



Towards trust-based performance evaluation in Swedish social services

Annika Hasselblad

To cite this article: Annika Hasselblad (22 May 2026): Towards trust-based performance evaluation in Swedish social services, Nordic Social Work Research, DOI: [10.1080/2156857X.2026.2677882](https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2026.2677882)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2026.2677882>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 22 May 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 50



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Towards trust-based performance evaluation in Swedish social services

Annika Hasselblad^{a,b}

^aDepartment of Communication, Quality Management and Information Systems, Mid Sweden University, Sundsvall, Sweden; ^bDepartment of Accounting and Finance, Turku School of Economics, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

ABSTRACT

Performance evaluation is a central governance mechanism in organizations because it shapes what becomes visible, legitimate, and valued. In social work, this poses particular challenges, as practice relies on professional judgement, relational engagement, and context-sensitive interventions whose effects are cumulative and preventive rather than immediately measurable. Indicator-based performance regimes associated with New Public Management (NPM) have intensified these challenges by privileging standardized and quantifiable outputs as dominant and ostensibly neutral forms of knowledge. In Nordic reform debates, trust-based governance (TBG) has been proposed as a response to strengthen the legitimacy of professional discretion and dialogue and to reduce micro-management control. However, little research has examined how such ambitions are translated into core governance instruments, particularly performance evaluation. This exploratory qualitative case study investigates how performance evaluation is articulated when front-line social workers are invited to define what should be evaluated in a Swedish municipality undergoing TBG-oriented reform. Data were generated through four participatory workshops ($N=89$), in which practitioners first articulated their practice logic and then developed proposals for evaluation approaches aligned with that logic. The findings show that practitioners did not reject measurement but reframed evaluation as an interpretive and dialogical process. Indicators were regarded as useful but insufficient without contextual interpretation, qualitative reflection, and structured dialogue. The study demonstrates that operationalizing TBG depends on reshaping evaluative practices so that accountability can coexist with professional judgement and relational forms of knowledge.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 11 March 2025
Accepted 15 May 2026

KEYWORDS

New Public Management; performance evaluation; social work; trust-based governance

Introduction

Performance evaluation plays a central role in organizations by making work visible, and thereby shaping what counts as legitimate and valuable (Power 1997). Measurement systems do not merely describe practice; they actively organize and prioritize which activities receive attention, resources, and recognition (Hopwood 1983; Miller 2004). In this sense, evaluation functions as a governance mechanism that not only defines legitimate knowledge and acceptable results, but also shapes organizational priorities and professional understandings of what counts as performance (Dahler-Larsen 2014).

CONTACT Annika Hasselblad  annika.hasselblad@utu.fi

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

In fields such as social work, this governing function becomes particularly consequential. Social work practice is characterized by what in this article are referred to as the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of practice: forms of work that rely on professional judgement, relationship-building, and adaptation to local conditions, and whose effects are often indirect, preventive, and difficult to quantify. These characteristics make performance inherently challenging to render visible through standardized quantitative measures.

In many Western welfare states, performance evaluation has been closely associated with governance reforms commonly grouped under the label New Public Management (NPM) (Hood 1995). In the Swedish public sector, NPM-inspired reforms have increased emphasis on measurable standards, output control, managerial accountability, and audit practices, contributing to hybrid organizational arrangements (Hall 2013). Within social services, this has translated into extensive documentation requirements and indicator-based monitoring intended to enhance efficiency and transparency (Hjärpe 2017, 2020), thereby influencing what activities are recorded, how professional time is structured, and which aspects of work become governable through numbers (Hjärpe 2022).

While such systems are introduced to strengthen accountability, transparency, and consistency, their application to complex professional work may generate tensions. In social services, measurement-intensive governance has been associated with constrained discretion, intensified quantitative demands, shifting professional roles, and a tendency to prioritize measurable outputs over relational and contextual work (Aronsson, Astvik, and Gustafsson 2014; Espvall 2018; Stenius and Storbjörk 2023; Tham and Meagher 2009; Welander, Astvik, and Hellgren 2017). Indicator-based monitoring may also produce unintended consequences, including strategic compliance, data manipulation, and the marginalization of activities that resist quantification (Bornemark 2018; Hjärpe 2017).

At the same time, social work evaluation scholarship has long recognized that meaningful assessment requires clarity regarding purpose, users, and underlying theories of change, and must remain sensitive to contextual and relational dimensions of practice (Shaw and Lishman 1999; Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell 2007). Evaluation in public organizations typically serves multiple purposes simultaneously, including accountability, learning, and service improvement (Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell 2007; Weiss 1998). These purposes are not inherently contradictory, as evaluation may inform oversight while also supporting reflection and organizational development. However, tensions may arise when accountability becomes operationalized primarily through standardized indicators privileging comparability and external oversight (Hjärpe 2017; Power 1997). The issue, therefore, is not evaluation per se, nor accountability as such, but how accountability is enacted through specific evaluative instruments and knowledge forms (Bornemark 2018).

In response to critiques of measurement-intensive governance, trust-based governance (TBG) has gained prominence in Nordic reform debates (Johansson-Berg and Siverbo 2025; Johnsen 2025). In Sweden, TBG has been articulated as a reform orientation aimed at rebalancing trust and control, emphasizing professional discretion, trust-based leadership, citizen focus, dialogue, and reduced reliance on detailed steering (Bringselius 2021, Bentzen 2023; SOU 2018). Rather than constituting a fixed managerial model, TBG represents a normative reorientation in governance ambitions.

At the same time, TBG does not automatically displace existing accountability arrangements. Research shows that trust-oriented reforms are interpreted and enacted differently across contexts and may coexist with established governance structures (Bringselius 2023; Svedenmark 2025). Given the continued institutionalization of performance measurement systems in public organizations (Modell and Grönlund 2007; Steccolini 2018), reforms risk remaining aspirational if core evaluative instruments are left unchanged (Funck and Karlsson 2024).

From this perspective, performance evaluation becomes a decisive site for examining whether TBG is translated into practice. If evaluation systems continue to privilege standardized indicators for control, ambitions emphasizing discretion and dialogue may have limited practical effect. While

emerging studies examine how professionals experience TBG reforms (e.g. Svedenmark 2025), less attention has been paid to how core governance instruments such as performance evaluation are reconsidered under such conditions.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines how performance evaluation might be reconfigured in alignment with TBG by foregrounding the perspectives of front-line social workers. Drawing on an exploratory case study of a Swedish municipality undergoing a transition towards TBG, the study investigates how practitioners understand the limitations of existing evaluation practices and how they articulate alternative ways of making their work visible and assessable. Evaluation is conceptualized not as a technical exercise, but as a governance practice shaped by assumptions about professional knowledge, accountability, and trust.

The study is situated within the broader reform trajectory initiated by the Swedish Trust Delegation (In Swedish: Tillitsdelegationen), which since 2016 has promoted TBG as a guiding orientation for public sector development (Bringselius 2021; SOU 2018, 47). These reform efforts form part of a wider strategic direction within Swedish public administration, including initiatives led by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) aimed at steering social services towards preventive, knowledge-informed, and locally adapted forms of practice (SALAR 2024). In this reform context, performance evaluation becomes a critical governance instrument through which trust-based ambitions are either operationalized in everyday practice or confined to reform rhetoric.

Performance evaluation and social work practice

Social work practice involves interactional and context-sensitive dimensions that demand professional judgement and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and complexity. Social work scholarship has long emphasized that practice is interpretive and reflexive, requiring ethical sensitivity and contextual reasoning rather than the mechanical application of standardized knowledge (Webb 2001). Outcomes are often indirect, cumulative, and shaped by local conditions rather than attributable to single interventions. From an evaluation perspective, this complexity does not render assessment irrelevant; rather, it makes evaluation choices consequential. Research in social work evaluation underscores the need to balance methodological rigour with sensitivity to practice realities, attending to processes, contexts, and the ways change unfolds over time (Shaw and Lishman 1999; Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell 2007).

Front-line social workers operate in what Lipsky (1980) conceptualized as street-level bureaucracies, where discretionary judgements are made under conditions of limited resources, operational constraints, and high caseloads. Evaluation in such settings typically serves multiple purposes simultaneously, including accountability, learning, and service improvement (Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell 2007; Weiss 1998). These purposes are not inherently incompatible. However, how evaluation is operationalized significantly influences which dimensions of practice become visible.

When evaluation is organized primarily through standardized indicators and reporting requirements, it risks narrowing understandings of practice to what can be readily documented and quantified. Social work organizations often pursue long-term and diffuse goals such as social inclusion, reduced inequality, and the promotion of human rights (Ebrahim and Rangan 2014). Such goals resist clear attribution and short-term measurement. Evaluation frameworks that demand linear causality and measurable outputs may therefore sit uneasily with the realities of frontline practice.

Managerial performance regimes and relational practice

Performance evaluation in social work has increasingly been shaped by managerialist logics associated with neoliberal governance and evidence-based practice (Hjärpe 2017). These approaches prioritize standardization, quantification, and auditability as mechanisms for

demonstrating effectiveness and ensuring organizational control (Abramovitz and Zelnick 2021; Zelnick, Abramovitz, and Pirutinsky 2022). As a result, evaluation frameworks tend to privilege activities and outcomes that are measurable and reportable, reinforcing a narrow understanding of performance aligned with managerial priorities (Timor-Shlevin and Benjamin 2021).

Research shows that such systems do not merely document practice but actively shape it. Indicator-driven evaluation may generate unintended consequences such as strategic reporting, misinterpretation of results, and the marginalization of relational and process-oriented aspects of work (Hjärpe 2017). Practitioners may adapt their conduct and emotional orientations to align with what is institutionally recognized and rewarded (Turtiainen, Anttila, and Väänänen 2022).

At the same time, relational engagement is widely recognized as central to effective social work practice. Empirical research demonstrates that relationships function as key mechanisms through which interventions become meaningful, enabling practitioners to translate organizational demands into individualized support (Cleece et al. 2025). Yet relational work is often treated as difficult to document systematically. When such dimensions remain peripheral in formal evaluation systems, their contribution to engagement, continuity, and change risks being underrepresented (Bryan, Hingley-Jones, and Ruch 2016).

Taken together, these dynamics reveal a structural tension between what practitioners view as central to social work practice and what performance evaluation formally captures. This tension points to the need to examine evaluation not merely as a technical instrument but as a practice that shapes professional priorities and defines legitimate work.

Performance evaluation as a governance tool

Performance evaluation mediates the relationship between managerial accountability and professional discretion by determining which aspects of work become visible, comparable, and governable. Research on accounting, audit, and performance measurement has long demonstrated that evaluation systems are not neutral representations of organizational activity, but actively shape organizational priorities and institutional understandings of what counts as legitimate performance (Espeland and Stevens 1998; Hopwood 1983; Miller 2004; Power 1997). In social services, this means that performance evaluation contributes to defining which dimensions of practice become administratively governable (Hjärpe 2022).

Brodkin (2008) shows how accountability regimes can distort representations of frontline work and undermine professional judgement. Such distortions manifest in strategic adaptation to indicators, conflicts over what constitutes success, and the neglect of problem areas that resist quantification (Hjärpe 2017). In later work, Brodkin (2011, 2012) further argues that new managerialist forms of control impose external evaluative logics that sit uneasily with discretionary and relational practice. Her analysis highlights the limitations of accountability-driven evaluation and underscores the importance of approaches that recognize complexity, learning, and professional reasoning. From this perspective, performance evaluation is not a neutral reporting mechanism but a core governance instrument that shapes how professional work is structured, interpreted, and valued.

Trust-based governance and performance evaluation

Critiques of indicator-driven performance regimes have stimulated interest in alternative ways of organizing accountability and learning in social services (Brodkin 2008, 2011, 2012; Hjärpe 2017, 2020). In Sweden, these debates intersect with the emergence of TBG, articulated through the work of the Trust Delegation as a reform orientation emphasizing professional discretion, dialogue, knowledge use, and reduced detailed control (SOU (2018), 47; Bringselius 2021).

Importantly, TBG does not prescribe a specific model of performance evaluation. Rather, it signals a normative rebalancing of how accountability and professional judgement should relate. Empirical research indicates that trust-based reforms are interpreted and enacted within existing organizational structures and frequently coexist with established performance measurement systems (Bringselius 2023; Svedenmark 2025). This suggests that core governance instruments are not replaced under TBG but must be renegotiated.

From this perspective, performance evaluation becomes a particularly revealing governance instrument. Research in social services shows how indicator-driven regimes may produce misalignments between managerial accountability and the relational and discretionary dimensions of practice (Bornemark 2018; Brodtkin 2008; Hjärpe 2017). If TBG is to move beyond rhetorical ambition, attention must therefore turn to how evaluation practices are interpreted and reshaped.

In this study, trust-based performance evaluation does not denote a predefined model, but refers to the exploration of how performance evaluation can function as a mediating governance tool under TBG conditions. The analytical distinction is therefore between TBG as a broader reform orientation and trust-based performance evaluation as the level at which governance ambitions are translated into concrete evaluative practices.

Methodology

This study employs an exploratory qualitative case study design (Yin 2018) to examine how performance evaluation might be articulated when front-line practitioners are given the opportunity to develop measures that reflect their everyday work within a social service organization undergoing governance change. A case study approach is well suited for investigating such contemporary organizational phenomena, where evaluation practices, professional roles, and governance arrangements are being reconsidered and have not yet stabilized. The study focuses on a single municipal case, enabling an in-depth examination of how evaluation is reasoned about in practice while remaining attentive to variation across organizational settings (Flyvbjerg 2006).

The study was conducted in a Swedish municipality of medium size, characterized by socio-economic variation and ongoing efforts to strengthen preventive social work and cross-organizational collaboration. At the time of the study, the municipality had initiated a TBG – oriented development project, which provided the organizational context for the workshops while remaining anonymized to protect participants and the organization. As part of this broader reform process, social services were reorganized from a centralized unit into four geographically based units located closer to citizens. This reorganization aimed to strengthen local presence, improve accessibility, and support preventive and relationship-oriented work towards clients. For the purposes of this study, these organizational changes are analytically relevant because they coincided with renewed discussions about professional discretion, collaboration, and how social work outcomes might be evaluated.

The empirical material analysed was generated through four participatory workshops conducted as part of a two-year collaborative project between the municipality and the university. The workshops were designed and facilitated collaboratively by researchers involved in the project. The author structured and guided the workshop process, primarily during the third and fourth workshops, and participated actively in the first and second workshops. The discussions and the formulation of evaluation ideas were generated by the participants. Although the workshops formed part of a broader development initiative, the analysis presented in this study focuses on participants' reasoning and interactions rather than on the outcomes of the development work. Responsibility for organizational decisions and any subsequent implementation remained with municipal managers.

This dual role may have influenced the research process by shaping the focus of discussions and the reflective orientation of the workshops. However, the study does not evaluate the project itself, nor does it assess the effectiveness of organizational changes or proposed evaluation measures.

Instead, the analysis focuses on how participants articulated possibilities and constraints related to performance evaluation when given the opportunity to define measures that better reflect their professional practice. To mitigate potential bias, the analysis emphasizes recurring patterns across groups rather than isolated statements and treats the workshop material as expressions of collective sense-making rather than individual viewpoints.

Data collection: participatory workshops

Data were collected through four participatory workshops conducted in two phases during autumn 2023 and spring 2024. The workshops were designed as facilitated group sessions that combined elements of focus groups and collaborative analysis, enabling participants to jointly reflect on their work and articulate shared understandings (Krueger and Casey, 2014). Each workshop lasted between four and eight hours and followed a structured format that included short conceptual introductions, small-group work, and plenary discussions.

Participants were drawn from the four geographically reorganized social service units and included front-line social workers, first-line managers, and representatives from central investigative functions. Across the four workshops, between 31 and 65 individuals participated, with some overlap between sessions. In total, $N = 89$ unique individuals participated in the workshops. During the workshops, participants were divided into smaller groups of four to eight members to encourage active participation and allow for in-depth discussion.

Workshop phases and analytical focus

The workshops were conducted in two phases, each with a distinct analytical focus. The first two workshops (Phase 1) were designed to support collective problem analysis and articulation of practice logic, while the second two workshops (Phase 2) focused explicitly on performance evaluation.

Phase 1 was structured around a programme theory inspired analytical matrix (Chen 2005; Funnell and Rogers 2011), used to facilitate collaborative reflection on everyday social work practice. Participants worked in small groups with the matrix, which guided them through five interconnected elements: (1) identification of a central social problem (e.g. school absenteeism or mental health difficulties); (2) discussion of underlying causes (e.g. delayed school reporting, inadequate adaptations, or problematic family relations); (3) consideration of potential consequences if the problem remained unaddressed (e.g. social exclusion, criminal behaviour, or substance abuse); (4) specification of a target outcome representing a desired change (e.g. school completion with passing grades); and (5) identification of strategies and interventions intended to contribute to achieving the target outcome.

Drawing on programme theory's emphasis on making assumed causal pathways explicit, the matrix facilitated a structured yet flexible progression from problem identification to intervention design through collaborative group discussions. By articulating links between problems, causes, interventions, and outcomes, the exercise surfaced professional reasoning that often remains implicit in everyday practice. This shared articulation provided a common analytical reference point across groups and served as a foundation for subsequent discussions about how such work could be meaningfully followed up and evaluated.

Phase 2 built on this shared analytical foundation by explicitly addressing performance evaluation. Participants were invited to reflect on how the outcomes and strategies identified in Phase 1 could be evaluated in ways that they considered meaningful and representative of their everyday work. Rather than starting from existing indicators or reporting requirements, the discussions focused on what kinds of measures could plausibly capture relational, preventive, and context-dependent aspects of practice. This phase generated proposals for evaluation measures that participants perceived as better aligned with professional practice, which are treated in this study as

empirical expressions of how performance evaluation could be configured when practitioners are given the opportunity to define what should be measured under changing governance conditions.

All group discussions and plenary sessions across both phases were audio-recorded and transcribed. Written materials produced during the workshops, including completed matrices and notes from group work, were collected and used as supplementary data in the analysis. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were clearly informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Oral consent was obtained for recording discussions, ensuring transparency and respect for participants' autonomy.

Analytical approach

The analysis was grounded in the materials produced during the group work with the programme theory inspired matrices and proceeded in close dialogue with the audio-recorded workshop discussions. As an initial analytical step, the completed matrices were examined to identify how participants formulated the social problems they experienced in their respective geographical areas, how they articulated underlying causes and consequences, and how they described strategies and desired outcomes. These matrices provided a structured entry point into participants' shared understandings of their work and the challenges they sought to address.

Building on this foundation, the analysis then turned to the recorded group discussions to examine how reasoning about performance evaluation emerged alongside the development of proposed measures. By tracing how participants moved from problem formulation and intervention strategies to considerations of what could be meaningfully followed up and assessed, the analysis captured how evaluative reasoning took shape in interaction. Particular attention was paid to moments of uncertainty, disagreement, and hesitation, as well as to the justifications participants used when proposing or questioning specific measures. This interpretive focus is consistent with qualitative social work research that views professional knowledge as situated, dialogical, and reflexively produced in interaction rather than as the expression of fixed positions (Shaw and Holland 2014).

This analytical process made it possible to reconstruct how proposed evaluation measures were developed in relation to participants' understandings of practice, and to identify the difficulties they encountered when attempting to translate complex, relational, and preventive work into assessable forms. Rather than treating the proposed measures as outcomes in themselves, the analysis focuses on the process through which they were articulated. This approach provides insight into both the challenges of developing performance measures for complex social work under changing governance conditions and the ways practitioners seek to address them.

Findings

This section presents findings from the participatory workshops, focusing on how front-line professionals articulated their work and explored possibilities for performance evaluation when given the opportunity to define what should be evaluated. The analysis follows the sequence of the workshop process, beginning with how participants formulated problems, targeted outcomes, and intervention strategies using the programme theory inspired matrices, and then examining how reasoning about evaluation emerged alongside attempts to develop evaluations aligned with practice.

Articulating practice logic (phase 1)

Working with the programme theory inspired matrices, participants across the four groups began by identifying central social problems encountered in their respective geographical areas. Although the specific formulations differed, the problems articulated were consistently complex and

interrelated, involving combinations of social, relational, and organizational challenges rather than discrete or easily delimited issues. Participants emphasized that these problems were embedded in local conditions and shaped by factors extending beyond the immediate reach of social services.

Table 1 provides an overview of the matrices developed by the four groups. Across the groups, recurring issues included distrust of social services (Groups 1, 3, and 4), challenges related to parental engagement and secure parenting (Groups 2, 3, and 4), and school-related problems such as low attendance and poor academic results (Groups 2 and 4). Despite differences in local context, participants frequently identified similar consequences of these problems, including crime, mental ill-health, and social exclusion.

Across the groups, underlying causes were often described as combinations of delayed detection, fragmented collaboration between organizations, inadequate adaptations within schools, strained family relationships, and structural conditions such as segregation and low trust in authorities. These discussions highlighted the difficulty of isolating single causes or linear pathways from problem to outcome.

Despite this complexity, participants articulated target outcomes that reflected shared professional aspirations. Commonly proposed strategies included parental education to strengthen parental capacity, community engagement to increase social inclusion, collaboration with schools to increase or sustain school attendance, and the provision of low-threshold services to get families to contact social services when support was needed. Concrete suggestions such as homework support, parental groups, informal outreach, collaboration with community actors, underscores centrality of relational, preventive, and long-term work that matters in everyday social work practice. Together the suggested strategies were mainly relational, long-term process-oriented rather than as short-term or easily quantifiable achievements.

Table 1. Programme theory matrix, overview of the four groups.

Group	Problem	Causes	Consequences	Target outcome	Strategy
1	Segregation, low trust in authorities, few activities for children	Language barriers, poor transport, lack of meeting places, weak agency cooperation, isolation, low social cohesion, absence of youth activities	Crime, social exclusion, lack of cohesion, insecurity among children	Social inclusion; families contacting social services when needed	Homework support, social media outreach, collaboration programs, low-threshold services, engaging young adults, night patrols, informal talks
2	Insecure parents, inadequate schooling	Weak attachment, parental mental illness, resistance to services, neglect, generational difficulties, poor school adaptations	Unsafe relationships, mental illness, neglect, school failure, crime	Secure parents → secure children; completion of schooling with passing grades	Parent education/ training, school collaboration, theme evenings, parental groups
3	Distrust of social services, parental substance abuse and mental illness	Disinformation, segregation, low education, fear of authorities, invisibility of services, low income, social inheritance	Children not receiving help, crime, substance abuse, neglect, fear, weak attachments	Families contacting social services when they need support; parental well-being	Low-threshold services, parent meetings, community marketing, improved treatment, counselling, collaboration with schools and bridge-builders
4	School absenteeism/home withdrawal, child mental illness, fear of social services	Late school reporting, insufficient school adaptations, waiting lists for child and adolescent psychiatry, weak attachment, cultural differences, honour norms, stress	Late interventions, child mental illness, drug abuse, crime, exclusion, lack of support at home and school	Completion of schooling; families contacting social services when help is needed	Visible social services, homework support, parental education, mother groups, guidance and support programs

Phase 1 was important because it made explicit the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of social work practice that often remain implicit in everyday work. By systematically articulating problems, causes, expected outcomes, and strategies, participants clarified how they understand change as cumulative, relational, and dependent on local conditions. The matrices revealed that professional practice is oriented towards building trust, strengthening relationships, and preventing escalation over time rather than producing immediate, isolated results. In doing so, Phase 1 established a shared and explicit practice logic that later became central when participants attempted to translate their work into performance evaluation terms.

Translating practice into evaluation (phase 2)

As participants moved from articulating problems, outcomes, and intervention strategies to considering how this work could be evaluated, significant challenges became apparent. While the matrices helped clarify professional logic and aspirations, they also exposed tensions between the complexity of social work practice and existing approaches to performance evaluation. Participants repeatedly noted that the kinds of outcomes they sought such as increased trust from clients, strengthened relationships, or early preventive effects, were difficult to translate into measurable indicators within current evaluation systems.

First, participants highlighted how quantitative indicators often provide a simplified representation of a complex reality, creating a gap between everyday practice and what is captured in metrics. This tension became evident in discussions about support interventions for insecure mothers. While the strategy aimed to reduce authority interventions through increased knowledge, trust, and visibility, participants noted that greater outreach could lead to an increase rather than a decrease in reports. As one respondent reflected:

I think the more we are out there and increase their knowledge, the more reports we will receive. We've already noticed this. And I've talked to principals who agree, the more you're here, the more visible you become (Respondent, WS 2)

This example illustrates how numerical changes can be difficult to interpret in isolation. An increase in reports may indicate heightened awareness and trust rather than a worsening situation, while a decrease may not necessarily signal improvement. Participants therefore emphasized that quantitative trends require professional interpretation and contextual understanding to be meaningful.

Second, participants pointed out that quantitative measures often fail to capture the content of practice. Counting activities or occurrences was seen as insufficient for assessing what actually takes place in interactions. This was illustrated in discussions about the measure 'number of times teachers recommend social services', which participants described as problematic because it does not reflect what information is conveyed or how it is communicated. As one respondent explained:

Many say 'yes, we talk about social services', but what do they say? For example, at a parent meeting I attended, the teacher said, 'I want to endorse social services', and then the information ended. So, they mentioned social services, but it wasn't informative. (Respondent, WS 2)

Similarly, participants stressed that numerical increases alone do not indicate whether practice has improved:

Numbers only tell if there's been an increase, but they don't indicate whether things have improved. (Respondent, WS 3)

These reflections underscored that quantitative measures can register activity but not quality or meaning, limiting their usefulness for evaluating relational and preventive work.

The third challenge concerned the status of professional judgement in relation to quantitative data. Participants described how changes such as increased trust or improved collaboration were experienced in practice but lacked legitimacy unless supported by measurable indicators.

Professional assessments based on experience and observation were perceived as insufficient without statistical evidence. This tension was articulated clearly by one respondent:

We feel it has improved significantly, but we haven't measured it. It's based solely on our feelings or perceptions. We know we're being invited more, like when a child has issues, we're invited to the school to talk rather than it becoming a concern report. But we have no statistics. (Respondent, WS 2)

Taken together, these discussions show how attempts to evaluate social work outcomes exposed tensions between professional understandings of meaningful change and the logics of existing performance measurement and evaluation systems. While participants did not reject quantitative data as such, they emphasized its limitations and the need for professional interpretation to make sense of numerical indicators.

The challenges articulated confirm previous research showing tensions between indicator-driven accountability regimes and the relational and discretionary dimensions of social work (Bornemark 2018; Brodtkin 2008; Hjärpe 2017). Participants described how performance measurement systems tend to privilege quantifiable outputs, while professional assessments of trust, collaboration, and preventive effects struggle to gain legitimacy. At the same time, the workshop format itself created value. By providing structured space to collectively reflect on these tensions, participants were able to articulate concerns that often remain implicit in everyday practice. This shared articulation of misalignment was vital for the subsequent step of exploring alternative ways of formulating performance evaluation. Making the tension explicit enabled participants to move from critique towards constructive proposals for how evaluation could better reflect the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of their work.

Reconfiguring evaluation

Despite the challenges identified in the previous section, participants did not abandon the task of developing ways to evaluate their work. Instead, all four groups proceeded to expand their problem analysis matrices by adding a sixth column focused on how the outcomes of their proposed strategies could be evaluated. This step marked a shift from identifying limitations in existing performance measures towards exploring what evaluation might look like if it were designed to reflect the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions everyday practice more closely.

One recurring strategy involved broadening the understanding of what evaluation could entail. Rather than seeking single indicators that could directly capture outcomes, participants discussed combinations of quantitative and qualitative information as a way to make their work more visible. Quantitative measures were considered potentially useful for indicating trends or levels of activity. However, participants emphasized that numerical changes often required contextual interpretation in order to be meaningful. In this setting, qualitative elements added value by enabling professionals to explain what developments signified in practice and how relational processes contributed to outcomes. Evaluation was thus framed less as a tool for definitive judgement and more as a structured basis for reflection and dialogue.

For example, some groups proposed tracking the frequency of contacts with schools or the number of advisory invitations received as quantitative indicators of collaboration. At the same time, they stressed that such figures needed to be complemented by qualitative elements, such as structured self-evaluations or reflective dialogues with schools, to assess the quality and significance of these interactions. Without contextual explanation, increases or decreases in numbers were seen as ambiguous and potentially misleading. The qualitative components therefore functioned as interpretive mechanisms that connected indicators to the underlying processes through which change was expected to occur.

Another recurring theme concerned the development of process-oriented measures aimed at capturing ongoing relational work rather than discrete outcomes. Participants repeatedly highlighted that much of their effort was invested in building trust, maintaining relationships, and being

present in local contexts, activities considered essential for long-term change but largely invisible in existing metrics. To address this, some groups suggested documenting time spent on relationship-building activities using tools such as colour-coded calendars. These were not intended to function as performance indicators in a narrow sense, but as a way of making visible work that was otherwise unaccounted for within formal reporting systems. Similarly, proposals to track forms of engagement or continuity of contact were discussed as ways of illustrating relational development rather than as direct measures of impact. In this way, qualitative documentation served to translate interactional work into forms that could enter performance evaluation without reducing it to simplified outputs.

Dialogue emerged as a third important theme in participants' approaches to evaluation. Several groups proposed using structured dialogues with schools and preschools as an evaluative practice in itself. Rather than relying solely on surveys or numerical indicators, these dialogues were intended to assess collaboration quality, mutual understanding, and trust between organizations. Examples included structured collaboration meetings where schools and social services could jointly reflect on how cooperation functioned, what had improved, and where challenges remained. In some cases, baseline questions were suggested prior to meetings to surface expectations and knowledge gaps, with follow-up discussions used to assess changes over time. These dialogical approaches were described as ways of generating evaluative knowledge that was context-sensitive and actionable. Here, qualitative elements added value by enabling joint interpretation and by anchoring evaluation in shared understanding rather than isolated figures.

Across the groups, participants also explored ways of evaluating outcomes that were relational and preventive in nature. For instance, some groups proposed pre- and post-term surveys for parents, using scaled questions to assess changes in confidence or perceived support. These quantitative elements were often paired with open-ended questions intended to identify discussion needs or assess the usefulness of information provided.

Similarly, proposals to assess schools' and preschools' knowledge of social services were framed as both evaluative and developmental, aiming to improve future collaboration rather than merely document current status. These approaches illustrate how participants sought not to replace measurement, but to connect indicators to the preventive ambitions of their work, even when effects were indirect or unfolded over time.

Taken together, these themes illustrate that participants did not approach evaluation as a matter of choosing between qualitative and quantitative data, but as a reflective process of negotiating what aspects of their work should be made visible and how. The proposed measures remained tentative and context-dependent, reflecting both professional aspirations and perceived organizational constraints. Rather than producing a unified evaluation model, the groups articulated provisional principles for evaluation that combined quantitative indicators with contextual interpretation, attention to processes, and structured dialogue. Evaluation was described as 'telling the story' of their work over time rather than producing isolated measurements. In this sense, evaluation was understood as a cumulative and interpretive process in which different forms of information were connected to render the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of practice visible within performance evaluation.

At the same time, participants expressed uncertainty about how such forms of information would be received within existing evaluation structures, where numerical indicators were often perceived as more legitimate. This highlights the ongoing tension between professional understandings of meaningful evaluation and dominant performance measurement logics.

Discussion

Under the organizational restructuring inspired by TBG, this study has examined how performance evaluation might be reconfigured by inviting front-line professionals to articulate how their work should be evaluated. Rather than asking whether accountability should be reduced, the study

explored how evaluation itself could be adjusted so that the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of practice become visible within accountability arrangements. In doing so, the study positioned performance evaluation as a decisive site where the ambitions of TBG are either operationalized or constrained.

The findings show that front-line professionals did not reject performance evaluation, but instead renegotiated its meaning and function in relation to the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of social work practice. When participants articulated their practice logic in Phase 1, change was described as relational, preventive, context-bound, and unfolding over time rather than as isolated or directly measurable outcomes. This articulation clarifies that the challenge is not opposition to accountability or measurement per se, but the difficulty of translating cumulative and interactional processes into evaluative formats. Participants also described how professional assessments of trust, collaboration, and preventive effects were perceived as less legitimate unless supported by quantifiable indicators, reflecting persistent hierarchies of evaluative legitimacy within institutionalized performance systems (Bornemark 2018; Hjärpe 2017; Steccolini 2018). By making these tensions explicit, the study extends existing research on relational practice and street-level accountability by demonstrating empirically how professionals themselves negotiate the relationship between accountability, interpretation, and evaluative visibility under TBG conditions (Brodtkin 2008, 2012; Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell 2007).

Importantly, the workshops lead participants to reinterpret the role of performance evaluation. Indicators were repositioned as requiring contextual interpretation; relational and preventive work was translated into forms that could enter evaluation without being reduced to isolated outputs; and dialogue emerged as an evaluative practice through which accountability and professional practice were jointly interpreted. In this sense, performance evaluation appeared not only as a measurement system, but as an interpretive and relational governance tool through which the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of practice could be rendered visible.

This reframing aligns with evaluation scholarship emphasizing that performance indicators have constitutive effects, shaping what becomes visible, valued, and institutionally recognized as performance (Dahler-Larsen 2014). At the same time, it extends this perspective by showing how professionals can actively participate in influencing how performance is represented within such systems. Rather than treating quantitative and qualitative approaches as oppositional, participants explored how indicators could be combined with interpretation and dialogue to better represent their work. Although evaluation literature has long highlighted the dual purposes of accountability and learning (Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell 2007; Weiss 1998), the present study does not propose a new learning-oriented model. Instead, it shows how the relationship between accountability and professional judgement is reworked in practice when evaluation is opened to professional articulation and reconfiguration. Therefore, the contribution lies in demonstrating empirically how performance evaluation can mediate between accountability and professional practice when professionals are invited into its design.

The analysis also raises a further question: if performance evaluation can be repositioned to better accommodate the reality of social work practice, under what conditions does this become possible? The workshops suggest that such renegotiation does not occur automatically, even within a reform context characterized by TBG ambitions.

First, participants were given structured space to articulate the logic of their practice before engaging with evaluation. Second, tensions between professional practice and existing accountability arrangements were explicitly recognized rather than suppressed. Third, professional interpretation and judgement were treated as a legitimate component of evaluative knowledge. Finally, evaluation was embedded in dialogue and reflection rather than reduced to isolated reporting. These observations suggest that adjusting performance evaluation under TBG is not primarily a matter of replacing indicators, but of reorganizing how evaluative authority, visibility, and meaning are constructed in practice. In line with literature emphasizing that TBG must be supported by institutional arrangements rather than rhetoric alone (Björk and Tengblad 2023;

Bringselius 2023), the study indicates that performance evaluation is one such critical arrangement. Governance reform requires engagement with core instruments. Without such engagement, TBG risks remaining aspirational.

Overall, the study makes two main contributions. First, it provides an empirically grounded account of how performance evaluation in social work can from a professional perspective be reconfigured to consider the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of social work practice. This by understanding performance evaluation as a mediating governance practice capable of connecting accountability requirements with professional practice. The study contributes practically by providing concrete examples of how performance evaluation can be reconfigured, which can be used to avoid TBG initiatives becoming only rhetorical. And suggest that reforming evaluation under TBG requires structured arenas for articulation, recognition of professional interpretation as legitimate evaluative knowledge, and dialogical practices that connect indicators to context. For research, the findings point towards the importance of examining performance evaluation as a governance mechanism that shapes what becomes visible and prioritized in welfare organizations. And the value of utilizing the knowledge of the profession to reconfigure performance evaluation to in a better way reflect the reality of social work practice.

Conclusions

This study examined how performance evaluation might be reconsidered when front-line social workers are invited to articulate how their work should be evaluated under TBG conditions. By structuring the analysis around participatory workshops, the study traced how professionals moved from articulating the interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of their practice, to identifying tensions with existing performance systems, and finally to exploring how evaluation might better reflect their professional understanding of their every day work.

The findings show that professionals do not oppose accountability or performance evaluation as such. Rather, they recognize the authority of indicator-based systems while highlighting the difficulties of representing relational, preventive, and context-bound work within standardized frameworks. When given structured space to reflect, participants repositioned evaluation from a narrow measurement exercise towards a more interpretive and dialogical practice. Indicators were not rejected, but understood as requiring contextual interpretation and complementing forms of qualitative reflection in order to render the social work practice visible within accountability arrangements.

The value of these findings lies in their empirical grounding. Rather than proposing a predefined alternative model of evaluation, the study demonstrates how performance evaluation is renegotiated in practice when professionals are invited to participate in its design. It clarifies why misalignment between practice and evaluation persists, how hierarchies of legitimacy shape professional reasoning, and under what conditions evaluation practices may be adjusted to better connect accountability and professional realities. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing debates on performance measurement and TBG by showing that the operationalization of TBG depends on engagement with core governance instruments such as performance evaluation.

Future research could build on these insights in several ways. First, comparative studies across municipalities or welfare sectors could examine how different organizational contexts shape the possibilities for renegotiating performance evaluation. Second, longitudinal research could explore whether and how participatory efforts to reconfigure evaluation practices are sustained over time and translated into formal organizational routines. Third, further studies could investigate how different actors, including managers, policymakers, and service users, interpret and respond to attempts to integrate interactional and context-sensitive dimensions of practice into performance evaluation systems.

By highlighting performance evaluation as a central arena where governance principles are translated into practice, this study underscores the importance of examining how visibility,

legitimacy, and professional knowledge are constructed within contemporary welfare organizations. How evaluation systems evolve will continue to shape not only what is measured, but what is valued and prioritized in social work.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express gratitude to the participating interviewees for their time and shared knowledge of their work.

During the writing of the paper ChatGPT-4o was used for grammar corrections and improving the fluency of the text.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

Mid Sweden University, in cooperation with the participating municipality, funds the project through which the material for this article was collected.

References

- Abramovitz, M., and J. Zelnick. 2021. "Neoliberal Managerialism and the Human Services." In *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, edited by Cynthia Franklin. New York, NY: Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.1408>.
- Aronsson, G., W. Astvik, and K. Gustafsson. 2014. "Work Conditions, Recovery and Health: A Study Among Workers within Pre-School, Home Care and Social Work." *British Journal of Social Work* 44 (6): 1654–1672. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct036>
- Bentzen, T. Ø. 2023. "The Tripod of Trust: A Multilevel Approach to Trust-Based Leadership in Public Organizations." *Public Management Review* 25 (12): 2255–2277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2132279>
- Björk, L., and S. Tengblad. 2023. *Tillförlitlig styrning och organisering av välfärden*. Stockholm: SNS förlag.
- Bornemark, J. 2018. "The Limits of Ratio: An Analysis of NPM in Sweden Using Nicholas of Cusa's Understanding of Reason." In *Metric Culture: Ontologies of Self-Tracking Practices*, edited by Btihaj Ajana, 235–253. Kings College London, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78743-289-520181013>.
- Bringselius, L. 2021. *Tillit och omdöme: Perspektiv på tillitsbaserad Styrning (Upplaga 1)*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Bringselius, L. 2023. "Trust-Based Public Management: Conceptualization and Lessons from the Swedish Trust Reform." In *Handbook on Strategic Public Management*, edited by Carsten Greve and Tamyko Ysa, 260–279. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789907193.00026>.
- Brodkin, E. Z. 2008. "Accountability in Street-Level Organizations." *International Journal of Public Administration* 31 (3): 317–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900690701590587>
- Brodkin, E. Z. 2011. "Policy Work: Street-Level Organizations Under New Managerialism." *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory* 21 (Supplement 2): 253–277. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muq093>
- Brodkin, E. Z. 2012. "Reflections on Street-Level Bureaucracy: Past, Present, and Future." *Public Administration Review* 72 (6): 940–949. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012.02657.x>
- Bryan, A., H. Hingley-Jones, and G. Ruch. 2016. "Relationship-Based Practice Revisited." *Journal of Social Work Practice* 30 (3): 229–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2016.1215978>
- Chen, H.-T. 2005. *Practical Program Evaluation: Assessing and Improving Planning, Implementation, and Effectiveness*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cleece, K., B. Cheneler, J. Harrison, and J. E. Hill. 2025. "Relational Practice, a Critical Component for Successful Social Work." *Cogent Social Sciences* 11 (1): 2492402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2492402>
- Dahler-Larsen, P. 2014. "Constitutive Effects of Performance Indicators: Getting Beyond Unintended Consequences." *Public Management Review* 16 (7): 969–986. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2013.770058>
- Ebrahim, A., and V. K. Rangan. 2014. "What Impact? A Framework for Measuring the Scale and Scope of Social Performance." *California Management Review* 56 (3): 118–141. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cm.2014.56.3.118>
- Espeland, W. N., and M. L. Stevens. 1998. "Commensuration as a Social Process." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1): 313–343. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.313>

- Espvall, M. 2018. "Professional Strategies and Neoliberal Challenges in Swedish Social Work Practice." In *Neoliberalism, Nordic Welfare States and Social Work*, edited by Masoud Kamali and Jessica Jönsson, 148–158. London: Routledge.
- Flyvbjerg, B. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (2): 219–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>
- Funck, E. K., and T. S. Karlsson. 2024. "Governance Innovation as Social Imaginaries: Challenges of Post-NPM." *Public Management Review* 26 (9): 2680–2699. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2023.2281981>
- Funnell, S. C., and P. J. Rogers. 2011. *Purposeful Program Theory: Effective Use of Theories of Change and Logic Models*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hall, P. 2013. "NPM in Sweden: the risky balance between bureaucracy and politics." In *Nordic Lights: Work, Management and Welfare in Scandinavia*, edited by Å. Sandberg. Stockholm: SNS.
- Hjärpe, T. 2017. "Measuring Social Work. Quantity as Quality in the Social Services." *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift* 119 (1): 23–46.
- Hjärpe, T. 2020. "Mätning Och Motstånd: Sifferstyrning I Socialtjänstens Vardag." Lund University.
- Hjärpe, T. 2022. "Measurable Time Is Governable Time: Exploring Temporality and Time Governance in Childcare Social Work." *Time & Society* 31 (2): 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X211059022>
- Hood, C. 1995. "The "New Public Management" in the 1980s: Variations on a Theme." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 20 (2–3): 93–109. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682\(93\)E0001-W](https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682(93)E0001-W)
- Hopwood, A. G. 1983. "On Trying to Study Accounting in the Contexts in Which It Operates." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 8 (2–3): 287–305. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682\(83\)90035-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682(83)90035-1)
- Johansson-Berg, T., and S. Siverbo. 2025. "The Emergence of Control Archetypes: Theorization of Trust-Based Control in the Swedish Public Sector." *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 102:102809. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2025.102809>
- Johnsen, Å. 2025. "Trust Reforms in Scandinavia: Assessments of Adoption and Impacts of Trust-Based Management in Public Sector Organizations." In *Future Public Governance and Global Crises*, edited by Jan-Erik Johansson and Åge Johnsen, 72–87. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Krueger, R. A., and M. A. Casey 2014. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Lipsky, M. 1980. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*. New York, NY: Russell sage foundation.
- Miller, P. 2004. "Governing by Numbers: Why Calculative Practices Matter." In *The Blackwell Cultural Economy Reader*, edited by A. Amin and N. Thrift, 179–189. Malden, MA: Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774274.ch10>.
- Modell, S., and A. Grönlund. 2007. "Outcome-Based Performance Management: Experiences from Swedish Central Government." *Public Performance and Management Review* 31 (2): 275–288. <https://doi.org/10.2753/PMR1530-9576310206>
- Power, M. 1997. *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SALAR (The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions). 2024. <https://skr.se/skr/omskr/styrelseochberedningar/handlingarfranskr/overenskommelseomomstallningtilllenlangsigtigthallbarsocialtjanst2024.78911.html>.
- Shaw I, and S. Holland. 2014. *Doing Qualitative Research in Social Work*. London: SAGE Publications Limited.
- Shaw, I., and J. Lishman, Eds. 1999. *Evaluation and Social Work Practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- SOU. 2018. "Med Tillit Växer Handlingsutrymmet – Tillitsbaserad Styrning Och Ledning Av Valfärdssektorn." <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/1705dea13e1845d999ce29016897a1ce/med-tillit-vaxer-handlingsutrymmet--tillitsbaserad-styrning-och-ledning-av-valfardssektorn-sou-201847.pdf>.
- Steccolini, I. 2018. "Accounting and the Post-New Public Management: Re-Considering Publicness in Accounting Research." *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 32 (1): 255–279. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-03-2018-3423>
- Stenius, K., and J. Storbjörk. 2023. "When the Organization Is a Problem: An Empirical Study of Social Work with Substance Use Problems in More or Less NPM-Influenced Swedish Municipalities." *Nordic Social Work Research* 13 (1): 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2021.1907613>
- Svedenmark, S. 2025. "Trust-Based Governance and Social Work Professionals in a Municipal Welfare Reorganisation." *Nordic Social Work Research*: 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2025.2452323>
- Tham, P., and G. Meagher. 2009. "Working in Human Services: How Do Experiences and Working Conditions in Child Welfare Social Work Compare?" *British Journal of Social Work* 39 (5): 807–827. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcm170>
- Timor-Shlevin, S., and O. Benjamin. 2021. "The Tension Between Managerial and Critical Professional Discourses in Social Work." *Journal of Social Work* 21 (4): 951–969. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017320949359>
- Turtiainen, J., E. Anttila, and A. Väänänen. 2022. "Social Work, Emotion Management and the Transformation of the Welfare State." *Journal of Social Work* 22 (1): 68–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017320973586>
- Unrau, Y. A., P. A. Gabor, and R. M. Grinnell. 2007. *Evaluation in Social Work: The Art and Science of Practice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Webb, S. A. 2001. "Some Considerations on the Validity of Evidence-Based Practice in Social Work." *British Journal of Social Work* 31 (1): 57–79. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/31.1.57>
- Weiss, C. H. 1998. "Have We Learned Anything New About the Use of Evaluation?" *American Journal of Evaluation* 19 (1): 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109821409801900103>
- Welander, J., W. Astvik, and J. Hellgren. 2017. "Stressrelaterad ohälsa och arbetstrivsel hos medarbetare och chefer i socialtjänsten." *Arbetsmarknad & Arbetsliv* 23 (2): 8–26.
- Yin, R. K. 2018. *Case Study Research and Applications*. Vol. 6. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Zelnick, J. R., M. Abramovitz, and S. Pirutinsky. 2022. "Managerialism: A Workforce Health Hazard in Human Service Settings." *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 65 (8): 669–674. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23395>