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Working across Time and Space: A Fractured Landscape

With recent improvements in digital technology (such as increased bandwidth, smart phones and tablets, cloud servers, cloud software and the like) we are seeing the emergence of new types of working arrangements. One such arrangement is the partially distributed team, where not all members work in the same location and communication is a blend of face to face and online.

This paper is informed by my PhD research project, and explores the experience of a partially distributed team that provides intensive therapeutic care to children in the custody of the child protection system. Data was created using socioanalytic methods (Long, 2013) and is being used to identify some of the potential benefits/challenges for team effectiveness and organisational efficiency. Research questions include: How is leadership and authority experienced in the team?

How does working in or with this kind of team affect the engagement of staff?
How are decisions made, and actions taken?
What practices/processes are used by the team?
How effective is the team in performing its task?

Analysis to date has surfaced themes related to a disconnect between the 'person and place-based work' of the partially distributed team and the centralized, 'hub and spoke' management and administrative functions of the organisation. There is a corresponding lack of engagement by the team with technology, compounded by the organisation's systems which hamper online collaboration.

Literature being used to deepen the analysis includes the concept of the autistic-contiguous position (Ogden (1989), Diamond et al (2004)) and the "quantum" organisation (Boxer, 2014). The investigation will delve further into the data to better understand how both the context of the work and the management of processes and boundaries impacts the functioning of the team.

References

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