Double force. Applying indicators and qualitative measuring to the public library learning space

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Abstract:

Norwegian statistics generally maintain a high standard. Statistics Norway, is responsible for coordinating all official statistics in Norway. The actual collecting of library statistics, is handled by the National Library of Norway.

The demand for detailed statistics from the library community has been low, but this is slowly changing. In Norway, the county libraries serve as development agencies for public and school libraries in their region. At Buskerud County Library, we believe that to guide and support development as efficient as possible, we have to measure it.

The quantitative values offered by national statistics are weighted towards traditional library operations. This means that they barely touch upon the role of public libraries as learning arenas, which has been our main focus in this project. Buskerud County Library seek to improve the public library as a learning space. In order to measure the level and quality of change, we adopted and customized a well-known talent management tool, called the Performance-Potential Matrix. The result was the Buskerud Measuring Model. Testing our model, we discovered that the numeric results relied too much on the qualitative descriptions used in the process. We knew we needed to integrate more quantitative data in the measuring process if we were to raise the quality of the test results.

By combining our qualitative definitions with the quantitative data of the national statistics and indicators, we will get a better and more extensive knowledge base to support a continuous development of the library. This paper describes the use of the Buskerud Measuring Model on public library as a learning arena, and discusses how to implement the national statistics and indicators into the process.

Keywords: Measuring, indicators, learning, statistics,

1 BACKGROUND

The advance of the knowledge society rapidly changes the services libraries should provide. The libraries are under pressure from new digital media and the library users' changing usage patterns. The libraries are changing in order to take on new roles and services. Facilitating new forms of learning are one important role for the libraries. The English summary of the Danish report "The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society" emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning and the role of the public libraries:

> *Lifelong learning becomes a strategically decisive factor to which the library can contribute in new ways. The library can support a positive societal development by on the one hand contributing to the digital information resources being exploited to the full, and on the other hand by creating an informal, open learning, inspiration and meeting place that encourages the public to personal development and societal commitment. (Danish Agency for Libraries and Media, p. 6, 2010).*

Norway, with its 5 million inhabitants, has a scattered population with many small communities. About half of the Norwegian employees participated in non-formal education within the last year according to Statistics Norway. The widespread population makes distance learning especially important. The public libraries in Norway can play an important role as facilitators for lifelong learners. But how well prepared are the libraries to provide service to this user group? That is one of the questions the Buskerud Measuring Model aim to provide an answer to.
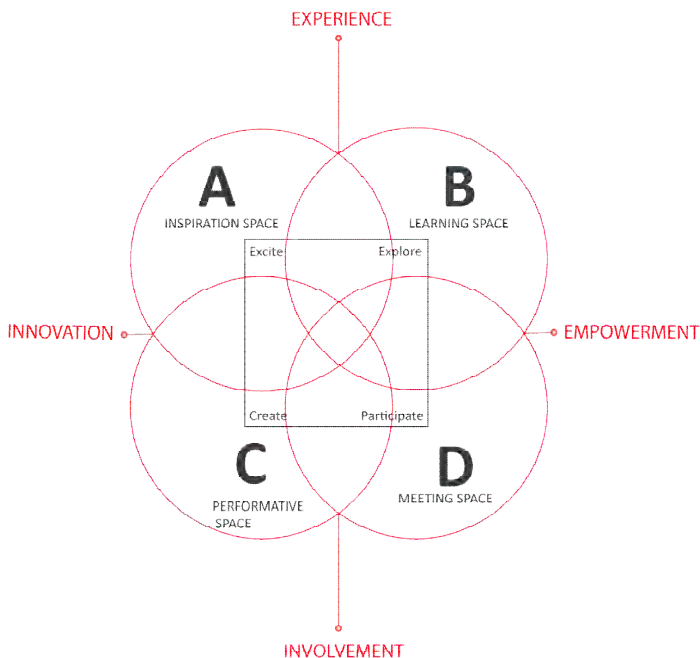
2 THE FOUR-SPACE MODEL

Fig. 1: The Four-space model

The Danish report from 2010, "The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society" has made an impact in Norwegian library development and innovation. For the past three years it's been used for both inspiration and prioritizing in library development.

The report presented a revised model for the library space, both physical and virtual, called the Four-Space model. The model outlines the library's functions through a division into an inspiration space, a learning space, a meeting space and a performative space.

The learning space is particularly important for experience and empowerment. Learning in libraries is always an available service to all users. Learning comes in different shapes and forms as play, artistic activities, courses, lectures and many more (Jochumsen, 2012). In an article from 2012, Jochumsen and co-authors describe the advantages libraries have as learning space:

Learning is seen as a dialogue-oriented process that takes its point of departure in the user's own experiences and their wish to define their own learning needs and, not least, that it takes place in an informal environment (Jochumsen, p. 591, 2012).

3 THE NEED FOR LEARNING SPACES AND STANDARDS. INTRODUCING THE BUSKERUD MEASURING MODEL

Norway's public libraries are facing significant and increasing challenges to provide satisfactory services to a wide range of students who use their local library and its facilities. Buskerud County is no exception. As an example, a survey of 32 students between the age of 18-45 conducted in the Drammen public library showed that they studied 15 different subjects belonging to 19 different institutions. One third was attending upper-secondary school as adults and two thirds were attending college or university.

In order for the public libraries to better meet the complex needs of this diverse user group, Buskerud County Library wanted to investigate what the different types of learning requires and how the public library can face these challenges. We had long been interested in working with standards, and partly inspired by the Michelin guide for restaurants, we decided upon constructing a model for measuring the public library as a learning arena. The result of this work was the Buskerud Measuring Model (BMM).

The Buskerud Measuring Model builds upon a rather well-known two-axial measuring model, known as the Potential/Performance matrix:
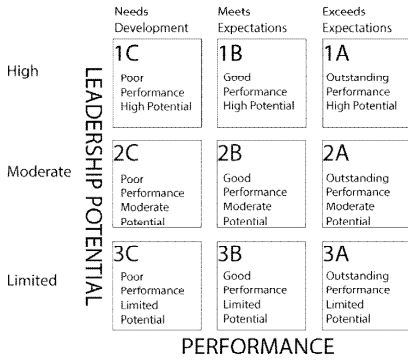
Fig. 2: The Original Potential/Performance Matrix

While the P/P-matrix is most often used for measuring the potential and performance of each employee in an organization or company, The Buskerud Measuring Model focuses not on the individual, but on the institution (the library) itself.
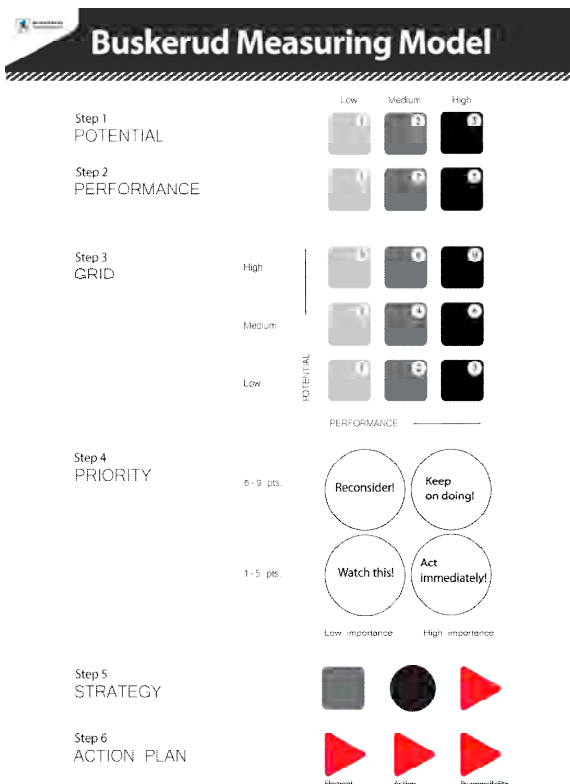
4 THE BUSKERUD MEASURING MODEL, STEP BY STEP
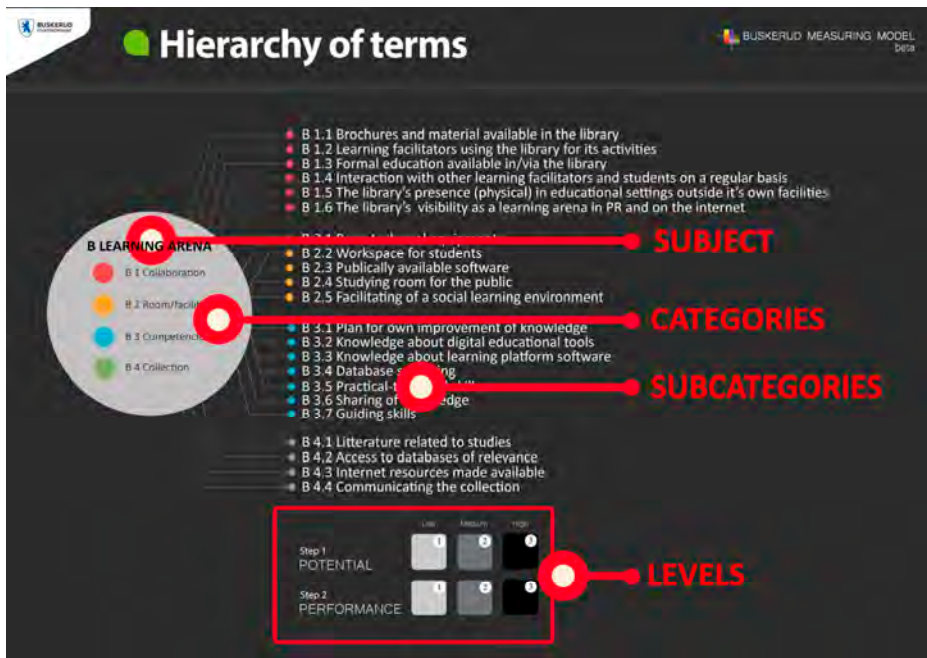

Fig. 3: The Buskerud Measuring Model

Fig. 4: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Hierarchy of terms

4.1 Introduction to Step 1 – Potential

Fig. 5: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 1 - Potential

A High Potential can be described as an almost unreachable state, which still can be reached if all circumstances and effort are at their best. Sometimes, the circumstances make it too hard or impossible to reach the state of high potential. There will always exist factors outside the library that the library can't influence. That is when we describe the potential as medium - or low potential.

As seen in the illustration (Fig. 5), the potential is graded into three levels. These are Low-, Medium- and High Potential. As shown in the hierarchy of terms (Fig. 4), each subcategory is to be given the value of one of the levels Low-, Medium- or High Potential. To be sure that the measure of a subcategory is as correct as possible, the accuracy of the definitions that describes each level is of high importance.

4.2 Introduction to Step 2 – Performance

Fig. 6: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 2 - Performance

The categories and subcategories are the same for performance as for potential within each subject. Using the definitions of performance, the library can measure and thereafter improve its own performance. While the definitions of levels of potential are created mostly on a qualitative basis, we want the definitions of performance levels to rely more on quantitative measures to assure a higher accuracy of the measuring results.

Performance is also graded in the levels Low-, Medium and High Performance. Performance definitions are prepared in compliance with the definitions of potential within the same subcategory.

The graded measuring of performance results in both information on minimum practice, as well as definitions of "best in class" within each subcategory.

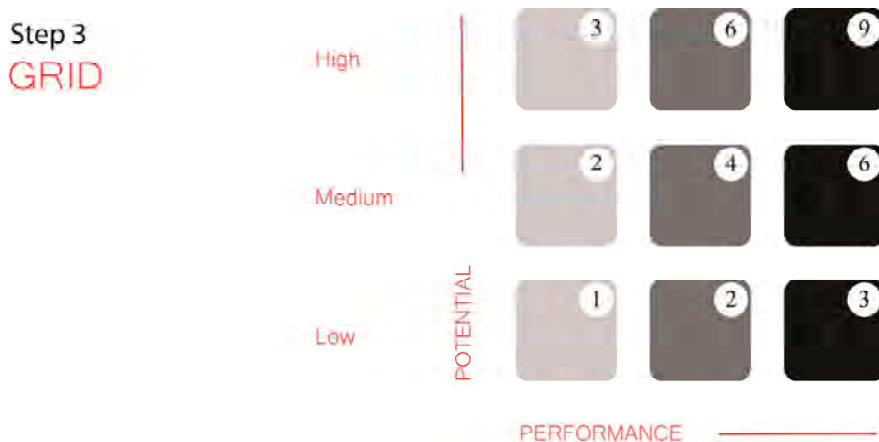### 4.3 Introduction to Step 3 – Grid

Fig. 7: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 3 – Grid

While Step 1 - Potential and Step 2 - Performance call for rather complex and time-consuming work on defining and grading the library, Step 3 - Grid, is more straight forward. The Potential and Performance scores of each subcategory are mounted onto either the vertical (potential) or horizontal (performance) axis of the grid.

By plotting the different sub-categories into the frames of the grid where they belong, their combined (multiplied) scores of Step 1 - Potential and Step 2 - Performance appear. Adding scores from each subcategory from the grid will show the result of the library's total score

within a category. Furthermore, adding the scores from the different categories' results in a total score for a whole subject, in our case, the Learning arena.

Step 3
GRID

Pre-measurement: Subcategories
Drammen library, August 2012   TOTAL SCORE: 25 / 63

Fig. 8: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 3 – Grid –in use
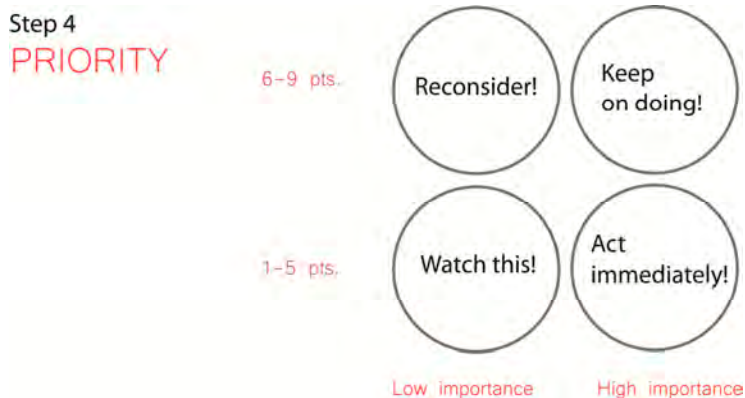
4.4 Introduction to Step 4 – Priority

Fig. 8: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 4 – Priority

The library will have to prioritize in which categories and sub-categories it wants to work to achieve a High Performance. Step 4 - Priority is about choosing which of the subcategories and/or categories you want to improve. On the basis of the scores from Step 3 - Grid, the

prioritization will not only rely on what you consider to be the most important, but also include information about the status of your library's performance, whether it is good or poor. This means that just as Step 3 - Grid, Step 4 - Priority uses two axes to deepen the task of prioritization. The vertical axis tells us how the library scores on each subcategory, and the horizontal axis shows whether a subcategory is considered to be of high or low importance to the library.
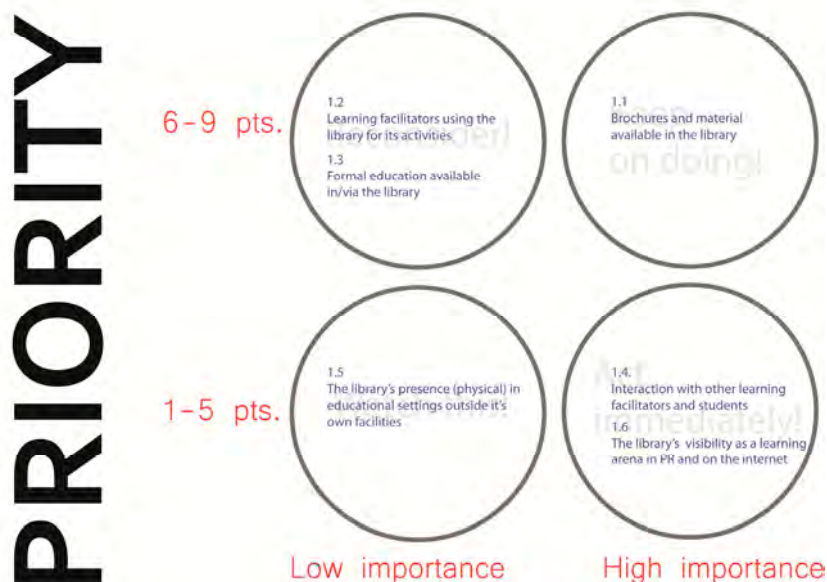

Fig. 9: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 4 – Priority –in use

4.5 Step 5 – Strategy, Step 6 – Action Plan

Fig. 10: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 5 – Strategy

Fig. 11: The Buskerud Measuring Model: Step 6 – Action Plan

The Buskerud Measuring Model's last two steps are Step 5 - Strategy and Step 6 - Action Plan. These two steps were necessary to include in the BMM to complete the full circle. As a county library we want to offer complete solutions, as there are many of the libraries in our region that miss a strategy and an action plan to guide them in their daily work. The libraries