It is not all about the money

– A study on factors that have an impact on perceived quality in public sector
Abstract

Title: It’s not all about the money - A study on factors that have an impact on perceived quality in public sector

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Key words: Public organisation, perceived quality, structure, collaboration, new public management.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify perceived quality in service among managers in the public sector. The study has been limited to look at the service taking place between the meal and property service department in a town district and the operating departments in use of the services, i.e. preschool, school and elderly homes.

Methodology: The thesis has an interpretative approach. The data collection has been carried out using qualitative method, and the results have been analysed using thematic analysis.

Theoretical framework: The theoretical framework consists of theories about collaboration, organisational structure and measurements of quality.

Results: The results are extracted from two informant interviews and six respondent interviews.

Conclusion: The quality in service in the studied town district depends on five factors: collaboration, organisation structure, flexibility, division of responsibility and autonomy/mandate. In order to provide the operating core, i.e. the units, with suitable quality in service, a balance between these factors must be considered. Due to that public departments do not enjoy the same liberty of choice of suppliers as private departments do, collaboration is of greater importance within public organisations.
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1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce you to the general background of this thesis. Furthermore it will provide you with the knowledge about the new public management-tradition, a phenomenon that has a great impact on public organisations today. Finally the problem and purpose will be presented.

1.1. Background

When paying it a little attention, it is easy to see that there are organisations around us in every part of the society. Private companies as well as public municipalities are organised because of the general belief that organisation leads to efficiency of some sort. Within private companies, the most common goal is to acquire maximal economic profit, which requires a cost-efficient organisation. A public organisation does also have incentives to be cost-efficient in order to not waste the taxpayers’ money, but it is not its singular aim. The public organisation is in addition driven by the values of humanity, such as providing the concerned citizens with the opportunities to live a tolerable life. The private and public sector in Sweden has gradually been merging with each other, due to certain reforms permitting private companies to operate within the domains that the public sector is responsible for. This has naturally led to that the awareness of cost efficiency, and that the public sector to a certain extent is operating in an area exposed to competition, has increased. The public organisations have had to adjust their activities to changed circumstances, and maximise the use of their limited resources. This phenomenon has been named New Public Management (NPM). Below a short description will be given of NPM, for the reader to understand the conditions that the public sectors are operating under today.

1.1.1. New public management and new public governance

New Public Management (NPM) names the transmission of corporate-inspired ideas from the private sector to the public sector. NPM has been the dominating mode of the public administration management since the start of the 21st century, and its ideas have been implemented to a great extent in the public sectors (Osborne, 2012). According to Røvik (2008), the seven main practices of NPM involves development of new and often
decentralised forms of management, new achievement-based reward systems, new systems for management by objective and accounting, exposition to competition, management by contracts, implementation of new systems for evaluation and the transition from an administration based to a rather corporation based organisational identity. However, this form of managing public organisations has been subject to criticism. The critics argue that NPM does not take the complexity within the public organisation into account; that public organisation does not look the same as the private dito (ibid.). This might have an impact on the democratic processes that public organisations are based upon, but that not necessarily have to be considered within the private sector.

Given this criticism, a new tradition within public administration has been suggested by several researchers (e.g. Osborne, 2012). It is called New Public Governance, and aims to take on a more holistic approach towards the public administration management. In a press release from Finansdepartementet (2014), it is stated that the Swedish Government has noticed the negative effects that has come with the implementation of New Public Management lately, and are signalling that they will take measures to develop new steering models for the public administration. The aim for these new models of governance is that the knowledge and work ethics of the professionals shall be in focus. The Swedish Government further expresses that when the professionals of the public sectors get more mandates to act in accordance with their professional knowledge, the quality within the public activities will increase.

1.2. Problem discussion

As stated, the public organisations have had to take measures to meet requirements from stakeholders and keep up with increasing competition. Such measures might imply several unforeseen effects, with both positive and negative consequences as a result. The inspiration to this thesis has its basis in the problem formulation made by the Meal and Property service department (M&P) within the town district Majorna-Linné in the city of Gothenburg, Sweden. In 2011, the city of Gothenburg went through a reorganisation where 21 different town districts were merged into 10 (Göteborgs stad, 2009). This resulted in a new form of structure within the organisation (see appendix 8.1.1). When the town districts were small, many of the departments within the same town district had their office placed in the same building.

1 As authors of this text, we recommend the reader to study this organisational chart carefully to facilitate further reading.
This facilitated the possibility of informal communication across the different domains (Personal communication: Department manager M&P, 2015-04-02). Within the new organisation of town districts, the offices of the different domains are spread out over the district (ibid.). Furthermore, a large organisation implies not only a wide geographical spread, but also several levels of hierarchies, organised both vertically and horizontally. Within the specific town district of Majorna-Linné, that this research project has studied, a complex of problems has arisen because of the loss of platforms for informal communication. After the reorganisation the department manager of M&P has experienced that certain issues have been left unsolved, such as exactly what budget model to be used when allocating the resources of M&P, and how cross-department communication should be conveyed regarding the same resources. The department manager of M&P stresses that there is a lack of a decision making-process where the persons that will have to be responsible towards users and relatives of users are included. In the case of the town district Majorna-Linné, these persons would be the unit managers, such as the principals of the schools and superintendents of the nursing homes. There has to be an agreement on the quality between the M&P and the departments these unit managers belong to, that is according to available budget and that everyone can accept. In order to do this the manager of M&P requests a picture of what the unit managers consider as good service.

Although this problem originates from a specific case, it describes a situation that can be identified in several types of organisations within the public sector. The general purpose of the town districts is to provide the citizens with opportunities to live a tolerable life (Göteborgs stad, 2009). This purpose is valid for several other public, politically driven organisations as well. In addition, this goal has to be reached with the limited resources that are provided by the taxpayers. Thus the departments within a public organisation have demands on them coming from several ways - both from the controlling political committee, the tax paying citizens, and the users of the services.

Our society is constantly influenced by different ideas. According to the new institutional theory organisations cannot only be working towards being cost effective, but they are also looking for legitimacy in different ways (Røvik, 2008). An example of demands from the surroundings are different the trends emerging within the society that the organisation must take into account in order to be legitimate (ibid.). However, one must remember that there are always different opinions from various stakeholders about prevailing trends, and different
kinds of interests and ideas that put pressure on the organisation. At the same time, these ideas must also cohere with rules and regulations from authorities. The public organisation has to manage all of them in a successful way to stay legitimate - and how shall that be done with limited resources?

Many organisations are organised with support functions, in order to facilitate for the operating departments to focus on their core business. However, from the user’s perspective, it is the unit that provides the public service that is the responsible one, regardless of how the public organisation is structured internally. The units are in the “front line” towards the users. According to servant leadership theory (see e.g. Hunter 2013) it is therefore required that the whole organisation above the “front line” in a hierarchical structure should aim to support the professionals working closest to the ones using the products or services provided, in this case the citizens.

1.3. Purpose and research question

Based on that a public organisation’s aim is to support the units in the “front line” to fulfil their task in the best possible way, it is interesting to look at what is perceived as qualitative service in such support. The purpose of this study is therefore to identify perceived quality in service among managers in the public sector.

In order to fulfil this purpose, following research questions has been formulated:

1. **What factors have an impact on perceived quality of service in a public organisation?**
2. **How can these factors be treated from a collaborative and structural perspective?**

2. Theoretical framework

*The theory chapter presents the main tools for analysis that is used to meet the purpose of the thesis. The main theoretical framework used includes measurement of quality, structure of organisations and collaboration, and is presented below. Measuring quality will not be used as a theory for analysis, but will rather help the reader to understand how quality can be measured.*
2.1. Measuring quality

When delivering services it is important to cover the quality in the service. The purpose of this study is to cover the experience and perception of quality, perceived by staff. If the staff is not satisfied or feel stressed about their situation, it may result in a poor deliverance of public services (Statskontoret, 2011). Below, Statskontoret’s definition of quality is given, together with different measurements of quality. These are the definitions that will be used in this thesis. Finally the reasons to examine perceived quality are presented.

The definition of quality

There are several definitions of quality, made by as well researchers as authorities. The article “Förutsättningar för en samlad och systematisk uppföljning av kvalitet, produktivitet och effektivitet i offentlig sektor” (“Conditions for an integrated and systematic monitoring of quality, productivity and efficiency in public sector”) by Statskontoret (2011), uses an internationally recognised definition of quality: "All the combined properties of an object or phenomenon that gives its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs" (ibid. p. 25). To exemplify, it is the same definition as used by the international organisation of standardisation, ISO, which task is to guarantee certain quality. Quality can be a subjective concept with different meanings in different contexts. Researchers cannot agree whether quality is a useful concept to evaluate the public sector, but they are also critical to continuous follow-up and measuring itself or whether it is a waste of resources (ibid.). Quality of the public sector can be measured in two dimensions, to define low and high quality. The first dimension is about where in the government operations one should seek efficiency measure and the second dimension concerns the observed and perceived quality. The dimension that is prevailing for this section of the essay is about the observed and perceived quality. Both types of quality, i.e. both perceived and observed quality should be observed in order to evaluate and study the concept of quality (ibid.).

Observed and perceived quality

Observed quality can be defined as the quality that can be measured or rated, e.g. by rating the grades of schoolchildren or rating the number of staff at a nursing home. Perceived quality is instead based on perceptions, experiences or references of a particular person. In addition, perceived quality can be described from two different perspectives, a general that can be described as the opinions of users or politicians and one perspective based on the opinions of
the staff of a profession (Ibid.). Statskontoret (2011) describes a system of evaluation and measurement system for measuring quality. The easiest is to measure the observed quality and it is therefore reasonable to spend more resources on it. But to get a clear picture of the entire organisation is also required to view the perceived quality which is more difficult to measure.

One difference between goods and services is that a good is an object, while a service is defined by an event between the provider and the recipient of the service. Thus, the service recipient influences the quality of a particular service. Therefore, the service quality can be determined in large part by a subjective perception. This means that there are various subjective definitions of good quality within the public sector. Healthcare is highlighted as a good example of a sector where the application of the two measurements of quality is important for defining the best treatment. The observed quality can be seen as “an objectively necessary but not always sufficient condition for high quality of care” (ibid. p. 28). It means that using observed quality is necessary, but does not give a sufficient basis for high quality in the health care service. Thus also subjective perceptions of quality have to be studied.

2.2. Structure of organisations

To get a picture of an organisation, several different aspects can be studied. In this thesis Henry Mintzberg’s theories of structures will be applied. Mintzberg’s theories can be applicable to several different types of organisations as it gives an image of the system of the organisation, and how different types of organisations are coordinated and governed. Below, Mintzberg’s most important contribution in organisation theory will therefore be presented. This framework will later on be used to analyse the relation between Meal and Property service and its users in Majorna-Linné.

2.2.1. Division of tasks and responsibilities

Mintzberg (1983) argues that an organisation usually is divided in five analytical parts, but this classification also depends of the character of the organisation and may vary by different types of organisations (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2012). The organisation is divided into operating core, middle line, strategic apex, support staff and technostructure (Mintzberg, 1983) (See picture in appendix 8.1.4). These five groups grow as the organisation evolves, grows and changes (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2012).
The operating core
The operating core consists of the staff that performs the basic work related directly to the production of products and services. It may relate to tasks about everything from producing a specific product to offer services as cutting hair, educate students or curing illness. The operating core is the division most affected by standardisation. The degree of standardisation may however vary depending of the type of profession and the nature of the work (Mintzberg, 1983).

The technostructure
The more the organisation grows, the more increases the need for standardisation. The staff working with this process is called analysts and they are found in the technostructure. They are outside the hierarchy and they can be called a second administrative division of labour. Mintzberg means that by substituting the manager’s role in supervising the staff by standardisation, the staff in the technostructure weakens the role of the manager (ibid.).

Support staff
The support staff is the division in an organisation that usually does not affect the standardisation but has the task to support and serve the other functions in the organisation. They are the staff that support the functions and activities that are essential to the purpose of the organisation. Examples of support functions are mailservice, cafeteria, cleaning etc. The support function has often been ignored and lumped together with the functions in the technostructure and are often labelled as staff to support the operating core. But an important difference between the technostructure and support functions is that the support function cannot be looked upon as a function that steers other bodies or gives advice to other functions, which is the case for the technostructure (ibid.).

Strategic apex
The people with the overall responsibility of the organisation are found in the strategic apex, together with their supporting staff such as assistants, secretaries etc. An executive committee is an example to be found in the strategic apex. “The strategic apex is charged with ensuring that the organisation serves its mission in an effective way, and also that it serves the needs of those who control or otherwise have power over the organisation (…)” (ibid., p. 13). The mission of the strategic apex is apart from supervision, “to allocate resources, issue work orders, authorize major decisions (…) design and staff the organisation” (ibid., p. 13). The
strategic apex is also in charge of the relations with the environment and the development of the strategy of the organisation (ibid.).

The middle line
The middle line is the connecting body between the operating core and the strategic apex. This is where managers with formal authority are found. The larger an organisation becomes, the more dependent it is of its managers for supervision. Small organisations can get along with a single manager, who is found in the strategic apex, but as the organisation grows, the need for supervision and monitoring increases. Thus a hierarchy will evaluate as the organisation grows. In this hierarchy, the middle line managers have knowledge about and perform tasks in the working procedure that are considered to be both above and under him or her. An important duty of the manager is to convey information from the strategic apex to the operating core and from the operating core to the strategic apex. Each middle line manager must be able to handle information from both the organisations’ staff, from other managers, analysts and from people outside of the organisation (ibid.).

2.2.2. The ideal of typical organisation forms
Mintzberg (1983) has five basic configurations on how to classify an organisation. These are the simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalised form and adhocracy. Mintzberg hereby contributes with a help on how to view and analyse the organisations of this thesis.

The simple structure
The simple structure is based on direct supervision. The strategic apex is a key part. This system is normally recognised in small organisations with simple systems and in a dynamic environment. Typically, an organisation that can be recognised as an organisation with a simple structure usually has little or no technostructure and a loose division of labour. Most small organisations go through a phase of being a simple structure through their first years as an organisation (ibid.).

The machine bureaucracy
The work in the machine bureaucracy is characterised of being standardised and with repetitive work tasks. The key part of the organisation is the technostructure. Mintzberg
describes this structure as the structure with most similarities with Max Weber’s first described structure. It has standardised responsibilities, qualifications and communication channels and a clearly defined hierarchical structure. The machines bureaucracy has a “(...) relatively centralized power for decision making; and an elaborate administrative structure (...)” (ibid., p. 164). Mintzberg further discusses the most important tasks of managers; they are supposed to be able to handle disturbances that may arise within the operating core. They are supposed to work in a liaison role with the staff of the technostructure by analysing the activities of the operating core. These tasks require personal contact which limits the number of people that can be supervised in an effective manner (ibid.).

**The professional bureaucracy**

The professionalised bureaucracy is normally based on standardisation of skills, which implies that the coordination of work is based on the specific, professional education or training the employees have received in their educations. This leads to standardisation and decentralisation at the same time. The operating core is the key part in a professional bureaucracy. The work in this type of organisation is often complex and require a higher education. The skills and knowledge of the operating staff therefore become essential for the function of the organisation (ibid.).

**The divisionalised form**

The divisionalised form is based on standardisation of output with the middle line as the key part of the organisation. One important difference between the divisionalised form and the other structural organisational forms is that the divisionalised form is not formed like a hierarchical structure from the strategic apex to the operating core. It is rather organised in a way where each and every division has its own structure. This structure can be recognised in diversified markets and is most used in the private sector of the industrialised economy (ibid.).

**Adhocracy**

The adhocracy is based on mutual adjustment in the organisation, and its support staff is the key part in the organisation. The adhocracy can be found in complex and dynamic environments characterised by sophisticated innovations. This is common in innovative environments where group projects in sophisticated teams work in project forms (ibid).
2.2.3. Concluding the functioning of the organisation

When studying an organisation and its structure, its organisational chart can be helpful to get an overview image of the organisation. However many organisational theorists claims that the organisational chart do not provide a clear picture of the organisation and that it does not show what is really happening in the organisation. Many organisations have important channels of communication and many relationships that cannot be seen on the chart. The organisation chart is still however important in the organisation analysis (ibid., 1983). There are multiple other ways of organising an organisation. Mintzberg mentions five different ways, where the organisational chart (or the ornigram as he calls it) of formal authority, is the one that will be used in the analysis of this thesis (See picture in appendix 8.1.5). I.e. the formal organisation chart of Majorna-Linné will be studied in the analysis.

2.3. Collaboration

Below, some definitions and purposes of collaboration, as well as some related requirements and difficulties with it, will be presented. As an alternative to the type of hierarchical and slightly authoritative organisation that was useful in the industrial revolution with its heterogeneous, unskilled and uneducated population, the collaborative organisation has been suggested (Kraus, 1980). In the public sector, collaboration has been brought out as the universal solution of how organisations should operate, and collaboration is sometimes described as the new form of working within the welfare sector (Lindberg, 2009). Therefore theories about collaboration will be used in this study.

2.3.1 Definitions of collaboration

Collaboration can be defined in several ways. William Kraus define it as: “(...) a cooperate venture based on shared power and authority. It is non-hierarchical in nature. It assumes power based on knowledge or expertise as opposed to power based on role or role function. It utilizes theory Y-assumptions about people.” (Kraus, 1980, p.19). The theory Y will be developed further down in this chapter. The researcher Berth Danermark describes collaboration as: "One always collaborates about something with a specific purpose" (Danermark, 2004, p.22), while Chris Huxham and Siv Vangen defines it as: “...any situation in which people are working across organisational boundaries towards some positive end"
(Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p.4). According to the so called “Storstadsutredningen” ("The big city report") the definition of collaboration goes: "Collaboration is what is happening between the public authorities, organisations and administrations at organisational level, but also between individuals and authorities, organisations and administrations." (Lindberg, 2009, p.14). A simpler, more generic definition comes from Kajsa Lindberg who explains that collaboration is about doing things together for a common purpose (Lindberg, 2009). Within collaboration theory, the collaboration between two different organisations is usually assumed. However, the theory applies for different departments in the same organisation as well. The organisational principles and policies might not differ appreciably between departments within the same organisation, but informally there might be different perspectives ruling within the different departments of an organisation.

2.3.2. The purpose of collaboration

The challenges that organisations face today differ to a great extent from what the organisations operating during the industrial revolution had to deal with. Today, the difficulty for an organisation is to serve social needs rather than its own needs. A problem arises when the institutions are more focused on serving its own interests rather than the social needs it is constructed to serve. The needs as well as the philosophy of society changes throughout time, but the institutions do not (Kraus, 1980). The issue today is therefore to manage the organisation in a way that suits the modern society. An example of collaboration can be that people meet to discuss a problem that they cannot solve alone, and to share knowledge (Lindberg, 2009). Hence it is believed that collaboration creates synergy effects, and that collaboration between two or more organisations can create more than the aggregated result of the organisations working on their own (Huxham, 2003). Kraus (1980) discusses the collaborative model and means that it provides a framework for organising the social system of an organisation and that it strengthens the individual development of the staff or people in the organisation.

Furthermore three arguments for collaboration are presented by Lindberg (2009). These are ideological and moral, economic, and finally knowledge-based. Primarily, within the ideological and moral arguments lie the rule of law- and the democratic aspects. The moral argument is used in the argumentation for that collaboration is the only way to address complex social problems (Huxham et.al., 2000). As regards the rule of law, thanks to
collaboration it is less likely that clients fall in between the demarcated fields of responsibility when having issues being treated by the public sector. Furthermore the democratic aspect regards the argument that collaboration can be connected to participation. Collaboration is supposed to contribute to an increasing influence for both inhabitants and operators, and can be looked upon as a way of transforming relations of power in society and diminish discrimination. In Sweden particularly, collaboration is seen as a way to improve the commitment and influence of the citizens. The committee in charge of the earlier mentioned Storstadsutredningen, emphasised the importance of that the political as well as the administrative administrations in the municipalities and town districts support the local citizens in their ambition to make a change in their local environment. Secondly, the economic arguments are perhaps the most frequently used to advocate collaboration. These arguments regard access to resources, efficiency, competitiveness and to share costs and spread risks. Organisations often carry out expensive projects jointly as a way of sharing the costs or the risks (Huxham, et.al., 2000). Economic coordination is supposed to be leading to both qualitatively better activities within the organisation and to that the total costs of society decreases. However, there are also reports showing that collaboration between organisations sometimes increases the costs, at least initially, as a result of the implementation of new administrative routines. Finally, there are the knowledge-based arguments for collaboration. These are common in knowledge intensive and innovative organisations. This is based on evidence from participants in collaborating activities, which states that it is within the meeting with other people where new thoughts and ideas prosper. In the demarcated organisations of today, there is not always room for that sort of meetings. Connected to this, is the argument for sharing of learning, that is rather often expressed in terms of the transfer of good practice from one partner, co-organisation or department to another (Huxham et.al., 2000). Closely related to collaboration, is coordination. Lindberg (2009) states that horizontal coordination is a kind of process organisation, which has developed as a counterbalance to traditional hierarchies. In the literature describing processes it is given that organisations should focus its core business, partly to put the customer or the user in the centre and partly to create room for streamlining. These kinds of arguments are also frequently used to motivate why collaboration is necessary.

2.3.3. The requirements for collaboration
As stated above, there are many arguments for collaboration, and all of them are reasonable (Huxham, 2003). Because of the variety of reasons for entering a collaborative situation, it is suggested to check out the participating organisations different assumptions in advance in order to avoid problems related to different expectations (Huxham et.al., 2000). According to Kraus (1980) the collaborative system requires and assumes that people have good intentions and are willing to work hard. This can be connected to McGregor’s X-theory and Y-theory and the importance of the individual’s personality for the organisation’s ability of fulfilling its goals. The X-theory describes a lazy and passive person with an unreasonable demand for financial compensation for its work. The Y-theory assumes that people are not passive or trying to work against the organisation but has the capacity to develop as the organisation grows (McGregor, 1960). Thus, in order to make collaboration work, one have to assume that the individuals within the collaborating organisations belong to the category Y (Ericsson-Zetterquist et.al., 2012). Furthermore the process of producing policy documents regarding collaboration requires to a great extent negotiations and compromises. When creating a new policy, all the stakeholders’ interests have to be taken into account. In order to make all the stakeholders somewhat satisfied regarding the policies, communication to reach a general belief in the common goal is necessary (Lindberg, 2009). It is moreover important to make clear what the organisational structures look like, and it has to be clearly understood where decisions are made and who owns the right to take decisions about what. To the most possible extent the organisations involved should delegate decisions to those who collaborate to give them space for action, which requires that the mandates for decision-making are clearly understood. It has to be legitimate, and maybe even a requirement from “above”, to participate in the collaboration. Furthermore, for collaboration to work, it is required that the participants have a will and a capacity to see problems also from others perspectives. To do this and respect others’ opinions, competences and purposes are essential to build up the trust necessary to success in collaboration (Lindberg, 2009).

Collaboration can be carried out in both formal and informal forms. The formal collaboration can be a way to fulfil the demands from the context that the organisation is a part of. For instance, regarding increasing efficiency and the quality of the service or the product (Lindberg, 2009). However, it is not to be taken for granted that formally structured collaboration in practice leads to good results. Many collaborative activities are based on more or less informal contacts between operators or workers that have tasks that are
dependent on each other. For this reason, informal structures that develop may be just as good as formal structures (Lindberg, 2009).

2.3.4. Difficulties with collaboration

Collaboration does have many advantages, and a vast amount of literature and articles have been written on the subject due to the belief in its great potential. However, in order to make collaboration work one has to be aware of contra-productive factors that can curb the collaborative development. Kraus (1980) discusses the difficulties in implementing the collaboration system, and for an organisation to move from a traditional, competitive model to a collaborative model. It takes a lot of energy and can be difficult to understand the new system at depth. As earlier stated it can be hard for every individual working in the different organisations to see the positive synergy effects of collaboration, and to change focus from the immediate needs of the own organisation to the common needs of the collaborative organisations. In a larger perspective, difficulties might arise due to cost efficiency. In the public sector the awareness of cost efficiency has increased gradually, which might contribute to a hidden calculating taking place in order to save money and put over the costs to the other organisations being part of the collaboration (Lindberg, 2009). Typically it is argued that those who do not have any control of the financial resources are lacking any sort of power. A study conducted by Huxham (2003) claims that this is not entirely true, since most parties generally at least have the “power of exit”, i.e., to leave an unfruitful collaborative project as a negotiative tool. When analysing collaboration it is important to keep in mind that interpersonal relationship between participating individuals may play a significant part in potential success (Huxham et. al., 2000). Collaboration between organisations that apparently works good from a starting point might be less successful once some individuals within the organisations are substituted. Finally, worth to mention is that geography has an impact on the success of collaboration (Lindberg, 2009). If the collaborative parts are placed at different physical spots, spontaneous meetings in the hallway have to be substituted with planned meetings, which take time to administrate and coordinate.

3. Method
In this chapter the method of how this study has been conducted will be presented and motivated.

3.1. Formulation and procedures for interviews

The study has been carried out in accordance with “the most important steps in qualitative research” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 583). Some side steps have been made from this model, since some theory selection has been made alongside with the data collection. The formulation of the problem was made after two informant interviews conducted with the sector manager of Culture and Leisure and with the department manager of M&P. With basis in their problem description a main question for the thesis could be formulated, and relevant respondents were chosen.

To answer the research question, the decision has fell on using an abductive method, and carrying out a qualitative study conducted with interviews. The abductive method implies that the theory has been generated alongside collection of data, which is in accordance with Bryman & Bell (2011). The respondents are three unit managers, and the assigned three department managers from each department that uses the services provided by M&P. The assumption was that answers from these six respondents would provide the basic data to enable covering the two management perspectives as well as all the departments that are involved with the services provided by M&P. The interviews have been conducted by the use of two different pre-formulated interview guides. One was directed towards the unit managers and the other one towards the department managers. The interview questions were designed with the basis in the theoretical framework given in previous chapter. All the interviews have been recorded with sound but not with picture. The interview was conducted by one of the authors, while the other took notes and added further questions. The interviews were transcribed to give the authors support for analysis. Transcription occurs not 100% verbatim because of murmurs etc. Furthermore the interviews were held in Swedish, and have been translated to the extent needed to English by the authors.

3.2 Guide and interview approach
Two interview guides were designed along the respondents’ position, one for department managers and one for unit managers. Some discrepancies exist between the questionnaires depending on what was relevant for the current position. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured interview form to be able to take up interesting threads and find new interesting perspectives. This allows greater freedom and flexibility to adapt the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The questions have been designed to be not too specific so that the respondents could have the ability to express their thoughts but still give answers to questions asked. The questions are open to avoid leading the respondent’s answers in any specific direction. During the interview, the respondents had the opportunity to ask questions to ensure that they had understood the question they had answered correctly. On these issues, the authors tried to develop or give examples. After each interview, the authors have asked whether the respondent would like to add anything or have any questions. The length of the interviews varied between 40 and 65 minutes. The interviews took place at six different occasions, in the analysis chapter however, the interviews of every unit manager is presented together with the department manager for each unit.

The authors make no attempt to solve a particular problem but tried to form a picture of how the selected respondents perceive their work situation in some specific themes or areas (food, property, and communication/interaction). The interview guides are attached in the appendix 8.2.

### 3.3 Research process

#### 3.3.1 Delimitations

The town districts are part of an organisational structure with many hierarchical layers, where the democratically elected politicians are in the utter charge of the governance. Decisions that have an impact on the service provided to the units are therefore in many cases implications from decisions made on a higher level than the two hierarchical levels studied. Conducting interviews with at least one responsible on every hierarchical level of the town district regarding the services provided by M&P, would have given a more complete picture of the decision process and how quality in service is ensured. However, due to limited time resources it was decided that interviews should be made with unit managers and department managers, in order to get a deeper insight in their perception of how their needs are met.
As the organisational chart in appendix 8.1.1 shows, the activities in Majorna-Linné are divided in four pillars. The study has taken basis in the problem description formulated by the sector manager of Culture and Leisure and the department manager of Meal and Property service. Though all pillars use the services provided by M&P, the study has been carried out solely on the sectors Education and Elderly Care, since they include departments (school, preschool and nursing homes) that use both meal and property services. Social Services (named Individual & Family care and Disability in the organisational chart 8.1.1) and Culture & leisure have not been studied since they only make use of property services.

3.3.2. Selection

The study has been carried out from both from unit managers’ and department managers’ perspective. We decided this to be logical since they are the managers working at the two levels closest to the professional “operating core” in the hierarchy. The process of organising the activities to reach the common goal of the town district takes place throughout the whole organisation. However, it is the units that constitute the “front line” of providing these opportunities to the citizens. Therefore it is interesting to study how the rest of the organisation works to ensure that the units get their needs met to fulfil their tasks. This view is according to the servant leadership theory (see e.g. Hunter, 2013).

Three department managers were selected along its position and that the authors wished to cover each department under consideration in this paper, i.e. preschool, school and nursing home. Three unit managers were randomly selected; the only requirement was that there would be a manager who represented the school, preschool and nursing home. The common factor for the respondents of this thesis is that they all are employees of the same town district administration and they all have an executive title.

3.4 Trustworthiness and authenticity

To give a picture of the assessment of the quality of this report, the alternative concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative research has been used. Bryman & Bell (2011) present Lincoln & Gubas concepts trustworthiness and authenticity, and the decision has fallen upon
using these terms in this thesis. The main reason for this choice is motivated by Guba & Lincoln, who claim that there is an uncertainty to the use of measurements of reliability and validity. Those measurements presuppose that one can arrive at a single absolute picture of the social reality (ibid.). This report does not aim to produce a single image, but to highlight the different individual images and their unique perception of the reality.

3.4.1. Trustworthiness

When treating the concept of Trustworthiness, Lincoln & Guba (1985) presents four terms for the usage of this alternative term. These are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (ibid.). The forthcoming text describes how these have been used in this thesis.

Credibility
To strengthen that an accurate picture is conveyed, a transcribed version of the interview data has been emailed out to each respondent for respondent validation (definition from Bryman & Bell), Lincoln & Guba (1985) defines this as ‘member check’. This has been done to give the respondents the opportunity to comment on whether they think that the transcript gives the image they want to convey. None of the respondents objected to the printouts.

Transferability
In a certain sense, this study is completely unique, because this is a study on a certain neighbourhood in a specific city in Sweden. On the other hand, it is an activity which is very similar to others because the study has been done on a social institution that deals with people and the institution have many general patterns. The ambition is that the case illustrates the general features of a unique case. And the aim is to provide rich contextual descriptions that can enhance the reader’s understanding and thus draw more or less general conclusions that can be transferred to other environments. It is however, as stated in Lincoln & Guba (1985 p 316) “not the naturalist’s task to provide an index of transferability; it is her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers”

Dependability
According to Guba & Lincoln’s (1985) criteria of dependability, it is desirable to have the work reviewed by other colleagues. This has been done throughout the whole research
process by the tutor assigned to this research project by the university. Furthermore the thesis has been subject to reviews by fellow researchers at undergraduate level at an organised occasion. The opponents had three days to read the study and prepare feedback.

**Confirmability**

The ambition of this work was to not let the authors' own opinions and values guide and influence the result.

### 3.4.2. Authenticity

The concept of authenticity can be treated as an alternative to the criteria of validity. The definitions fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) have been considered in this thesis and will here be presented. The ambition has been that the conducted interviews should give a fair picture (defined as *fairness* by Lincoln & Guba, 2000) of the studied organisation. One option would have been to also interview users, i.e. citizens, to study their image of quality. However, this paper is about the managers’ perceptions of the quality in service, rather than the perceptions about the quality that depends on amount of resources. There has not been an explicit goal for the researchers to make the respondents better understand their current situation. According to **ontological authenticity**, one respondent spontaneously said that answering the interview questions was appreciated by her, because it gave a better personal understanding of what works well and poorly in the organisation. There is also the hope that the survey will help to get a better understanding of each other within the organisation according to **educative authenticity**. It is unfortunately not certain to know whether the investigation contributed to that the respondents may change their situation under **catalytic authenticity**. This has not been a goal. Likewise, the researchers cannot say whether the respondents in this study have better opportunities to take certain measures as **tactical authenticity**.

### 3.5. Thematic analysis

The analytical procedure has been conducted using thematic analysis method. This choice of research method can be motivated by being a very flexible and useful research tool that helps
the researcher to provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data. It is a method for identifying patterns and themes and organises and describes it in a vivid way (Braun & Clarke, 2008). The purpose has been to investigate perceived quality in the public sector, which can motivate the choice of a method that seeks to convey a vivid image. Braun and Clarke (2008) further explain that there is not a single way of conducting thematic analysis, which is why a clear description of how the empirical data of this thesis has been treated will be presented. During the analysis, as theoretical position, a realist method has been used as it focuses on reporting experiences and meanings of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

Procedure
The first step of conveying the analysis was to identify themes. A theme can be defined as something that captures something important in the data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Important themes were identified in the transcribed data and coded with highlighters in different colours. The method of using highlighters to colour coding is described as an example of a way of coding manually by Braun & Clarke (2008). Themes or patterns have been identified in an abductive way, i.e. a combination of inductive and deductive method. The themes “flexibility”, “autonomy/mandate” and “division of responsibility” were identified as strongly linked to the data when going through the collected data, and are therefore considered as themes identified in an inductive matter. Also, there are two topics identified by deductive method. They are connected to the theoretical framework and have been coded to fit the research questions. These are the themes “collaboration” and “organisation structure”. Both a semiotic level and a latent (interpretative) level have been chosen to describe how the data should be interpreted. Braun & Clarke (2008) describe a latent level as going beyond a semantic level of reading the data. The latent level starts to identify underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations. Where it has been possible, the researchers have identified frequently brought up themes that are related to the factors that has an impact of the ensurance of qualitative service and supplied needs. Some themes have been presented and analysed in a semiotic way as the respondents have informed about issues without need of interpretation.

3.6. Ethical considerations
To meet the requirement of ethical considerations, Bryman & Bells’ (2011) examples of ethical considerations have been followed. The respondents have been informed according to the information requirement about the purpose, and they have been informed that they have been interviewed to contribute with their view of different aspects. They have also been informed that the managers in the Culture & Leisure sector have an interest in the investigation. All interviews have been voluntary, however we have as authors seen that it has been of prime importance to cover the three areas of school, preschool and nursing home and with the consent of the manager of Culture & Leisure contacted the respondents. This may have contributed to that they have experienced a certain requirement to be interviewed. No interview, however, has been carried out without consent according to the requirement of informed consent. Along with the requirement of confidentiality, the respondents have been notified that their names will not be published, but that anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed since some respondents can be identified in the form of their title. Data collected will be used solely for the thesis and we have as researchers had no intentions of giving respondents any misleading information.

4. Results

In this chapter, an overview of the structure of the town district will be presented. Subsequently the empirical data extracted from the interviews will be presented first with a short description of each department, and then mainly in thematic form. The formulation process of the themes has been described in the method chapter. Preschool, school and nursing homes will be presented separately from each other but with both the unit manager’s and the department manager’s view presented together for each department. The interview with the department manager of M&P makes an exception from the presentation of the thematic form. The results from that interview will be presented as her view of the problem for the organisation today, unlike the other interviews for preschool, school and nursing homes. For the sake of simplicity, titles have been shortened and their acronyms are used throughout the chapter of results.

PUM = Preschool Unit manager
PDM = Preschool department manager
SUM = School unit manager
SDM = School department manager
NUM = Nursing homes unit manager
NDM = Nursing homes department manager
M&P = (Department of) Meal and Property service

4.1. Structure of the city and the town district

The city of Gothenburg is the second largest city in Sweden with a population of approximately half a million people. In 1989, the municipality of the city established 21 town districts in order to decentralise the responsibility of certain domains in the public sector to a local level. These four domains included social services (“individual & family care and disability” in the organisational chart in appendix 8.1.1.), elementary education, elderly and special care, and cultural and leisure activities. The main purpose of the establishment was to increase the democratic influence and provide the citizens with possibilities to dialogue with the politicians in the town district. Moreover, the aim was to guarantee the provision of good service and reach an increase in efficiency (Göteborgs stad, 2009). In 2002 a proposition was handed over to the city government with recommendations to lower the number of town districts in order to facilitate the governance and coordination within the districts. After further investigations, a decision was made to reduce the number of town districts to 10, and the reorganisation was carried out in 2010 (Göteborgs stad, 2009). The fusion of the town districts has redrawn the map of structure of the town districts, both regarding the activities of the domains that the town districts are responsible for, as well as organisation of the employees employed by the town districts. Today, the structure of the town district Majorna-Linné consists primarily out of sectors, departments and units, and looks as stated in picture in appendix 8.1.1. Above the town officer there is the town district committee, which is not depicted in the chart. The blue boxes symbolise the sectors and the pink boxes demonstrate the different departments. Below the departments, there are a number of units, as exemplified by the organisational chart of the sector of Education in Appendix 8.1.2. The sector of elderly care is structured in a similar way. The studied elderly care department of this thesis is named “special accommodation” in the organisational chart, but the units analysed will be called “nursing homes” throughout the thesis to facilitate the understanding. An example of a unit is a preschool, an elementary school or a nursing home for elderly people. The unit manager of a preschool would be a preschool director, for the school it would be the principal and the
superintendent at the nursery home for elderly people. The schools in the organisational chart are only elementary schools. The sectors are mainly organised vertically, with the sectoral level having cross-sectoral decision-making meetings on regular basis. On the lower levels, basically no cross-sectoral meetings are formally organised, but an informal meeting procedure has been institutionalised once every other week between department managers. These meetings have no decision-making power. The unit managers participate in cross-sectoral meetings only regarding specific issues, when needed.

As of now, the M&P is a department in the sector of Culture and Leisure. Its purpose is to serve the three other sectors with meal and property services. The main users of meals are the sector of education and the department of nursing homes, while all three sectors use property services. The properties where most of the sectors are housed are owned by the public Management of premises, which act as a landlord towards M&P. Some services are carried out by the Management of premises, but most issues regarding properties and premises are to be covered by M&P.

In the organisational chart in appendix 8.1.1., M&P is in a special situation. They are to a great extent looked upon as a supporting function, but are placed within a sector rather than grouped together with the other supporting functions (HR and accounts). Also, the M&P supporting function is rather operative while e.g. HR is strategic (Personal communication: Department manager M&P, 2015-04-02).

Since the reorganisation, the part of the budget for the different units that previously was assigned for salary to meal and cleaning staff, is today lifted out in the beginning of the budget year and given to M&P for them to control. The financial resources for cleaning are handed over as it is as a committee subsidy\(^2\), while the money for meals is provided to M&P by a subscription system. The subscription system implies that each sector, with a decision taken at a higher level than both unit level and department level, make an order to M&P regarding quantity and quality of the meals that should be provided to the units within the sector during the upcoming year. The order can only be done within the political framework of regulations agreed on by the district committee. This implies that the town district of Majorna-Linné has a combination of a committee subsidy-system and a not very detailed

\(^2\) Authors’ translation of ”nämndebidrag”
“buy-and-sell” system. Other town districts in the city of Gothenburg have a different organisation, where some use a complete subsidy-systems and other a detailed “buy-and-sell”-model.

M&P have the role of being responsible for all operations regarding the activity of meal and property services. Some units do not have their own kitchen, but do instead get food sent to them from a central kitchen every day. The staff responsible for food is employed by M&P. The unit managers of preschool, school and nursing homes have budget responsibility over their own professional staff, but are not responsible over budget for meal and property service and have no mandate to make decisions over the meal staff.

As for janitorial and cleaning services, it works a little differently for the various units. The nursing homes have their own janitor in the building they are placed in. The janitor is however an employee of M&P and the unit managers of nursing homes have no mandate to control the janitor. M&P has defined what tasks the janitor will perform. In schools and preschools, it may vary depending on the unit size, whether you have an "own" janitor or not, but even in these cases the janitor is employed by M&P and they are the ones that determines the janitor’s job description. Cleaning staff is also hired by M&P, in some cases the cleaning is outsourced, M&P are in those cases responsible of procuring these contracts.

All department managers are responsible for a number of unit managers in each department. Department managers do not work at the units, but have their own office. The unit managers are supposed to contact their department manager in issues regarding food and property service that cannot be solved at unit level. They thus become the contact between unit managers and M&P.

4.1.1. The department manager of M&P’s point of view

According to the department manager of M&P, there is a structure missing when M&P is supposed to allocate the committee subsidy to the departments. What is lacking is a model where “everybody agrees and understands at what level the decisions regarding these issues are taken” (M&P department manager, personal communication, 2015-04-02). She exemplifies the complex of problems by stating that meals and cleaning are issues that regard many stakeholders practically. If for instance the children at a school do not like the food in
the canteen, it becomes an issue for the principal, even though it is not an issue that the principal has any mandate to impact in the current organisation. One can compare with a detailed “buy-and-sell”-system, as in some town districts in Gothenburg and in the private sector. There, the units basically buy cleaning services and catering from entrepreneurs and send an invoice every month. With that system, the budget process is very controlled and the unit manager has a total control over expenses and a general view over the budget. However, the “buy-and-sell” system requires large amounts of administration that would steal focus from the unit managers’ work with the department-specific, professional issues. What the Department manager of M&P requires is a transparent and functional process where the ones that are impacted practically by meals and property services can be involved to reach an agreement on quality of the services. This agreement could either imply that the unit managers participate in the budget process, which as stated requires more administrative focus, or that the supporting function manages it all and the unit managers completely give up their mandates regarding budget and quality so they can solely focus on their professional issues, but will not have the power to have any impact on the quality. The important factor is that everyone has agreed on one model and has understood the consequences. In general the department manager of M&P is quite satisfied with the quality of the service that her department deliver today, but she admits that due to restraints of resources there is a limit to how much that can be done, rather than what that can be done. Thus a problem arises when there are certain expectations from the “buyer” on the quality of the service that cannot be met, which is due to a lack of an agreement of what should be delivered in correspondence with the budget restraints. An alternative organisation could be that M&P was not its own department at all, and that every unit manager would hire their kitchen and cleaning staff. However, that would require a totally different kind of organisation.

As of today, the department manager of M&P take part in the department management group meetings of the Culture and Leisure sector, but not in any of the sectors that use the services of M&P the most. She claims that she is missing such natural forum. It would help out in understanding what is going on in the sectors, in order to give them the appropriate service. The M&P carries out evaluations to the units that use their services with the ambition of a follow-up on the provided service. However, the increasing amount of evaluations requires time and energy and a “tiredness of surveys” has been experienced in the units. According to the department manager, she does not have the mandates to impose these evaluations on anyone, even though it would have a great impact on the quality of the service in the end. She
claims such orders have to come from higher levels, such as the town district committee to be followed accurately.

4.2. Preschool

In the crowded and popular town district Majorna-Linné, there is no possibility to house all preschools in public premises, therefore some preschool are located in buildings owned by the Public Management of Premises and some in rented premises. The preschool meal service is structured so that at some of the units there is a kitchen with a hired chef, while some units get their food delivered from a central kitchen every day. This implies different needs at the different units, e.g. regarding staffing. However, all kitchen staff is hired by M&P. The preschool units order the food they want from lists sent out by M&P. The pre-school units are very dependent on that the premises the preschools are located in get cleaned properly, due to potential allergies and diseases. They are also dependent on the janitor for the everyday upcoming issues.

The respondents are a department manager and a unit manager. The PUM manages five preschools, as stated above, some are located in buildings owned by the municipality and some in rented premises. The task of the PDM is to in a long term perspective guarantee the quality of the activities within the preschool department. She coordinates the collaboration with the other departments, and works as a support towards the preschool unit managers. There are 15 unit managers below her, that in their turn manage 148 preschool wards. Together with the Department manager of M&P, the PDM is in charge of calculating how much food that will be needed according to different variables, such as population growth. This is done every semester. There are routines for this process, but according to the PDM it can also be flexible, based on mutual communication. The budget for the food is decided at a higher level, in a process where the PDM is not involved. In general the PDM has the conception that the units are very satisfied with the quality of the meals and the service regarding them.

Collaboration

The PDM considers the “buy-and-sell”-system, which is the earlier mentioned subscription system, not being the most efficient form of collaboration. This is due to the problems that arises when staff from two different organisations (M&P and Preschool) work at the same
place. For instance, it can often occur a deficit in substitutes for meal staff, especially at the preschool wards that do not have its own kitchen, which has a huge impact on the preschool but cannot be handled by them.

As mentioned above, some preschool premises are rented by private landlords. This implies different procedures for reporting errors and for the general collaboration. The PDM experiences the collaboration with the responsible for the public premises as easier, due to easier ways of communicating and more possibilities to raise demands. When in contact with the private landlords, a higher amount of issues tend to bounce back on the unit managers. Supposedly it is M&P that should be responsible for the contact with the private landlords regarding errors reporting etc., but due to lack of staff, that has not been possible to the fullest extent. This claims a lot of time from the unit managers from working with the pedagogical issues. The PDM says that it would be preferable if someone at M&P that had the knowledge and the competence regarding premises, would take care of it.

The PUM stresses that communication is the solution to many of the organisational problems that might occur within the town district today. It is required that the managers cross departments cooperate and show that the organisation is “one” in order to have a working collaboration within the units. Many decisions are taken at a political level, such as that the amount of vegetarian meals should be increased. The moral idea behind this has a great support, but the PUM also requests a discussion on a practical level. Since the main purpose of the meals is to feed the children, it is important that the children eat the food that is served. The PUM emphasises the importance of that the managers cooperate with each other across the department and sectors, not only for its obvious reasons, but also to show stability and unity towards the staff working in the units that are collaborating around the meal and property service. She states how important it is that the whole town district operates as one, and avoids the perspective of being different organisations due to that they belong to different sectors.

As regards cross-department communication, the PUM describes there are not that much of a platform of that. There used to be such meetings, but are not anymore. Most issues are discussed “within the line”, i.e. vertically in the sector (see the organisation chart 8.1.1. in appendix). She says that she thinks it is important that such cooperation is organised, because it does not happen naturally when the organisation is so big and has so many people involved.
The PUM admits that sometimes she can feel pinioned, because of lack of space of action when it comes to quickly fixing deficient issues. She has to go through many steps in the hierarchy to sort it out, and at the same time being responsible of the unit according to laws and rules. However she is of the opinion that it would be impossible that the unit managers would own all their processes themselves. Therefore she strongly supports and emphasises the importance of a good and tight cooperation, where everyone sees the different sectors as one organisation with a common goal. She believes that the only way to reach a change is to be good communicators, both on a formal and informal basis.

The PDM has understood that the PUMs experienced frequent problems regarding lack of feedback on errors reports to the premises service. Due to shifting staff during the work day, it is difficult to keep track of if someone has examined the errors or if nothing has happened, since there is no existing feedback system at the moment. The PDM explains that they are working towards a system where the routines around who to contact are clearer. Often the Premise service takes too long time to take care of reported problems, and then it is the PUM or the PDM that has to deal with it towards parents and other stakeholders with opinions. She admits that many problems are solely a resource issue, but in this case many problems can be solved if Management of Premises looks over its routines for feedback.

Organisation structure
As earlier stated, the PDM experiences that problems arise when staff from two different organisations (M&P and Preschool) work at the same place, but not under the same boss. The PDM feels that she has had the possibility to bring this issue forward and to discuss it with the responsible managers, such as her sector manager and the HR-manager. She understands the advantages of the buy and sell-systems as well, but could see a possible solution in that the preschools that have their own kitchen could also have their own staff.

Flexibility
The PDM requests more flexibility within the work tasks of people, for instance that someone could work with both pedagogical issues within school and preschool, and also within meals. However, the unions can be critical to employees working with such different tasks. Regarding cleaning, the PDM is of the opinion that the “buy and sell”-system is very complicated for its purpose. She believes that if the resources for cleaning would be included in the unit budgets, they could be more flexible in reorganising their resources. Since the unit
managers have budget responsibility over their professional tasks today, adding the resources of meals and cleaning to it would not make a lot of difference in workload, but probably a lot in flexibility.

**Division of responsibility**
The PUM describes that when it comes to serving the meals, the way it works today is that the pedagogical staff do take care of some tasks connected to the meals, such as preparing breakfast, which is not what they are educated to do. The PUM requests that the pedagogical staff would instead be able to use that time for what they are educated to, i.e. spend time with the children and their activities.

Many of the overhead premises issues end up at the desk of PUM, which she thinks is unnecessary since that is not where the competence is, since she has a pedagogical education. PUM claims that she has to commit a lot to organising the cleaning-schedule because it requires meticulous planning due to that the cleaning staff has so little time and needs to visit many preschools a day.

**Autonomy/mandate**
According to PUM, both the budget for meals and the process of deciding what is “orderable” are going on at a higher level, independently of the units and of the PUM. She means that if there were more time and possibilities, i.e. resources, it would be preferable if a dialogue could exist regarding this. As it currently works, she is not involved in the decision-making process, but still has to take responsibility towards e.g. parents that have opinions regarding the meal routines. The PUM describes that this partly has to do with that the M&P and preschool belong to different sectors, thus different organisations. As an example, she brings up how the pre-schools were organised when she started working in the town district 25 years ago. All the employees, as well pedagogical staff as chefs and cleaners, were hired by the PUM. Thus, the PUM “owned the whole process”. If something occurred, things were quite easily solved because everyone belonged to the same organisation. Today, the process requires more steps through the organisation chart, and is a bit more complex. If something is not working regarding meal and property services, the PUM discusses the problem with the manager at the M&P department, rather than the operating staff in the first place. This requires a close and trustful cooperation between the managers.
The PUM suggests that the higher level managers should open up for a dialogue regarding what food should be orderable, etc., in order to involve the unit managers in the process. However, when it comes to whether the PUM wants more autonomy in how to use the resources she is assigned, she can see both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages of more autonomy includes that there would not be as many operators involved in the processes, she would instead own her own processes. For instance, the preschools could order some food themselves such as breakfast and snacks. It would give room for some more creativity when it comes to creating a nice and inspiring meal-time for the children, by being able to order a bigger variety of products for instance. In addition to this she admits that creativity regarding meals is related to flexibility, imaginativeness and capacity of the individuals in the meal staff. On the other hand, such organisation, that the pre-schools order some food themselves, would imply more administrative work. A related disadvantage would be that there are many rules and laws to consider, and that neither the unit managers nor the pedagogical staff could know everything there is to know about that since it is not in their expertise. However, she is aware of that this is a question of resources.

PDM would like more autonomy in the processes of deciding the budget for the meals, but admits that her relatively short work period at this position, just about a year, has an impact. She also sees that her manager, the sector manager, is working towards more transparency in all processes, all the way.

4.3. School

The SUM means that the food is of high quality, and he is very pleased with the meal service but wish they had longer opening hours in the canteen. The unit has nothing to do with the practical management of the food but paying their bill while the staff in the meal unit handles the rest of the required activities. The contact to make cooperation work between the meal staff and the school is handled by the SUM himself or by the assistant principal.

SDM explains that he is new to his post, and is not yet too familiar with the questions about the decision-making when it comes to school meals but he will try to answer the questions as well as possible. He talks about how he sees the system regarding the responsibility and mission of M&P. "We have no clear system of being a buy-and-sell-organisation, but they
must meet a need we have, based on the resources they have been allocated then." The SDM says that they convey their needs of M&P through the measurement of how many students that are supposed to go on school in the autumn and all the quantities they need in different forms prior to each school year.

The SUM describes the needs of his units are clean and fresh premises, both maintenance of the premises and any adjustments to the requirements of the activities conducted in school. The cleaning of some schools in Majorna-Linné is on contract via an entrepreneur, but at the school where the respondent (SUM) works, it is M&P that is responsible for the cleaning.

**Collaboration**

The SUM describes that he lacks to be involved and interact and collaborate in the discussion about what food to order. He tells of an example when the parents of the children at the school pushed the issue of having more organic food in school. The politicians seemed to listen to this request and took the decision that the school would put large amount of money on increasing the amount of organic food in school. However, what some of the parents who had pushed the issue did not understand, was that the increased investments in organic food resulted in decreased allocation of other parts in the budget. The SUM furthermore explains that he has experienced the situation to be problematic when having to make it clear why more organic food meant reduced funding elsewhere and would like to have a dialogue on issues where different economic ventures and its consequences can be discussed. The SUM also tells us that he really understands that he works in a politically controlled organisation and that the political decisions represent the will of the citizens. The SUM’s job is therefore to execute these decisions without inserting his own values, but believes that this makes his job a little more difficult.

In the theme of communications, SDM explains that he has a natural communication with the department manager for M&P. They meet at regular meetings and are in contact when there are important issues to be discussed. He also believes that he has a good communication regarding property issues.

**Organisation structure**
Concerning decisions on the budget spent on meals, the SUM means that he has no voice in that process. In the role as a school, they get a bill to pay while it is a political matter what type of food to be ordered. An example of this is the increased proportion of organic food. The SDM assumes that the required communication occurs between the respective manager of the kitchen and the school unit manager. Furthermore SDM describes that the strength of the system when M&P handles the needs of the school, is that it is easier to see the big picture in a different way. One drawback is that it is a little unclear to see all the cash flows.

**Flexibility**

One problem with the cleaning is that it can be difficult to get hold of replacement staff when someone is sick and that leads naturally to a loss of quality. The SUM further describes the difficulty that he cannot give instructions and orders to the staff in charge of cleaning since it is not he who is their boss. If he has desire on priorities and the like, he must bring it up with the manager of the cleaning staff. It is the same situation regarding janitorial services. If the SUM has needs to be fulfilled or if he wants to make changes about anything, he has to take it through the janitors’ manager. Usually the communication and services from janitorial service works excellent but it would have been easier for the SUM if the janitor would have been part of the school staff.

When talking about the communication with M&P, the SUM explains that the communication usually happen on a spontaneous basis and is usually taken care of by the assistant principal. The SUM thinks this way of communicating both have pros and cons. A good thing is that not too many people need to get involved in the process which makes the situation of communicating easier. He is generally satisfied with this way of communicating but he also wish he had more influence in certain decisions and more flexibility on when and how things will be performed.

**Division of responsibility**

The main difficulty in the cooperation between school and property services, is the problem of ambiguity over who should pay for what. Certain costs related to the property, is the responsibility of property services and those costs related to the activity in school is the matter of the school. The SUM uses the metaphor: “The blanket is never big enough”. He says that he wants to put as much resources as possible to the core business, i.e. the education and as few resources as possible on the premises. That is why it is a conflict over who should pay for
different things. He says that he thinks that they have to put too many resources on the premises, while he does understand that they cannot operate without functioning premises. The most problematic communication is the one about the issues related to the property. In such cases, the SUM does not know where he should turn and it takes a lot of time to get in touch with the right person.

**Autonomy/mandate**

The SDM says he does not have any major influence when it comes to the mandate to say how much resources should be put on their units, i.e. schools. He has expectations of what quality the food should have, but he trusts that M&P handles this well.

The SUM describes that he would like to have more influence over property issues and he furthermore discusses the problem of the high rents which the school pays for their premises. He means that the facilities are fine on the outside but they are not really optimal for teaching. When comparing public schools to private schools, the public school do not have the possibility of switching to another premise in case of high rents, as the private school has the possibility of.

The SUM also mentions a desire for greater autonomy and a greater opportunity to participate and influence the school's budget and the allocation of money. He means that this participation would help him to be able to reach the goals of his budget. The SUM explains further that he does not feel that he has a mandate to bring up the changes in relation to M&P and they do not have a formal forum to address these issues. The ability to make changes relates rather to the attitude of the various managers. He also says that there is no difficulty at all in cooperating with his current manager.

Finally the SUM explains that he is very pleased with the service the school gets of the meal service but that he would like to have more saying in matters relating to property. He currently experiences a big frustration over the slowness of the system. It does not happen very much in the questions he raises.

The SDM feels that he has a mandate to propose and bring about change regarding the services that his units receive from M&P. “They are a support function and they are responsive. I mean, if we had not existed, they would not have existed either. It is clear that
the school units work for the users and M&S is a support function to enable the school to conduct their activities.”

4.4. Nursing homes

In the nursing homes, the residents have a permanent contract of hire. This includes all meals and the food is cooked in the house where the nursing homes is located and served there. It is M&P that is responsible for the meals of the unit. In several cases in the town districts, units from different departments, such as a nursing home and a preschool, are located in the same houses. Each house has its own janitor working in the house but that is employed by M&P. The cleaning of the premises is though purchased on contract.

Decisions on how much money should be allocated on the meals and property services are decided on the budget process every year. And it is the district committee that distributes the money. Neither NUMs nor NDMs have any saying in the budget process and have neither any autonomy in how resources should be allocated regarding meals and property services.

The respondents of nursing homes are one nursing home unit manager and one nursing home department manager. Generally speaking, both managers are satisfied with the quality of the food but would wish that the restaurant could offer longer opening hours so that the elderly lodged at the unit have the possibility to visit the restaurant on more occasions. The NUM explains that she is very pleased that the food is locally produced and the communication with the kitchen staff works very well.

Collaboration

The overall experience of the food seems to be good according to the NDM, however the food tends to get some bad reviews in the users survey. The NDM thinks the reason for this is not because of bad quality of the food but rather about how it is being served and about the surroundings. She explains that to solve this problem, they have decided to hire someone to be in charge of ensuring that the food is being served after required standards and to strengthen the cooperation between the kitchen staff and the nursing staff serving the food. The NDM says that she has seen that this collaboration works well on units that have started working with the system of having someone with this new responsibility. However the result of the
profession is pretty bounded to the personality of the person in charge, i.e. some people who are more service might do a better work.

When communication is discussed, the NUM says that she thinks that it has become a little more difficult to communicate with the other managers since the merger. They now sit further apart. When the district was smaller, many people were working at the same house and the same office and had therefore a better contact. She feels that there is now more responsibility on her to find out information from different sources. There are many documents about regulations and how to control the activities but it is difficult to find your way among these documents.

In the area of communication, the NDM would like to have a more direct communication. She is also experiencing the phenomena labelled as "too many cooks spoil the broth". She would have preferred that there was a person in nursing homes that was responsible for property issues and food issues. The NDM believes that to organise so that the units can have better communication and a better work situation, both resources and cooperation is required. It is important that the houses really take the time to have regular meetings with unit managers for the various activities of the different houses, i.e. the unit manager of the nursing home, the unit manager of preschool and unit managers for the kitchen and the respective staff. The NDM further explains that she think it is the responsibility of the unit manager of the house or by the unit manager of the kitchen to take the initiative to contact.

**Organisation structure**

A problem that the NUM experiences in the system is how controlled the activities such as meal service, are by political goals. There are limitations to what can be ordered and what kind that shall be ordered. For example, there are goals that the food must be organic to a certain extent with the result that the unit sometimes cannot order certain foods that the elderly want. The NUM says that a problem last year was that you only were allowed to order organic ham instead of non-organic ham for Christmas. At the same time, there was a shortage of those among the suppliers. Meanwhile, the NUM understands that suppliers may not be able keep up in time to match supply with demand, but it leads then to that the elderly do not get any Christmas ham at all in those cases when the organic ham is out, due to political constraints.
The NUM also talks about the political objectives of increasing the served amount of vegetarian food. She thinks it is not fair forcing a 95-year-old person who has never eaten vegetarian food to suddenly start eating it. It can lead to some people not eating much those days when it is served only vegetarian food. And it is important that the elderly eat and receive the nutrition they need.

However, the NUM is not entirely critical of the organisation. She sees an advantage in having all the janitors belonging to the same department and can take advantage of having, for example, education and the like together. Furthermore there is an advantage that someone at M&P is responsible for procurement, etc., because it is therefore handled by someone who is a specialist in that particular area.

**Flexibility**

One thing that works badly is opening hours and also the working hours of the kitchen staff. The NUM would e.g. want the evening meal to be served a little later than in the current situation. She calls for some flexibility to adapt the service to fit the elderly, i.e. the users. The NUM would also like to see a little more variety in the food offered by the kitchen.

In today’s system for meals, the NDM unfortunately experiences that there is no greater flexibility, e.g. the elderly who live at the facility do not have a selection of meals but has to choose the one being served that day. On the other hand it would tough be too disorderly if everyone were to have the possibility to select between more than one meal each and every day. In that case, the sector of elderly care would have to pay for that extra service.

**Division of responsibility**

On the property front, the NUM would like to see that it would be less responsibility for the unit managers. It takes a lot of time to get familiar with the issues of the property and it is not actually within the profession.

Basically, it works well having a janitor at the house that is employed by M&P, the difficulty would be if the janitor is ill or on vacation. At these times there is sometimes a lack of information about replacement. Another daily problem concerns the allocation of tasks and who is responsible for doing what in the unit. Sometimes it is a little unclear which parts of
the task that M&P shall cover and what parts that the nursing home is supposed to cover. The janitor do have a checklist with tasks that he or she is supposed to do, but the NUM recognises tasks that need to be done but that are not defined on the janitors to-do-list. One example is to clear the weeds, since it is not defined on the janitor's list, the NUM herself has to do it. Personally, she does not mind doing it, but then she have to take time away from her regular tasks included in her profession.

A problem the NDM experiencing is a difficulty in deciphering who is responsible for different things that need to be done. It is a little unclear what her units stand for and what responsibility the units have in certain questions and what Management of premises stand for and is responsible of. The NDM believes that this problem often occurs and believes that there are too many players involved which leads to a lack of clarity. The NDM would like to see that there was only one person who had full responsibility for property issues within the sector of elderly care. Unit managers receive too much responsibility in the property issues when their profession is to work with caring of other people. The NDM believes that it is not about a communication problem but rather a problem which is based on ambiguity. It is hard to know who to contact and what that person have the ability to when there is an issue about the property. Decisions concerning the property should be taken at another level, by another sector, and not be the responsibility of the unit managers.

The NDM talks as well about the janitor role and it becomes very bounded to personality. It becomes very personal what you think is a good janitor and what tasks that should be performed by him or her or what kind of tasks he or she tackles to perform. However, she is sure they do their best. Even if the janitors have a check list defined with what tasks to perform, it still does not seem to be clear what to do about the duties that no one is responsible of. The NDM tells that it is frustrating when the janitors cannot be given orders on what tasks to perform since they have another manager. Sometimes she feels a little pinioned in matters not knowing about, e.g. property questions.

**Autonomy/mandate**

The NDM says she has no autonomy in matters of how resources should be allocated. She can wish and apply for resources and try to signal in good time in case important circumstances are coming up. Speaking of views on autonomy and M&P’s role, the NDM describes that she experiences a good cooperation with M&P. Even if she may not always get what she asks for,
she thinks that thoughts and wishes are listened to and she is never afraid to express what she needs for the units.

To improve communication today, the NUM requests more meetings on the houses where you work, which can include staff from several departments (elderly care, preschool and M&P). However, she experiences that she herself might not have the mandate to convene such meetings. She feels she has a mandate to express views on possible changes in M&P services, but no authority.

**5. Analysis**

The five themes that have been identified will now be discussed more in detail in the analysis. Parallels from the theoretical chapters “collaboration” and “organisation structure” will be presented together with discussions around the themes.

**5.1 Recap of purpose of this thesis**

The purpose that this study is aiming to fulfil is to identify perceived quality in service among managers in the public sector. In the beginning of the analytic process, the empirical data has been coded according to thematic analysis as described in detail in the method chapter. The themes that have crystallised throughout the analytic process are ‘collaboration’, ‘organisation structure’, ‘flexibility’, ‘autonomy/mandate’ and ‘division of responsibility’. According to Statskontoret (2011), the internationally recognised definition of quality is “all the combined properties of an object or phenomenon that gives its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs”. The interviews have strived to identify the needs of the respondents, to proceed from those needs to identify how they should be served in the most qualitative way. Put together, the five themes that have been identified during the analytical process can according to the empirical data and the analysis of the researchers be seen as those properties that have an impact on the phenomenon ‘service’. They can thus be considered the factors that impact quality in service.

When identifying the themes, a sixth one that appeared was 'resources', mostly in the context “lack of resources”. However, this study has had an explicit focus on not paying too much attention to need of financial resources in the analysis, since that would have required another
type of theoretical framework and the empirical data would run the risk of ending up as list of
wishes. The point of departure has instead been to identify what factors that have an impact
on the perceived quality in service within the framework of existing resources. Below, the
factors will be discussed in accordance with the theoretical framework. The discussion will
put forward how these factors can be treated from a collaborative and structural perspective.

5.2 Organisation structure

When looking at this organisation in general, a mix between two of Mintzberg’s configuration
forms can be identified, the machine bureaucracy and a professional bureaucracy. The staff in
the operating core are professional teachers, preschool teachers and health care staff. The staff
in such an operating core are not easily substituted, because not anyone can substitute their
knowledge and skills. The organisation can therefore be seen as a professional bureaucracy as
it seeks a degree of standardisation of skills in the work of the operating core. However, due
to the large organisation, tasks and processes has to be quite standardised. Standardisation of
task is the main feature of a machine bureaucracy. Examples of standardisation are the yearly
budget process, or the check lists that the janitors at elderly homes are assigned to follow.
Another thing that can imply the recognition of the machine bureaucracy is the important role
of the technostructure. In this case the role of M&P as steering function can be identified even
if they claim to be a support function. An important difference to identify when studying
Majorna-Linné as a machine bureaucracy, is the lack of power to control among the unit
managers and department managers. A deeper discussion will not follow, but the lack of
mandate in the budget process is an example of this.

Looking at the town district of Majorna-Linné by using Mintzberg’s division of an
organisation, the studied organs in the town district can be classified as Mintzberg’s structural
subdivision (see figure in appendix 8.1.4.). Firstly, the operating core may be identifiable as
activities going on at the school, preschool and nursing homes. To educate students and
nurture older can be seen as typical activities of the operating core. Without these activities
the other units of the structural subdivision will lose its purpose. Secondly, the decision-
making politicians within the district committee with the overall responsibility of the
organisation can be identified in the function strategic apex. They are supposed to ensure that
the organisation works towards its goals and that the needs of the organisation are met (ibid.).
Thirdly, in the middle line the respondents of the thesis interviews are found. The unit managers and department managers have formal authority and are performing tasks both above and below their position, which is according to Mintzberg’s definition of the middle line. Finally, the last division from Mintzberg’s structural subdivision identified in Majorna-Linné is the support functions. They are defined as units that work to support the functions carried out in the operating core, and should not assume the role of controlling or provide other features advice. However, this structure differs in Majorna-Linné. In the organisational chart, M&P is not labelled as a support function, but instead included as a department within the sector of Culture and Leisure. Despite this, M&P is explicitly defined as a support function by some of the respondents. One of the department managers explains that the general picture of M&P is that it is a clear support function to his department, and that “everybody” seems to look upon it as a typical support function. In studies of the organisation, it emerges that M&P is a function that executes orders made by the district committee’s decision regarding the unit’s control of resources, unit’s dietary composition and entities access to property services. This leads to a confusion regarding how M&P should be looked upon. The aim is to support the operative core, i.e. the units, but this is not done in a solely passive way. Its task also include executing strategic decisions made by the district committee, such as the earlier mentioned organic meals or the fact that the department manager of M&P distributes the committee subsidy regarding the property services on her own authority, which provides M&P with a controlling function. Thus the M&P can be seen as a combination between a supporting function and the technostructure. In the organisational chart of Majorna-Linné, there is no such thing labelled as technostructure. The strategic functions HR department, finance department and development department are classified as support functions, but are however situated differently than M&P. The activities such as strategic planning, training and development activities in Majorna-Linné’s organisational chart would be found in the technostructure according to Mintzberg’s structural subdivision. Mintzberg suggests that developmental functions for the organisation working with development of the organisation and its staff belong here. Thus Mintzberg would have classified Majorna-Linné’s support functions, HR, finance and development, as more strategic and managing functions, and in the technostructure instead of as support function.

5.3. Collaboration
It appears that the respondents in general assume that their co-workers have good intentions, capacity to develop as the organisation grows and are motivated to work hard, thus they belong to the category Y of people (McGregor, 1960). One example is the department manager that talks about how the collaboration with certain staff from the M&P might have flaws sometimes. However she stresses that she believes that they do their best, and means that the flaws instead are due to that people have different personalities and different priorities of which tasks to handle first. The assumption of that people who collaborate carry the characteristics included in the theory-Y is as stated by Kraus (1980) necessary for the collaboration to work.

Many collaborative and cooperative structures, both informal and formal, exist in the town district. Three of the quoted definitions of collaboration in the theory framework emphasise the requirement of working for a common purpose or end, in order to collaborate. Depending on which perspective taken, the common goals can be more or less clear. As one of the interviewed unit managers explains, it is important that everyone involved sees the organisation as one, rather than different units, departments and sectors that at times stand against each other. At stressed times it can happen that people “defend their own parts”, and have a hard time to put themselves in other people’s perspective. This unit manager meant that the big challenge lies within making everyone work as one organisation. Thus the aim to meet this challenge is supported by Danermark, (2004), Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Lindberg (2009).

5.4. Division of responsibility

The way the town district is organised today implies that there are two different budgets, the operative department and the M&P, involved in producing the same output, i.e. what the units provides to the users. As exemplified by Lindberg (2009), a hidden calculating might take place in order to keep expenses within the limits of the budget and put costs to the other organisation being part of the collaboration. This results in an economic responsibility flaw. As stated in the theory chapter, a main reason to collaborate is the belief that collaboration creates synergy effects that give a better result than if the organisations were working without collaborating with others (Huxham, 2003). Several of the interviewed have brought up the idea of a more clear structure and a reduction of the responsibility flaw if every department or
even unit were to "own their own processes", i.e. to hire kitchen and cleaning staff themselves. This type of organisation would increase the level autonomy, and decrease the wonderings regarding on which budget certain expenses actually should end up. As from a collaborative perspective one could picture the current situation as if the Meal and Property service department is the collaboration project, “owned” jointly by the operative departments, that creates synergy effects such as economies of scale regarding staffing, contracting and administration. This should according to the collaborative theory presented by Huxham (2003) lead to better results than if all the processes were organised within the respective departments.

5.5. Flexibility

The different relationships and competences connected to individuals involved in an organisation have an impact on the quality of service from both a collaborative and a structural perspective. Regarding communication, some of the respondents express that intra-department communication is working fine, on the basis of informal contacts that take short cuts through the organisational chart. Even though there are formal platforms for meetings with people with certain titles, some respondents express that the success of collaboration might vary depending on the individual possessing the title, regardless of the formal set-up. From a structural perspective, some respondents describe that they do tasks that do not belong to their job description. As an example, there is the unit manager for a nursing home that takes away weed from the yard connected to the premises, because otherwise it would not be done due to resources or a responsibility flaw. The reasons she does it are two: She gives it priority, and she knows how to do it. As stated by Lindberg (2009) certain collaboration or operations might be working satisfactory at a starting point, but flaws in the systems are revealed once the individuals at the different positions are substituted. This is due to different competences, interests and priorities. This can cause trouble regarding who shall do what, e.g. if a potential successor to the current unit manager at the nursing home has no interest in removing weed, and the janitor believes it is not part of his or her tasks because it has not been before. To handle these problems and diminish the responsibility flaw, measures such as check-lists with detailed job descriptions have been developed. However, the competences, interest and priorities can also be seen as an asset. Therefore very detailed and standardised job descriptions can also have a downside. If a newly hired manager for instance has a skill in
carpeting or a certain interest in flowers, the organisation can adopt a flexible structure where some space for action exist in order to manage such inherent individual competence. This might diminish structural frustration and the feeling of being pinioned, and increase the efficiency in the use of resources. However, this require a flexibility from the supporting functions, e.g. to the janitor, to adjust and cover up when inherent competences shift.

5.6. Autonomy/mandate

As stated by Huxham (2003), there lies power within controlling financial resources. The unit managers have budget responsibility, but they are not part of the decision-making process regarding the budget for the M&P services. Thus the unit managers cannot enjoy that supposed power. Huxham (2003) also says that most parties, regardless of if they control financial resources or not, at least have the "power of exit", i.e. the power to leave the collaboration if there would be disagreements. However, this is rarely the case in the public sector, and is apparently not the case in the relationship between the operative units and M&P, since that sort of autonomy is not built in to the organisation of the town district. For instance, M&P receive orders on how they should carry out their activities defined by the town district committee, for example regarding an increased proportion of organic food. However, the units ordering food have their own preferences about how quality should look and may not at all wish to order organic food and the restrictions that this entails. It arises as examples in the interview with the unit manager of a nursery home. She means that it is a good cause to order organic food, however these requirements does not suit their residents particularly good since it comes with restrictions of what can be ordered. Several of the respondents have in the empirical data made the comparison of their situation with a private company, in terms of the possibility to choose supplier, with the “power of exit” as the main tool. The customer in this case, i.e. the unit managers, cannot exit the collaboration if they are unhappy about the contracts due to the structure.

Furthermore, the lack of choice among the “customers”, i.e. the operative departments, is problematic for the M&P. The situation leads to a phenomenon that could be named “dual demands”. The M&P end up in the situation that they receive demands from two directions, the town district committee and from the operative department that represent the users. Meanwhile, the M&P is only controlled from one direction. M&P has mandate to execute the
decisions of the town committee to their units they serve. However, the unit manager or the
department manager, are the ones who acts as responsible against the users of the services, i.e.
children in schools and preschools or residents in the nursery homes and their relatives. The
unit managers have to take the role as responsible even if they do not have the mandate or the
role of someone who can make changes. The unit managers or department managers are still
supposed to turn to M&P with their wishes and request, and M&P have to manage the way of
deciding how to act when they get requests from their users but are being controlled by the
restrictions of the politicians.

5.7. Conclusions of analysis

Five factors have been identified essential for the perceived quality in service the public
sector. Under “organisation structure” the studied organisation is identified as a combination
between a machine bureaucracy and a professional bureaucracy in accordance with the
theories about configuration forms of Henry Mintzberg (1983). A discrepancy appears
between the studied organisation’s organisation chart and Mintzberg’s models when it comes
to what should be identified as a support function, and what should be identified as the
 technostructure. In the part about “collaboration” it emerges that within the studied
organisation, the general perception is that the co-workers are willing to work hard and to
develop for the better if they are given the right circumstances, in accordance with the X and
Y-theories (McGregor, 1960). In addition, the importance of working towards a common goal
and to see the organisation “as one” instead of different departments and units is brought up.
Both these facts facilitate collaboration according to Danermark (2004), Huxham and Vangen
(2005) and Lindberg (2009). In the part about “division of responsibility”, the analysis once
again stresses the importance of that the organisation see itself “as one”, in order to avoid that
hidden calculations between the several budgets takes place. In addition, the discussion about
division of responsibility brings up the possibility of letting the managers “own their own
processes”, to diminish the responsibility flaw regarding the M&P services and reduce related
frustration. However, Huxham (2003) and the logic of economies of scale supports the idea of
collaboration around functions such as meal and property services. The discussion about
“Flexibility” brings up a paradox between structure and flexibility within a system, where
very detailed standardisation can imply a waste of inherent competences and creativity.
Finally, the discussion about autonomy/mandate brings up the phenomenon “power of exit”,

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as a tool that can be used for negotiations and executing power. It emerges from the analysis that the departments in this study do not enjoy this sort of power. Furthermore the complex situation of the M&P department is distinguished. This situation regards being seen as a support function at the same time as having the role of a strategic function. M&P are also in a situation where they get demands from the units as their customers, at the same time as the units do not have any mandate to make decisions about the services they get. The units are not in this cooperation as a customer with power to exit, and it is the politicians who control the money and have a mandate to make changes.

6. Conclusion and discussion

*This chapter will summarise the most important contributions that our thesis has generated. Subsequently it presents and further discusses the findings and our final conclusions. This will be followed by our suggestions for further research and finally what we have learned as writers.*

6.1. Conclusion

This study has contributed with an identification of factors that constitutes the perceived quality in service in the public sector. Taking basis in the fact that the studied town district is an already working and well-functioning organisation, and that the lack of financial resources should not be considered, five themes has been identified as the main issues that have an impact on the perceived quality of service in order to supply needs: Collaboration, organisation structure, flexibility, division of responsibility and autonomy/mandate. By identifying these factors and discussing them according to the theoretical framework, the two research questions have been answered.

Throughout the work of this study, many comparisons between the public organisation and the private organisation have been made. This is partly due to the new public management-tradition. As brought forward in the analysis, private organisations can to a great extent use the tool “power of exit” when negotiating, i.e. leave the collaboration or at least use it as a threat in order to have an impact on agreements. This is not possible within a public organisation, if it regards internal operators. One conclusion to be drawn from this is that
when there is no possibility of exit, collaboration is of bigger importance and should be given more attention to avoid the participating parts feeling pinioned.

This study reaches the conclusion that it can emerge a confusion regarding decision-making and responsibility if the perceptions of the function of a certain department vary. As suggested by Huxham et. al. (2000) it is important to check out the participants different expectations regarding a collaboration before entering it in order to avoid problems, which has not entirely been done in the studied organisation. If a department such as M&P is looked upon as a support function, the operative managers have to keep in mind that the decisions this supporting department executes, are due to political regulations imposed by the town district committee, and budget regulations made on sectoral level. Thus, the supporting department is “the messenger”. If this is forgotten, unit and department managers might believe that the supporting department also is controlling, and has more mandates to reorganise resources and structures than it actually has. A way to make this idea clearer, is to imagine that the unit or department managers of the operative units get the new regulations agreed upon on their own desks, and from there on has to order services in accordance to them from the supporting department. This would make the role of the M&P purely supportive, and the operative managers would be more active in the process. To conclude, it must be defined whether a department such as M&P should be a supporting function for the operating core or a rather strategic and planning function that has the mandate to give advice and impose new structures. The different perceptions regarding the function and organisational position of M&P creates discrepancies in expectations, and thus has an impact on perceived quality in the service.

As researchers, we try to be careful not to solve practical issues tied specifically to the case Majorna-Linné, where we cannot draw any connection to our theory. A source of frustration that we have identified is discussed under the concept of “dual demand”. In the role of a unit manager you are responsible but do not really have any mandate to make bigger changes about the services from M&P. We have seen this phenomenon but do not have a theoretical basis for discussing it. However, we believe as external researchers that this debate will remain as one of the drawbacks of the current structure and that without changes, it will become a drawback to accept if you do not give more decision-making mandate or resources to the unit managers. A proposal for further research could be how to look at the role of
manager and whether the role of manager and the mandate has been altered, which can be seen as a sign of NPM.

When discussing the findings regarding the five themes, it appears that they can be seen as variables that depend on each other. A completely defined structure can have a positive impact on diminishing the responsibility flaw, but might at the same time decrease the level of flexibility, autonomy and even collaboration. The respondents at times express wishes that contradict each other, such as request of bigger mandate to impact processes and decisions regarding meal and property services, but at the same time a structure that let them focus more on the issues were they have their expertise. Thus, this study leads to the conclusion that there is a paradox between structure and flexibility. In order to request the best quality in the service provided by the organisation the units belong to, they should have a thought about which of the factors they value the most.

6.2. Closing discussion

When starting this study, we did not have any particular knowledge about the organisation and therefore we started with informant interviews. The answer from those interviews formed the questions in the interview guides. There was a curiosity in finding out whether the image of the organisation from M&P’s view would be the same as the image of the respondents who represented the users of M&P’s services. A first step in the conduct of this study was to try to obtain a description of the goal, purpose and activities of the M&P department. As our respondent for the organisation informed us there was no such document, most of the descriptions of the organisation have been founded after the descriptions of the people who work within the organisation, which has given a subjective perspective. We are as authors aware of this, and it has also been the image we wanted to convey.

As management students, we have the new institutional perspective that organisations are influenced and affected by different ideas and trends in the society. We had previous knowledge of new public management, the phenomenon that public organisations begin to mimic private companies in their actions, which has impacted our view of the organisation. This mindset governs us as writers towards that the organisation must constantly be cost effective. Furthermore it is also a human service organisation that has been studied, where a
goal of maximising profits can collide with an aim to see the best for the people. This is an interesting phenomenon of study that distinguishes the public organisation from the private. As brought up in the problem discussion, it is relevant for several public organisations.

As regards our choice of method, the analysis has been conducted with a thematic method which helped us to identify themes that were important for the respondents when speaking about the service that they receive. The thematic analysis implies per se that the subjectivity of the writers affect the analysis, since the themes are identified with help of the writers’ own perceptions. Another type of method for analysis would therefore give another perspective on the case, which is likely to have given a different result. The choice of a qualitative approach was made in order to get rich and vivid descriptions of the respondents’ perceptions. A quantitative method could have been used to gain greater comparability, but we had probably not been given the descriptive results we were looking for. For instance, we doubt that a quantitative method could have provided us with a description of how communication works, which in itself has given us an idea both objectively about how it works, but also what is good and bad in it by the description of how the organisation works. Many nuances had disappeared if a structured, quantitative method had been used.

Finally, the empirical data has in accordance with our method been analysed with the given theoretical framework. The paradox between structure and flexibility that has emerged throughout the analysis has however initiated thoughts about the advantages with hard and loose couplings within an organisation, for instance as discussed by Meyer and Rowan (1977). A theoretical framework regarding decoupling theories would have been applicable on this study.

6.2.1. Suggestions for further research

Throughout the work with this thesis, a couple of ideas on how to develop this study further have emerged.

This study was conducted with a qualitative research method in order to get an understanding of what factors that have an impact on the perceived quality in service. As stated, we would not have been able to get the picture as clear by using a quantitative method at this stage. However, the results of this study can be used as a base for formulating a survey for
quantitative study, in order to compare factors that impact the perception of quality between different town districts.

As also mentioned in the method chapter, this study is quite unique as it covers a district with a combined subscription and committee subsidy-system. A suggestion to further research could be to compare the result of this study with another town district that uses another kind of system, and see how they differ.

6.2.2. What we have learned

We have with this study gained a better understanding of the problems and difficulties that may exist for activities in the public sector. We understand that complexity increases with the larger organisation, and we have seen similarities with Mintzberg’s description of a machine bureaucracy were increased standardisation is needed and implies a stiffness that may hamper the flexibility required for collaboration. We have also understood that many requests by the units have to do with resources, which is a cause of the democratic will and political decision which have not been taken into account in this study. However we have realised that much can be done with non-financial tools, such as reorganisations and collaborative initiatives.
7. References

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**Web:**


http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa


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8. Appendix

8.1 Pictures

8.1.1.
Support functions

Manager of HR

- HR specialists
- Economists of operations
- Accounting
- Purchasing

Manager of finance

Manger of Development

- Chief secretary & Environment
- Town district
- Committee secretary
- Board secretary
- Registrar
- MAS
- Leader of development
- IT
- Communication/IT
- Public health
- Communication, EC-HS & IFC-PH
- Communication, education & col.
- Urban development
- Quality
- Human rights
- External financing
Figure 1-2. The five basic parts of the organization

(Mintzberg, 1983, p.11)
8.2 Interview guide

8.2.1. Interview guide for unit managers

1. Vad har du för nuvarande post?
   1.1. Hur länge har du haft din nuvarande post?
   1.2. Hur länge har du jobbat inom organisationen?

   1. What is your current position?
   1.1. How long have you had your current position?
   1.2. How long have you worked in the organisation?

2. Vilka specifika behov skulle du säga att din enhet har när det kommer till de tjänster som Måltid och fastighetsservice erbjuder?

   2. What specific requirements would you say that your unit has when it comes to the services that Meal and Property service offer?

Måltider - Meals

3. Hur fungerar nytjandet av måltider hos din enhet idag?
3.1. Finns det något som du upplever särskilt bra med detta upplägg?
3.2. Finns det någonting du saknar?

3. How does the use of meal services work at your unit today?
3.1. Is there anything that you experience as particularly good with this approach?
3.2. Is there anything you lack?

4. Hur och när beslutas hur mycket resurser som skall läggas på måltider?
4.1. Har din enhet något självbestämmande gällande hur mycket resurser som skall läggas på måltider?
4.1.1. Om ja - Hur bestäms detta? Vad tas resurserna ifrån i sådana fall?
4.1.2. Om nej - Är det (dvs självbestämmande) någonting du saknar? Hur skulle du vilja att det såg ut?

4. How and when is it decided how much resources that will be spent on meals?
4.1. Does your unit have any autonomy regarding the amount of resources that is being spent on meals?
4.1.1. If yes - How is this determined? From what are the resources taken in such cases?
4.1.2. If no - Is that (i.e. autonomy), something you lack? How would you like it to look like?

5. Tycker du överlag att enhetens behov och önskade kvalitet gällande måltider är tillgodosedda?
5.1. Vad skulle du vilja förändra utifrån de resurser organisationen har tillgång till idag?

5. Do you think in general that the unit’s needs and desired quality concerning meals are satisfied?
5.1. What would you like to change based on the resources the organisation has access to today?

Fastighetsservice - Property service

6. Hur fungerar nyttjandet av fastighetsservice och lokalvård i din enhet idag?
6.1. Finns det något som du upplever särskilt bra med detta upplägg?
6.2. Finns det någonting du saknar? (Får ni tillräckligt med städ? T.ex. vad gör ni om ni vill ha mer städ?)
6. How does the use of property services and cleaning work at your unit today?

6.1. Is there anything that you experience work particularly good with this approach?

6.2. Is there anything you lack? (Do you get enough cleaning for instance? What do you do if you want more cleaning?)

7. How and when is it decided how much resources that will be spent on property services?

7.1. Does your unit have any autonomy regarding the amount of resources to be spent on buildings and cleaning?

7.1.1. If yes - How is this determined? From what are the resources taken in such cases?

7.1.2. If no - Is that (i.e. autonomy), something you lack? How would you like it to look like?

8. Do you think in general that the unit's needs and desired quality concerning property services are satisfied?

8.1. What would you like to change based on the resources the organisation has access to today?

Kommunikation – Communication

9. How do you communicate with Måltid- och fastighetsservice idag?

9.1. Are you satisfied with the communication's structure and scope, or is there something you would like to improve?

9.2. How flexible do you perceive the cooperation to be between your unit and M&F?
9. How do you communicate with Meal and Property service today?

9.1. Are you satisfied with the way the communication work today and its extent, or is there something you would like to improve?

9.2. How flexible do you feel that the collaboration is between your unit and M&P?

10. Hur ser plattformen ut för att diskutera organisatoriska och övriga problem rörande samverkan med de andra områdena i stadsdelen?

10.1. Hur fungerar det?

10. How does the platform look when it comes to discussing organisational and other problems concerning collaboration with the other areas in the town district?

10.1. How does it work?

11. Upplever du att du har mandat att föreslå och få igenom förändringar gällande tjänsterna din enhet erhåller från M&F?

11.1. Hur går du tillväga i sådana fall?

11. Do you feel that you have a mandate to propose and make the changes regarding the services your unit receives from the M&P?

11.1. How do you act in such cases?

Avslutningsvis - Lastly

12. Hur nöjd är du med avvägningen mellan resurser och kvalitet för de tjänster som måltid och fastighetsservice erbjuder er?

12. How satisfied are you with the balance between resources and the quality of the services that meal and property services offer you?

13. Vad är din roll i att säkerställa att måltid, fastighetsservice och lokalvård håller önskad kvalitet?

13. What is your role in ensuring that food, property service and cleaning keeps the desired quality?
8.2.2. Interview guide for department managers

1. Vad har du för nuvarande post?
1.1. Hur länge har du haft din nuvarande post?
1.2. Hur länge har du jobbat inom organisationen?
1.3. Beskriv kortfattat dina arbetsuppgifter.
1.4. Hur många enheter ingår i ditt område?

1. What is your current post?
1.1. How long have you had your current post?
1.2. How long have you worked in the organisation?
1.3. Briefly describe your duties.
1.4. How many units are included in your area?

Måltider - Meals

2. Hur fungerar beslutsprocessen (beställning, leverans och nyttjande) kring måltider inom ditt område idag?
2.1. Finns det något som du upplever särskilt bra med detta upplägg?
2.2. Finns det någonting du saknar?

2. How does the decision process (ordering, delivery and utilisation) around the meals in your field work today?
2.1. Is there anything that you experience as particularly good with this approach?
2.2. Is there anything you lack?

3. Hur och när beslutas om hur mycket resurser som skall läggas på måltider?
3.1. Hur mycket har du som områdeschef att säga till om gällande hur mycket resurser som skall läggas på måltider?
3.2. Skiljer sig resursåtgången åt mellan enheterna inom ditt område gällande måltider?
3.3. Hur kommunizicerar du med enhetscheferna inom ditt område gällande vilka resurser som skall läggas?

3. How and when is it decided about the amount of resources that will be spent on the meals?
3.1. How much of a say do you have as department manager regarding how much resources that will be spent on the meals?
3.2. Does the quantity in the use of resources differ among the units in your area regarding meals?
3.3. How do you communicate with the unit managers within your area regarding what resources to be spent?

3. Upplever du överlag att enheternas behov gällande måltider är tillgodosedda?
3.1. Är det något du skulle vilja förändra utifrån de resurser organisationen har tillgång till idag?

4. Do you think in general that the unit's needs and desired quality concerning meals are satisfied?
4.1. Is there anything you would you like to change based on the resources the organisation has access to today?

Fastighetsservice och lokalvård – Property service and cleaning
5. Hur fungerar beslutsprocessen gällande nyttjandet av fastighetsservice och lokalvård inom ditt område idag?
5.1. Finns det något som du upplever särskilt bra med detta upplägg?
5.2. Finns det något som saknar?

5. How does the decision-making regarding the use of property services and cleaning work in your field today?
5.1. Is there anything that you feel particularly good about with this approach?
5.2. Is there anything you lack?

6. Hur och när beslutas hur mycket resurser som skall läggas på fastighetsservice och lokalvård?
6.1. Hur mycket har du som områdeschef att säga till om gällande hur mycket resurser som skall läggas på fastighetsservice och lokalvård?
6.2. Skiljer sig resursåtgången åt mellan enheterna inom ditt område gällande fastighetsservice?
6.3. Hur kommunicerar du med enhetscheferna inom ditt område gällande vilka resurser som skall läggas?

6. How and when is it decided how much resources that will be spent on property services and cleaning?
6.1. How much say do you have as area a regarding how much resources that will be spent on property services and cleaning?
6.2. Does the quantity in the use of resources differ among the units in your area regarding property services?
6.3. How do you communicate with the unit managers in your area regarding how many resources to be spent?

7. Upplever du överlag att enheternas behov gällande fastighetsservice och lokalvård är tillgodosedda?
7.1. Vad skulle du vilja förändra utifrån de resurser organisationen har tillgång till idag?

7. Do you think in general that the unit's needs and desired quality concerning property service and cleaning are supplied?
7.1. Is there anything you would you like to change based on the resources the organisation has access to today?

**Kommunikation – Communication**

8. Hur kommunicerar ni med Måltid- och fastighetsservice idag?
8.1. Är du nöjd med kommunikationens upplägg och omfattning, eller finns det något du skulle vilja förbättra?

8. How do you communicate with Meal and Property service today?
8.1. Are you satisfied with the way the communication work today and its extent, or is there something you would like to improve?

9. Hur ser plattformen ut för att diskutera organisatoriska och övriga problem rörande samverkan (det vill säga gemensamma problem,) med de andra områdescheferna i stadsdelen?
9.1. Är du nöjd med upplägget?
9.2. Hur flexibel upplever du att samverkan är mellan ditt område och M&F?
9. How does the platform look when it comes to discussing organisational and other problems concerning collaboration (i.e. mutual problems) with the other department managers in the town district?
9.1. Are you satisfied with the arrangement?
9.2. How flexible do you feel that the collaboration is between your area and M&P?

10. Do you feel that you have a mandate to propose and bring about change regarding the services that your units receive from M&P?
10.1. If yes - How do you go on in such cases?
10.2. If no - How would you like it to look like?

11. What is your role in ensuring that food, property and cleaning keeps the desired quality?