms of methodology. *Research and Change* aims to publish research based on a tradition for working explicitly with the idea of change (such as action research, participatory research, collaborative research, community development and co-creation), as well as qualitative and quantitative research projects that introduce new types of practice-relevant scrutiny of data, methods and theory.

Review guidelines

In view of the above aims and the specific theme of each issue, reviewers are asked to comment on and rate the validity and clarity of the contribution, and how coherently it presents the knowledge production involved. In addition, reviewers are asked to assess the quality of the contribution based on the following quality criteria:

Practical Relevance

Does the article present research demonstrating explicit theoretical, methodological or empirical reflection, which is relevant to practice and which contributes new knowledge about what the value, relevance or importance of research actually is, should be, or may become in terms of the development or change of practice?

Forms of Cooperation

Are actual or potential instances of collaboration between research and practice presented and analysed as part of the research – or as relevant and reflective activities related to it? Are the role of research and its potential importance for actual cooperation with practice sufficiently clear and reflectively argued?

With a view to change

Does the article clearly state the contribution or significance of the research presented to progress, change or learning in the professions, or in related social, cultural, organisational or societal fields? Does the article pass on essential approaches or contributions to solving or ameliorating problems or unacceptable conditions found in practice?

Theoretical and methodological perspectives

Does the article contribute to the theoretical, scientific or methodological development or investigation of the interaction between research, education and practice? Can the research presented enrich, or present new angles on, such interaction, above and beyond the scope of the research itself?

Editorial Team

The editorial team is responsible for the journal's profile and for the composition of the editorial group responsible for each thematic issue. The editorial team consists of eight to ten editors, of which one or two will be chief editors for a period of four years at a time. The editorial team meets twice a year.

The editorial team currently consists of the following:

Editor in Chief: Martin Bayer, Head of Research, UCC, Denmark

Ditte Tofteng - Docent, UCC, Denmark

Mia Husted - Docent, UCC, Denmark

Eva Schwencke - Associate Professor / Head of Research, Oslo University College and Akershus, Norway

Janne Dam Madsen - Professor, University College in South-East Norway, Norway

Julie Borup Jensen, Associate Professor, University of Aalborg, Denmark

Olav Eikeland, Professor, University College in Oslo and Akershus, Norway

Hilde Hiim, Professor, University College in Oslo and Akershus, Norway

Ann-Christine Larsson, Project Manager, Norrköping Municipality, Sweden

Ewa Gunnarson, Professor, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

Editorial Assistant: Signe Kierkegaard Cain, Science Journalist, UCC, Denmark

Formalities

Abstracts (1 page at the most) addressing the above themes and questions should be sent to the theme editors.

Mail: Julie Borup Jensen - jbjen@learning.aau.dk

Abstracts can be submitted in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and English.

Deadline for abstracts: December 8, 2017.

Deadline for final articles for assessment is: April 1, 2018.

For more information: <https://forskningogforandring.dk/index.php/fof>

Best regards,

Julie Borup Jensen, Associate Professor, University of Aalborg, Denmark

Hilde Hiim, Professor, University College in Oslo and Akershus, Norway

Ewa Gunnarson, Professor, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

(Editors of this issue)