

The Science Centre Health and Technology; a Case Study of a unique arena for progressive health care education, welfare technology and service innovation

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Introduction

Most higher education institutions have taken initiatives to meet the future needs of welfare technology implementation, service innovation and new educational initiatives in the health- and care services. However, many institutions struggle to move beyond pilot studies, to actively contribute in both welfare technology innovation and service innovation and thereby establish long lasting results. The Science Centre Health and Technology opened in 2012 in Drammen, Norway, constituting an arena where researchers, educators and students interact and cooperate with public and private working life as well as users and patient organizations. The Centre offers education ranging from presentations and work-shops to higher education programs within health and welfare technology, applying clinical- and simulation training and web-based learning facilities. The Centre develops and implements welfare technology, service innovation and social entrepreneurship. Research is conducted related to the activities in the Centre. This case study describes why and how Buskerud University College (BUC) has developed the Science Centre Health and Technology through a partnership with public sector and private companies. Research questions are: 1) why did BUC develop a Science Centre; 2) how did strategies and characteristics of BUC contribute, 3) how did national, regional and local political strategies and development contribute in this process; 4) how has BUC contributed to regional development of new educational initiatives, development of welfare technology and service innovation through the preceding process and establishment of the Science Centre Health and Technology and 5) what are the success factors?

Materials and Methods

We use a mixed methods case study design and collect data through publicly available data, review of documentation and interviews. The main data sources are reports and minutes of meetings from 2004 until today. Key persons will be interviewed to validate the findings from the document analyses and elaborate on questions raised through the analyses. Meetings has been held with management of BUC, employees of the Faculty of health sciences, the partners such as regional authorities, municipality administration and health and care service, technological developers, regional health trust, regional welfare authorities, funding agencies and policy makers such as Innovation Norway, Norwegian Research Council, politi-

cians and users such as students, health care professionals, user/patient organizations and visitors to the Science Centre.

Results

Preliminary document analysis reveal that BUC has had a strategic focus on health innovation, creating a new way of cooperating with regional partners in the Drammen region since 2004, in concordance with national and regional strategies. Data from the Database for Statistics on Higher Education shows that BUC has a good production of students, one of the highest academic levels among the employees and a high production of health and care research, a high number of master programs developed in regional partnerships and a high degree of innovation and entrepreneurial activities. BUCs initiative to and participation in the Arena Health Innovation Network has been of great importance both for the realization of the Science Centre and for regional development. The Science Centre Health and Technology was built as an entirely new entity housing a “mini health Norway” including hospital wards, x-ray lab, a mental health clinic and a (private) innovation apartment. BUC has initiated a number of research projects related to development and implementation of technology in municipalities and service innovation. Several new educational programs and learning activities have been introduced. And finally, a large number of municipalities and users have visited the Science Centre in order to learn more about welfare technology.

Discussion

After the opening in 2012, the Science Centre Health and Technology seems to be a unique arena connecting partners in a quadruple helix setting. Although obstacles have been reported, BUC is perceived as quite successful and effective to partners and students in the role as facilitator and co-producer of health- and care innovation and educational innovation, working through the Science Centre in concordance with national and regional needs and strategies.

Acknowledgments

We thank the research participants for their contribution and support.

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