

Adaptive and Future Proof?

A critical examination of the twinning between two Dutch governmental agencies

Netherlands School of Public Administration

Prof. dr. M.J.W. van Twist
Mag. Phil. P.M. Karré
Dr. M. van der Steen

Introduction

- A public agency under immense pressure.
- Drastic political intervention expected.
- But: 'peace and quiet' by twinning

Context

- Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND)
 - A law enforcement agency of the Ministry of Justice
 - Implements Dutch immigration policy
 - www.ind.nl/EN
- Social Insurance Bank (SVB)
 - A quango of the Ministry for Social Affairs
 - Implements social insurance schemes and regulations
 - <http://www.svb.nl/int/en>

Twinning in general

- A sustained cooperation between organizations of divergent cultural backgrounds aimed at learning from one another.
- Master-apprentice relationship
- Strategic alliance

Twinning SVB-IND

- Activities regarding improvements in:
 - Steering
 - Information management
 - Public service provision
 - Complaints management
 - Internal quality control systems
 - Enforcement systems
 - Remodeling of internal processes
- Crash tests and knowledge networks
- New culture of learning and of looking beyond organizational boundaries.

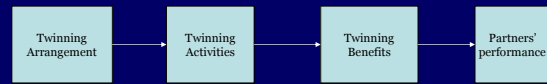
Research questions and method

- What are the benefits of the twinning between IND and SVB?
- How can we best examine the results of a strategic alliance such as this twinning?
- Under which conditions can a twinning be successful in the public sector?
- *Action Research*: in-depth interviews, document analysis, discussion meetings

What may count as an effect of twinning?

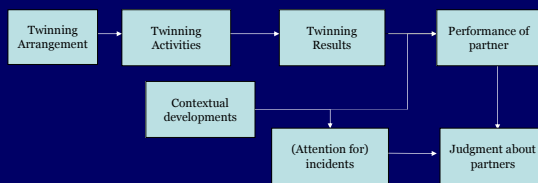
- Also intensive contacts or only concrete changes in quality control?
- Also accidental and indirect effects or only direct effects?
- Also temporary or only long lasting effects?
- How to distinguish between effects due to twinning and those due to other

Twinning in a simple ends and means diagram



- A lot of activity but hardly any concrete results.

Twinning in a multiple process model



Twinning as catalyst.

Characteristics of a successful twinning

1. The simultaneous recognition and denial of inequality.
2. Detached closeness.
3. Argue in a friendly fashion.
4. Be visibly invisible.
5. Big improvements with small steps.

Question for discussion

How to keep a twinning adaptive and future-proof?