Identifying and analysing personal participation in Finnish pupil welfare work

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Abstract

In recent years, our research group at the University of Oulu has developed, in a dialogue with German-Scandinavian critical psychology, a model of empirical research that strives to understand the changing participation of individuals in maintaining and changing societally produced conditions and meaning structures. In this article, I present an empirical analysis from a research project where subject-scientific ideas have been used and developed in relation to pupil welfare services in Northern Finland. I begin with a short description of the project where professionals in pupil welfare services discussed the current challenges in their everyday work in supervised peer groups and describe the data that was created during the project. Next, I describe how personal participation is identified and further analysed in relation to sociological research on the development of mental health work in Finland. In the discussion, I suggest that the knowledge created in this kind of analysis can be used in developing structures of pupil welfare services and in supporting professional growth.

Keywords
subject, society, participation, professional agency, pupil wellbeing, psychiatry, educational psychology, fabric of grounds

1. Introduction

The relationship between subjective experience and societal conditions is a central question in any research on human experience and action. In recent years, our research group at the University of Oulu has developed, in a dialogue with German-Scandinavian critical psychology, a model of empirical research that

strives to understand the changing participation of individuals in maintaining and changing societally produced conditions and meaning structures. The model was first developed in practice research related to the training of professional interpersonal skills for educators and other professionals working in educational contexts (Suorsa, Rantanen, Mäenpää & Soini, 2013). The approach has been developed further in a dialogue with a theory of organism-environment system (Järvilehto, 2009) that has strived to conceptualise human beings and their environment as a unitary system (Suorsa, 2015a; Suorsa, Rantanen, Siipo, Laukka & Soini, 2017). The model has also been discussed in relation to solution-focused practices (de Shazer et al., 1987) which focus on the participants' everyday activities and experiences, social relations, and their visions about future (Suorsa, 2015b).

In this article, I present an empirical analysis from a research project where subject-scientific ideas have been used and developed in relation to pupil welfare services in Northern Finland. I begin with a short description of the project where professionals in pupil welfare services discussed the current challenges in their everyday work in supervised peer groups (Soini, Jämsä & Kuusisto, 2006; Suorsa et al., 2013) and describe the data that was created during the project. Next, I describe how personal participation is identified and further analysed in relation to sociological research on the development of mental health work in Finland. In the discussion, I suggest that the knowledge created in this kind of analysis can be used in developing structures of pupil welfare services, and in supporting professional growth.

2. Description of the SOLMU-education project and the data

Our research group has provided in-service training programs – called SOLMU-education – in professional interpersonal skills for employees working in the field of pupil welfare services. "Pupil welfare services" in Finland refers to a multi-professional collaboration between teachers, principals, school psychologists, school social workers, special educators, school nurses, and other professionals who have their own duties in the process of enhancing pupils' wellbeing and learning at schools. Current legislation emphasises the role of communal pupil welfare work that focuses on developing the school community into a better place for all students and teachers. Often, however, professionals' everyday work consists of handling individual pupils' problems rather than developing schools as organisations.

Since 2005, 71 professionals have participated in the SOLMU-education program that consists of lectures, seminars, and supervised peer group meetings.

The participants, mainly female, were 25–50 years of age, with more than five years of working experience, mainly in comprehensive schools as teachers, principals, special educators, psychologists and school social workers (see Suorsa, 2014). Some of the participants also had experience in preschool education. The totality of the data consists of several sources that typically comprise audio, video, and written materials produced during one training program that lasts from 6 to 12 months. An example of the educational training structure is described in the Table 1 (see also Soini, Rantanen & Suorsa, 2012; Suorsa et al., 2013).

Event (6-8 hours)	Participants	Content
Opening seminar	24 professionals	• Orientation • Experiences of pupil welfare work • Professional interpersonal skills
3 training days	6–8 professionals per group	• 2–3 counselling conversations (per day) on a topical, personally meaningful matter in participants' work that is observed and discussed in the supervised peer group
Evaluation day	6–8 professionals per group	• Watching the videoed counselling conversations • Structured discussions on the interaction between the counsellor and the client • Discussing the clients' "problems"
Theme seminar	24 professionals	• Solution-focused counselling
3 training days	6–8 professionals per group	• 2–3 counselling conversations (per day) on a topical, personally meaningful matter in participants' work that is observed and discussed in the supervised peer group
Evaluation day	6–8 professionals per group	• Watching the videoed counselling conversations • Structured discussions on the interaction between the counsellor and the client • Discussing the clients' "problems"
Ending seminar	24 professionals	• Discussing the insights into professional interpersonal skills and problems in pupil welfare work • Innovating new practices for the everyday pupil welfare work

Table 1. Structure of SOLMU-education.

During the training year, participants take turns acting as counsellor, client, and observer. In the role of the client, participants are asked to discuss ongoing, topical and personally meaningful matters emerging from their work (Soini et al., 2012). The counsellor listens and helps the client to handle the topic, practicing counselling skills, such as listening and asking specific questions. The observer comments on the interaction between the client and the counsellor. Also, the client's problem is addressed in the peer group. The supervisor moderates the conversation in the group and points out important aspects that emerge from the counselling conversation. The training sessions are video recorded for educational purposes but they also offer a good opportunity for analysing the conversations. The training model has also been developed as a particular method for researching experiences (see Soini & Tuominen-Eilola, 2004) where the experience is first "released", as the client starts to describe his / her problem to the counsellor. Then the experience is "specified" and "enriched" in the conversation with the counsellor and the whole group. Participants also regularly recognise similarities between clients and their own experiences, as well as common aspects of the experience and its context. Thus, the structure of the training session brings together the experiences and expertise of all participants, creating the possibility of "generalising" individual experiences through pointing out the commonality of individuals' shared experiences. This step of the SOLMU-education programme can be seen as the first step toward an actual generalisation as it is carried out in the research process (see Chapter 3.3. *About generality and particularity of personal participation*).

The data package that is used in this article consists of 48 videoed training sessions (incl. one-on-one counselling conversations and discussions within the group, 60–90 minutes per session). The training sessions took place over the course of one year. In this paper, I focus on the analysis of an individual participant's description of a topical, personally meaningful everyday situation occurring at her place of work. The detailed example documented here is chosen to illustrate the problematic role of psychological and psychiatric expertise in pupil welfare work that can be identified in several cases in the data.

3. Subject-scientific research on pupil welfare professionals' experiences

The starting point in this research has been the subject-scientific idea of "discourse of reasons" that emphasises that the environment does not "condition" human action and experience (Holzkamp, 1983, 1996; Markard, 2009). Rather, a person's actions and experiences are seen as already "grounded" in the bio-socio-material environment (see Suorsa, 2015c). Klaus Holzkamp (1996) described a

person's grounded participation in their scenes of everyday living as a proper object of psychological research. Ole Dreier (2008, 2011) has further refined the concept of personal participation in terms of (trans)located and positioned taking of a personal stance in a historical situation (Suorsa, 2015b). This taking of a personal stance can be seen in relation to the subject-scientific concept of agency (*Handlungsfähigkeit*) that emphasises a person's restrictive and generalisable participation in maintaining and changing their life conditions (Markard, 2009). The concepts "restrictive" and "generalisable" denote a central contradiction in the lives of western individuals: on the one hand persons are able to consciously participate in maintaining and changing their living conditions in accordance with their own and common interests and needs; on the other hand, they also need to hold on to their current possibilities for this participation, and thus are inclined to ally themselves with current power relations, even if they are far from optimal and equitable, because changing them could endanger the resources they need and that matter to them.

3.1 Identifying personal participation: FOG-analysis

Participants' subjective standpoints in different situations were summarised as fabrics of grounds (FOG) that include a description of 1) the situation, 2) the participant's thinking, feeling and/or acting in the situation, and 3) the participant's subjective reasons for thinking, feeling and/or acting a particular way in (and in relation to) the situation. The FOGs also included the intended next step of the participant in this situation. The reconstruction of FOGs has been described in Suorsa et al. (2013). In Suorsa et al. (2017), we described the identification of fabric of grounds as FOG-analysis. During the research project the reconstructed FOGs were presented to the participants so that they were able to make corrections and integrate specifications. In all, there were 48 FOGs that described personal stances that had been adopted in different situations in everyday pupil welfare work.

The themes in the FOGs were categorised by Peltola, Suorsa, Karhu & Soini (Under review) using grounded theory. The main themes of the discussions were described as 'Resources, division of labour and changes in duties' (23 units), 'Coping and limits of work' (46 units), 'Client-related concerns' (15 units), 'Unprofessional practice of a colleague' (17 units), and 'Organisational culture and interaction' (42 units). The analysis showed the 'concern for pupil welfare work' as a general characteristic for all the discussions. The contents of FOGs were also analysed in relation to the concepts of feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979; Karhu, 2015) and psychological capital (Borén, 2017; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). These analyses have shown that FOGs can be a reasonable starting point for many kinds of research and that they can also function as a

bridge between different traditions in psychological research. The knowledge that we have created about the concerns and affective rules in pupil welfare work has been welcomed among the pupil welfare service professionals as articulating the dilemmas in their everyday work. The focus on psychological capital highlighted the strengths and hopes that sustain the motivation of poorly paid and highly educated professionals in their difficult work.

3.2 Analysing personal participation

In Holzkamp's (1996) terms, the reconstruction of FOGs can be seen as descriptive attending to a scene of a participant's everyday life. Even though the researcher's interest is theoretically motivated by the idea of "discourse of reasons" it is still the main focus in the reconstruction of FOGs to describe a participant's experience at the level of her self-understanding (see also Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). If the reconstructed FOG is presented to the participant, we are – following Holzkamp (1996) – already attending constructively to the scene of their everyday living, even if the researcher's intention would only be to make sure they have described the participant's experience accurately. For instance, the participant may not have initially seen her action as grounded, even though she readily recognises the groundedness, as the FOG is presented to her. Theoretical understanding (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), that may also challenge a participant's self-understanding, takes place when more subject-scientific concepts are taken into account in the analysis. If the analysis' multidisciplinary task is to articulate the societal conditions and the real results of the participant's action, it becomes probable that the produced theoretical understanding is inaccessible to participants. In subject-scientific terms it is a limitation in the created knowledge if the interpretation cannot be developed together with the participants. However, one should not conclude that research should not be done at all if all the ideals of subject-scientific research cannot be followed. Instead, recognising the limitations of the research and created knowledge is an important part of carrying out the research (see also Markard, 2009).

Suorsa (2015a) suggested that the following figure helps researchers to organise participants' experiences in accordance with basic concepts of the subject-scientific approach. In Figure 1, the subject-scientific concepts of "grounds", "premises", "meanings" and "conditions" are seen in relation to the concept of "result of action" that is central in the theory of the organism-environment system (see Suorsa, 2015a).
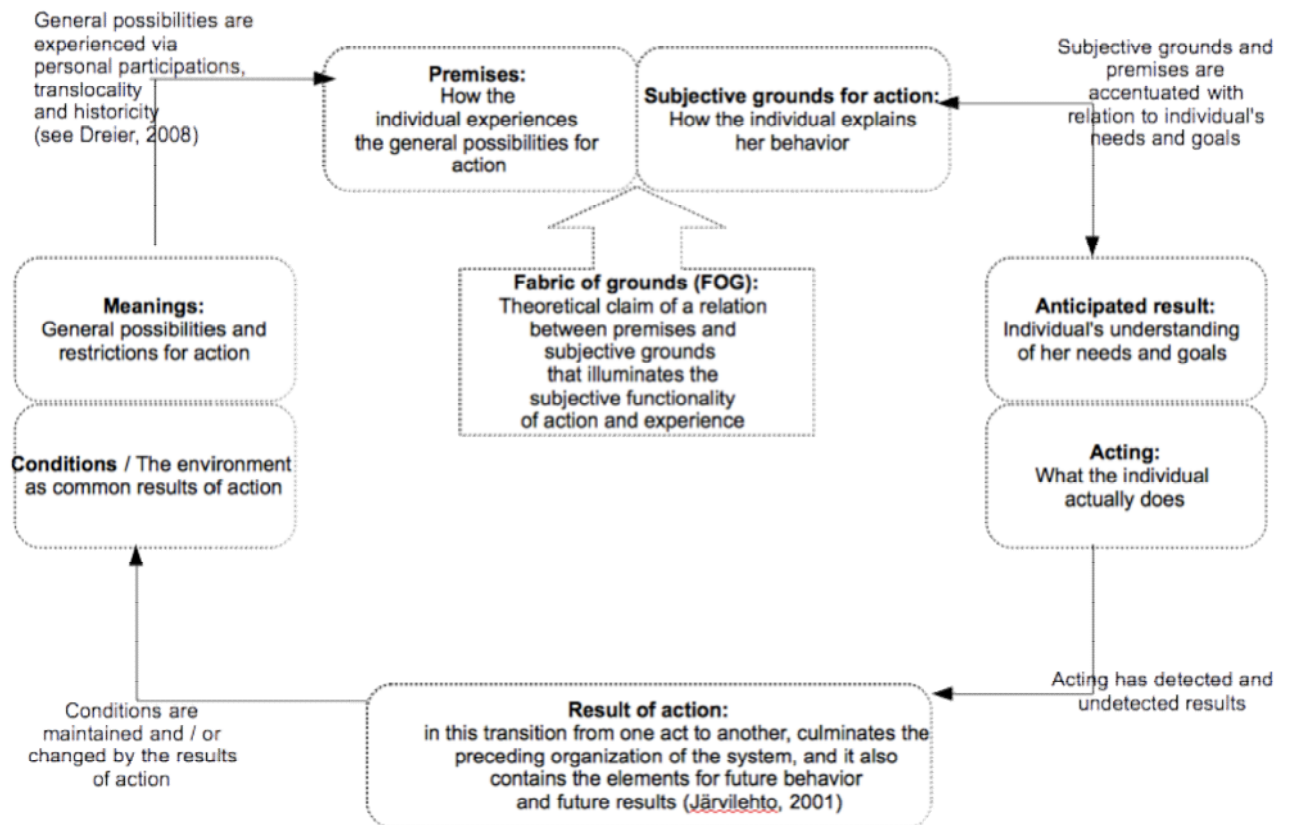
General possibilities are experienced via personal participations, translocality and historicity (see Dreier, 2008)

Premises:
How the individual experiences the general possibilities for action

Subjective grounds for action:
How the individual explains her behavior

Subjective grounds and premises are accentuated with relation to individual's needs and goals

Meanings:
General possibilities and restrictions for action

Fabric of grounds (FOG):
Theoretical claim of a relation between premises and subjective grounds that illuminates the subjective functionality of action and experience

Anticipated result:
Individual's understanding of her needs and goals

Conditions / The environment as common results of action

Acting:
What the individual actually does

Conditions are maintained and / or changed by the results of action

Result of action:
in this transition from one act to another, culminates the preceding organization of the system, and it also contains the elements for future behavior and future results (Järvilehto, 2001)

Acting has detected and undetected results

Figure 1. Analysis of personal participation (Suorsa, 2015a).

These concepts can be used in a "qualitative text analysis" that seeks to identify central themes in participants' talk. This can be done according to the rules of inclusion presented in Figure 2.

Premises	• Participant describes her conceptions about general possibilities for action
Grounds	• Participant explains her action; she describes her thoughts, feelings and actions in relation to what she actually does or to what results she expects
Anticipated result	• Participant describes her needs, goals and possibilities; she describes consequences of the situation or her actions in the situation
Acting	• Participant describes what she actually has done in the situation (without reflecting on possible consequences, etc.)
Result of action	• Participant describes the actual consequences of acting
Conditions	• Participant describes practices, institutions, etc. where the action and/or possibilities for action take place
Meanings	• Participant describes general possibilities for action into which her premises are connected

Figure 2. Rules of inclusion.

This figure and these rules of inclusion should not, however, be seen as an absolute requirement for placing each sequence of text into the right box; the placement of individual statements can also change as the research proceeds. The main idea is that the data is discussed in relation to the dimensions in the figure. Strictly speaking, a participant's description is always about premises, grounds, and the anticipated results of action. Acting, results, conditions and meanings require different approaches, such as participatory observation, and theoretical reconstruction in relation to sociological research. A participant's descriptions can, however, be seen as an indication toward acting, results, conditions and meanings.

The figure can also help in organising the data in order to understand changes in participants' participation. For instance, learning professional interpersonal skills in SOLMU-education can be approached by identifying participants' FOGs in different phases of education. The change and its meaning can be specified by focusing, e.g., on participants' premises (how they experience societal conditions and general possibilities for action) and on the results that their grounded actions produce. The results of educational psychological research can, then, be seen as descriptions of action and experiences before and after the intervention, and further theoretical explications of the change and its preconditions (see Nissen, 2005). "The change" can also mean a more fine-grained understanding of premises or results of action, enabled in the developing dialogue between the participants. Then, it is not so much

about a change in participants' actions and experiences but in the development of mutual understanding between the researcher and the participant that will help the researcher in orienting toward essential dimensions of the situation.

3.3 About generality and particularity of personal participation

Subject-scientific conception of generalisation can be seen as a further development of Kurt Lewin's (1890–1947) conception of human scientific research (Holzkamp, 1983). Lewin was interested in general laws of human action and experience. By law, Lewin meant that a certain kind of action occurs typically in certain kinds of situations. "The law" explicates the relationship between the conditions of action and results of action as "if-then relationships" (Chaiklin, 2011). In Lewin's model the research focused on particular cases as they took place in everyday life and as a result of researchers' interventions. The goal of the research was to recognise the common features of the cases, and to see the particular case as a variation of a more general type of cases.

A FOG articulates an individual's unique and particular participation in maintaining and changing the societal conditions within the scene of their everyday living by showing the way that the general possibilities for action assemble to ground an individual's action and experience. The individual FOGs in different scenes of everyday living can eventually be combined, taking into consideration their common aspects, and they can be seen as unique variations of a more general type of participation in a historical situation. Thus, the FOGs, as results of educational psychological research, are potentially generalisable everywhere people live and work under the same or similar conditions (see Kempf, 1994; Markard, 1993).

3.4 Case analysis: Psychiatry as a scientific and professional anchorage in Finnish pupil welfare work?

In the following, we take a closer look, with the concepts described in Figure 1, at one FOG that was reconstructed during a SOLMU-education. I also make theoretical claims about the participant's psychic orientation in a way that illustrates the individual, communal, and societal character of a participant's experience and that makes the subjective functionality of a participant's experience and action evident. The concepts of restrictive and generalisable agency are also used in the analysis. The societal dimension of the experience is clarified in relation to a sociological analysis related to development of mental health work in Finland. The theoretical claims were produced by the researcher,

and the interpretations were presented to the participant, whereby she also gave some specifications on the situation that she described in the training session.

It should be emphasised that even though the following FOG originates from an individual school social worker's description, its main function in the research process was to articulate general possibility structures that are accentuated differently by individual employees, in relation to their experienced needs and possibilities for action. Because the translocality and historicity of the school social worker's grounded participation are not thoroughly articulated in this research, the research creates relatively rough-grained knowledge about the situation and individual possibilities of participating in maintaining and changing the societally produced conditions.

> *FOG: When pupils don't get psychiatric services, even if they were needed, I think that there are situations at my work that I can't immediately change. I have, however, tried to change the situation by participating in writing a letter to the city's policy makers, because I believe that a general or public discussion about the situation could bring about the change, and psychiatric services could be offered to those who are in need.*

This FOG was reconstructed from a counselling conversation where a school social worker explained how the city's service system was a part of her problematic everyday work (**conditions / meanings**). According to the participant, the queues for the children's and youth's psychiatric services were too long, and the pupils and their families did not get the help that they needed in time (**conditions / meanings**). As a consequence, the pupils' and their families' situations got worse while they were waiting (**conditions / meanings**). In addition, she explained that there were too few employees in the child welfare office (**conditions / meanings**). In relation to her own work as a school social worker, she acknowledged that there were situations that one had to bear and tolerate as they are not immediately changeable (**anticipated results**). She, however, believed that a general / public discussion on the matter could bring about change (**premises, grounds**): she had participated in writing a letter to policy makers with her colleagues, in order to make their concerns visible (**acting**). She was hoping that this would lead to a situation where psychiatric services would be available to every pupil who needed it (**anticipated results**).

In terms of restrictive / generalisable agency, we can note that the social worker participated consciously in changing her working conditions, with the goal of promoting the availability of psychiatric services for pupils (**anticipated result**). It is noteworthy that both the problem and the solution are seen in the field of psychiatry. This can be seen in relation to sociological research on the

development of mental health work in Finland in general (**conditions / meanings**). Psychiatry has, according to Helén, Hämäläinen and Metteri (2011), become a scientific and professional anchorage in modern, wide-ranging and multi-professional mental health work. According to Helén et al. (2011), this has to do more generally with mental health work reacting to neoliberal policy focusing on problematic individuals who cause or may cause societal or economic damage. This way of thinking can, according to Helén et al. (2011), be seen also in many experts' demands that the psychic malaise of children and adolescents should be alleviated by increasing psychiatric services. Helén et al. (2011) find this, however, problematic since problems in mental health are mainly about the relationship between the individual and society, as well as about social interaction. Accordingly, Helén et al. (2011) suggest that in addition to taking care of individual patients, it would be necessary to develop also social and societal practices.

The FOG is reconstructed from one limited conversation, and it has not been discussed, for example, in relation to the school social worker's endeavours in developing the schools' organisational cultures. Still, the FOG is a good example of the role of the psychiatric and psychological expertise in pupil welfare services (**conditions / meanings**) that is present also elsewhere in our data. There are also other kinds of discourses that can be identified in our data, but a general tendency seems to be that other solutions remain in the shadows of the idea, such that a realistic solution should be found from more active participation by mental health professionals. This can be seen also in the City of Oulu's decision to hire psychiatric nurses at schools to promote the wellbeing of pupils (Yle Uutiset, 2013).

With concepts of interpretive and grasping thinking, which enlighten the cognitive aspects of restrictive / generalising agency (see Markard, 2009), we can make some specifications according to how the situation is handled. The concept of 'interpretive thinking' directs the researchers' attention toward a question about to the extent to which the participant's description is limited to how things are at the moment, and what is realistic in these conditions. With the concept of 'grasping thinking' the researcher focuses on the extent to which the current context is reflected in relation to the conditions and possibilities in which the situation appears. For instance, focusing on the desirability of psychiatric services means at the same time that no other types of solutions are developed in this conversation.

Our exemplary FOG does not, of course, mean that the school social worker would not see other possibilities in contributing to pupils' wellbeing besides promoting the availability of psychiatric services. However, the FOG shows that in the current situation, the exploration of other solutions is not always

subjectively functional. Further, the FOG can be seen in light of Helén et al.'s (2011) claim that developing preventive mental health work in Finland nowadays usually means developing a differentiated service system where each problem has its own expert. The goal of this development is to ensure that mental health services would be available in all phases of the development of mental disorders. Services ought to, accordingly, be directed to strengthening individuals' living and coping resources, solving psychosocial problems and offering psychosocial support, identifying mental disorders as early as possible, and offering effective treatment and rehabilitation (see Helén et al., 2011). What is problematic in this focusing on the service system, is that the societal-structural mental health work remains in the shadows of the development of an extensive service system. Also, the concept of structure is seen as equal to this service system. By "societal-structural mental health work", Helén et al. (2011) mean, instead, utilising the knowledge, that is created in mental health work, about difficulties in citizens' lives, for developing societal practices and structures. In this sense, the school social worker's activities in promoting psychiatric services also maintain and develop societal practices that are in contradiction with participants' long-term interests.

Focusing on psychiatric services in this situation had to do with the fact that the young people who, according to a standard procedure, would have been offered psychiatric services, could not get these services due to a backlog **(conditions / meanings)**. Consequently, the school social worker had to do supportive work with these pupils, which meant more meetings with them **(acting)**. The pupils' problems were the kind that required help, but according to the school social worker, help could not be provided based on their level of expertise **(premises, anticipated results)**. As the school social worker was doing both supportive work and her basic work, she felt frustrated and burdened; also because her working hours were not enough to handle all the situations **(anticipated result, result of action)**. As she later discussed with her colleagues **(acting)**, she noticed that others had been acting similarly in a similar situation **(premises)**. The recognition of the similarities also brought about a will to do something about it collectively **(grounds)**. Because the acute problem in everybody's work had to do with the backlog in psychiatric services **(conditions / meanings, premises)**, their collective actions were also directed toward solving this acute problem **(acting)**.

The situation is psychologically interesting because it illustrates the contradictory movement in human action and experience (see also Maiers, 1994). On the one hand, the challenging situation at work was characterised by personal feelings (frustration, burdening) and simplifying and personalising interpretations (pupils' psychiatric problems) and consequent developmental lines: burn out and

/ or getting more psychiatric services. We can also talk here about interpretive thinking, according to which the observed matters are interpreted in light of the immediate life world of participants and current state of affairs in welfare work. On the other hand, as the personal and private feelings turned out to be common experiences **(premises)** an emotional readiness to change the conditions by collective activity was brought about **(anticipated result, acting).** Despite the strengthening agency and the entailed positive emotionality and motivated activity the situation remains contradictory because, from a societal perspective, the collective activity was oriented toward solving the acute problem in a way that strengthens the idea of developing psychosocial pupil welfare work as a service system **(result of action, conditions).** From the perspective of the school social worker, this is, however, subjectively functional because availability of psychiatric services enables her focus on basic work that also includes preventive mental health work at schools.

4. Discussion

This article has introduced a way of identifying and analysing personal participation in Finnish pupil welfare work. The methodical steps were concretised in an analysis of a school social worker's experience of a critical incident at her work. The starting point was a FOG that was reconstructed during an in-service training programme (SOLMU-education). In the analysis, the participant's premises and subjective grounds for action were addressed. Also, the participant's understanding of her needs and possibilities (anticipated results) were discussed. The participant's action was, however, in a strict sense, not addressed because we only discussed the participant's description of her actions and experiences in the situation. Further, the actual results of the action were not, in a strict sense, addressed. Consequently, the research did not create knowledge about how the school social worker in fact participated in maintaining and changing her working conditions. Instead, the research created knowledge about a possible way of relating to a situation where a city's service system did not function as expected.

According to a subject-scientific co-researcher principle, the individual subject functions as a mediator between theory and empirical observations. This means that people whose experiences are addressed by the research should have a final say concerning whether the theoretical claims about their experiences still address *their* experiences. In this research, the accuracy of interpretations has been reflected by presenting the researcher's formulations to the participant in different phases of the analysis. Like in communicative validity (Kvale &

Brinkmann, 2009), the idea is not that the "participant knows best". Instead, the dialogue with the participants is seen as an articulative step in describing the reality. Furthermore, the dialogue is seen as developing collaboration between researcher and practitioner. In this dialogue, the basic concepts (that have their own truth value) and participants' subjective experiences (which are also, in a way, undisputable) are in a reciprocal relationship and may develop during the research process. In this sense, the FOGs and their further analyses are to be seen as part of a dialogue aiming to conceptualise the common reality. In subject-scientific research, the dialogue between the researcher and the participants, that relates to research's basic concepts, is a central criterion for the objectivity, or appropriateness, of the research. In all cases, however, extensive dialogue with the participants is not possible (see also Huck, 2009). In these cases, it is reasonable to hold on to traditional criteria in qualitative research, such as careful data-driven analysis, as well as theoretical understanding, and their evaluation in a scientific community (see Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

When we think about communal strategies for carrying out and developing, say, pupil welfare services, FOGs and their further analyses can give answers to questions about "Where are we now?" by describing individual ways of relating to general possibilities for action. Furthermore, they offer a concrete starting point for thinking about "Where do we want to go?", and "How do we get there?" (see Laitinen & Hallantie, 2011). The FOGs concretise the level between a general goal ("wellbeing of children and youth") and general means to achieve this goal ("more psychologists in schools") as they describe the topical matters in, for example, a school social worker's everyday work, and articulate, based on empirical research, different ways of relating to these matters. FOGs can also function as a tool in dialogic strategy making where citizens, professionals, organisations, and other interest groups have their own role. According to a suggestion by the development manager of the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (Pauni, 2013), the role of the communal actor should be, in dialogic strategy making, a facilitator in developing strategic goals rather than an independent definer of goals. The FOGs that belong to a concrete problem articulate participants' perspectives of parties on different sides of a contradictory situation (for instance, in relation to psychiatric services, or psychological testing). It is clear that the FOGs as such do not answer all questions about individual professionals' possibilities for carrying out and developing pupil welfare work. Instead, they open novel questions.

As descriptions of how the working conditions are experienced as possibilities for action, individual FOGs have a clear value:

1. for policy makers and managers; as knowledge about possible ways of acting and experiencing in relation to common structures.

2. for professionals working in a similar profession; both through articulating / enhancing consciousness about personal stances and by pointing out alternative possibilities for action.

3. for students who are preparing to work in a similar profession; as knowledge about possible work situations, as well as different ways of relating to and in these situations.

Even though individual FOGs have their value, it is important to note that in a more wide-ranging research effort, it is possible to recognise, in addition to individual ways of relating, different types of relationships to situations. These ways and types of relating can then further be specified in multidisciplinary research projects if they seem to articulate some meaningful or critical aspects at individual or societal levels. In terms of educational psychological research, this specifying means also striving to overcome specific obstacles for action, as well as promoting participants' professional and personal growth.

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