Chapter 13

e-Welfare as a Client Driven Service Concept

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Abstract. This paper describes the processes which made the development of e-welfare services with and for elderly people possible. This kind of development process is seen important because of the increasing number of elderly people and economical challenges, a welfare service sector has to face. We believe that by applying technology new solutions can be found. It means that different experts learn to work together and it also demands new kinds of environments. We also see that students in professional higher education should be involved from the beginning in the development of new kinds of technology based welfare services, service concepts and client driven working models. We, at first, introduce the model of the new kind of environment as a meeting place and then proceed to describe an action model in which an authentic research and development project forms a learning environment, and in which all the participants are seen as equal partners and learners.

The research and development project, Going Home, will be used as an example of how technology based e-welfare services can be designed with and for elderly people. In the Going Home project the two channel interactive Caring TV forms a technical platform for e-welfare services. The research findings show of how elderly people become more active and responsible for their own welfare status. Virtual guidance and counselling services according to the conceptions of elderly people are identified and the client driven programme production process is described. At the end the indicators of quality of life are presented based on elderly people’s own descriptions.

Keywords: e-welfare services, a client driven service concept, a centre of welfare competence, Learning by Developing action model, Caring TV, the indicators of quality of life.

1 Background

1.1 The Challenge in Elderly – The Demand of New Kind of Competence Sharing

The population is expected to grow in all major areas of Finland (Jokiranta 2006). The highest growth will take place in the 65—74 age group. This will create a significant increase in the proportion of senior citizens in the population. It also means an increase in costs in the health and social sector (e.g. Aromaa & Koskinen 2002). As the population ages, the challenges of elderly and geriatric care are a central area of development for private and public social service and health providers. Some
estimates indicate that more than 80% of daily services needed by senior citizens already come from outside the public sector.

In future, there will be more and more healthy, capable senior citizens. Solutions for them may consist of welfare technology applications related, for instance, to accommodation, daily life, information and service development. Promoting the well-being and resources of the elderly requires the competence of a multidisciplinary team of experts, whose work is based on the expectations and situations of clients and their friends and relatives. Increasingly, senior citizens want to and are able to live at home for as long as possible, despite chronic illness or decreased functional ability, which means that more tailored welfare services are needed in the home. The availability and compatibility of such services contribute to coping at home. More efficient productivity presupposes innovative technological applications about which unanimity prevails among innovative service designers. As Hyppönen (2004) has pointed out, the research and development of technology based service concepts are prioritized in welfare sector.

The Information Technology offers many possibilities in the field of welfare. The challenge is in creating possibilities for technology and welfare experts to share their knowledge and competences in order to arise and improve new ideas for the development of service innovations. We will use the Well Life Center (WLC) as an example of a new kind of environment built for the integration of welfare, technology, and business competences.

The WLC has been built based on theories of how new professional knowledge can be created.

Professional expertise is found to be built of knowing (evidence based knowledge), understanding, and doing and situation management. The orientations of professional competence building are identified as doer’s, client’s, researcher’s and working processes’ orientations. The concept orientation, in this context, is defined as the way a person perceives the phenomenon of learning in the meaningful way (Boekaerts 1996). The types of knowledge in professional competence building, in turn, are identified as 1) theoretical knowledge, 2) knowledge embedded in skills and abilities, 3) moral knowledge and 4) experiential knowledge. (Raij 2000, 2003.)

In the studies of knowledge creation within an enterprise, Nonaka has introduced the idea of Ba, which is a meeting place as a physical, spiritual and virtual place. In meeting middle-up-down people, in an enterprise, have a possibility to explicit tacit knowledge by sharing their experiences, finding new, improving and duplicating. Interaction leads to create new knowledge. (e.g. Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka 2000.) By applying the idea of a meeting place to the research findings, mentioned above, it was possible to construct the theoretical frame for the environment where technology based innovations are developed for and with clients. One of the questions which this raised was who were supposed to meet if we wish to create new professional, welfare related knowledge and new technology based service innovations? The answer was found from the orientations of professional competence building as welfare and technology doers, researchers, clients and service processes. In this way the types of knowledge in professional competence building are also present. Participants bring their own clients as well as their activities with services to be present in the meeting place. A value base was identified as aiming at a human being’s good. (Figure 1).