'Betwixt and Between'

Action Research and the Duality between Project and Research Results

Andreas D. Landmark[1], Tobias Buschmann Iversen[2]

[1] SINTEF Technology and Society [2] Helse-Vest IKT Innovation and Architecture
andreas.landmark@sintef.no, tobias.buschmann.iversen@helse-vest-ikt.no

Health-care managers everywhere are pursuing the application of ICT as a 'means to an end', be it efficiency, effectiveness or quality. ICT may radically alter the delivery of health care and outcomes. The socio-technical nature of IT systems sets them apart from other engineering disciplines. The role of researchers as both participants as well as observers in such processes is a difficult one. While this dual role gives detailed insight into processes, procedures and data, the researcher, unlike the project professional, needs to maintain scientific rigour *and demonstrate* practical/societal relevance.

We contrast two research projects; both on the implementation of electronic whiteboards in two hospital departments. One is the implementation of a perioperative planning system, the other is a ward whiteboard solution. Both have the overall goal of supporting logistics within and between wards by sharing information in real time. The projects were performed in the tradition of action research; but with very different outcomes. On the face of it, the set-up and context of the projects were similar.

In light of these two cases, we discuss some of the classic myths of key critical success factors as an avenue to project and research success. We further discuss how the potential for high quality research is not necessarily connected to project success, while at the same time many of these negative examples are seldom published in international scientific literature.