

MEDIATION IN WORK COMMUNITIES

Experiences and Needs of Mediators

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ABSTRACT

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This Bachelor's thesis examines work community mediation from mediators' point of view. The study is implemented in cooperation with Timo Pehrman, who is the chairman of the Finnish Forum for Mediation and a trainer of work community mediation. A previous study by Pehrman from 2011, which concentrated to explore the current needs of the work community mediators, served as a background for this research. The idea of this study was to deepen the results of the Pehrman's research.

In this research, the focus was on three main questions. First, it explored mediators' experiences about the status of the mediation in the work communities. Second, the investigation concentrated on the support that mediators experience meaningful in their work places. The third research question focused on mediators' perspective towards networking and sharing of experiences. The theoretical framework of the thesis concerns the concepts of mediation, conflict resolution, culture change, labor protection and self-help.

The thesis was conducted by using qualitative and quantitative methods. The data was collected, first, by conducting a survey concerning mediators' experiences, which was sent for 44 mediators in different work communities. The survey achieved 10 responses, which were analyzed with a content analysis method. Second, three semi-structured interviews were implemented; two of them with mediators who had responded in the survey and one with an expert of labor protection. The interviews were recorded and the material was analyzed, similarly, with the content analysis method. In the discussions, I have drawn some conclusions of the main findings and reflected them with the theoretical key concepts.

Based on the results of the research, mediators long for support in spreading word and raising awareness of mediation in work communities and in public. Administrative staff's support for mediation in work communities is essential. Group meetings and sharing of experiences were seen valuable among mediators, although there existed divergence in the reasons for attending a group. These reasons consisted learning from each other's experiences and promoting research and publicity. In addition, non-cooperation between mediators and personnel representatives in work places roused up as one of the findings in the research. The discussion section of this research tries to open the topic further and provide some general suggestions for the situation.

Keywords: Mediation, work communities, awareness raising, organizational support, cooperation, group sharing and self-help.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mediation is a method for conflict resolution. Implementing and practicing mediation promotes an awareness to observe, intervene and resolve many conflict situations and turn them into restorative and empowering force in the community. For institutions, such as work communities and schools, it is a practical tool to promote organizational culture where, regardless about the status of the parties, bullying and other type of inappropriate behavior is intervened and resolved. Mediators are the persons who work in the situation as a third party to enable the communication and understanding between the conflict parties.

My thesis consists of a research where I focus on studying the experiences of the work community mediators. My research problem is to discover how mediators have experienced the status of the mediation in the organization and what support they need in their work. The purpose of the research is to produce knowledge and raise public awareness about the mediation in work communities. The concentration in the research is on mediators' needs in relation to their role as internal mediators of the organization. In addition, the research provides a short insight into the labor protection in Finnish work life and discusses about the relation that mediators have towards personnel representatives.

As a background for this research served a survey form 2011 by Timo Pehrman, who had explored the current needs of trained workplace mediators, focusing on mediators' views about the mediation process in workplaces and on the experienced obstacles related to the mediation processes. The idea of this research was to update the information about the mediators' needs at the current moment, using the Pehrman's results at the bases. As a method I have used qualitative and quantitative research in implementing a survey and three interviews. The research process was guided by the collected data in an inductive way which is visible in all the research steps.

The research consists of a survey and interviews. The survey was conducted as an internet survey and analyzed with the content analysis method. After analyzing the survey results, three interviews were made to extend and deepen the data of the survey. Two first interviews concentrated to explore more deeply the answers of the survey respondents. The third interview was made to explore the perspective of the labor protection expert and the purpose was to further investigate the possibilities to meet the needs of the mediators.

The theoretical framework of this research concerns the concepts of mediation, conflict resolution, culture change, labor protection and self-help. A brief insight into work community well-being is provided in the chapter two, which serves as a wider concept at the background of the research. In the chapter three I concentrate to open the theoretical key concepts of the research. The methodological perspectives, namely the phenomenological and heuristic research principles, are described in the chapter four and the results of the research are revealed in the chapter five. The discussions section about the topic of non-cooperation of mediators and personnel representatives follows in the chapter six. Conclusions of the research can be found from the chapter seven.

By working on the subject of mediation, it strengthens my feeling about the choice of career and clarifies my aims as a social worker. I have applied for the educator place in a school peer mediation program "VERSO" and I am interested to continue with the topic of mediation in my work life. In addition of being personally highly motivated about the mediation, I regard it very efficient community development work as well, which topic is more reflected in the chapter seven about the community development perspective.

2 WELL-BEING AT WORK

At the moment, well-being in work is one of the central political issues in Finland, UK and in other western countries. Different governmental and non-governmental projects are launched frequently for improving the atmosphere in the work places. In Finland, the most recent is the "Työelämä 2020"- project (National Strategy for Well-being at Work 2013-2020). Changes in the age distribution of the population has affected crucially to labor setting more requirements for efficiency and well-being in work (see for instance, Kauppinen, 2005; Lehto, 2001; Valtioneuvoston kanslia, 2013). Since 2009, when the government agreed on the goal of extending work careers with 2-3 years in Finland until 2025, well-being in work has become a central theme in a public discussion (see for instance; National Program for Elongation of Work Careers 2009-2025; Lehto, 2001.)

At the same time, work related disability pensions and absences through sickness have caused considerably costs for employers in Finland and decreased the total efficiency of the Finnish labor (Liira et al., 2001; Hussi, 2004). The requirements for the work efficiency in Finland emerge from the becoming retirements of the major workforce and there is a risk that the well-being of the employees in the work places becomes even more compromised. According to Lehto (2001), studies show that 7 percent of the working population suffers from serious exhaustion. Thus many employee organizations in Finland have started to argue that, in addition for extending the amount and length of the work, the well-being of the employees should be promoted as a primary solution for more efficient work.

Hussi (2004) argues that the maintenance of work ability (MWA) has been a central framework for occupational health and safety activities in Finland since the early 1990. In his study, he has examined the issue of work ability and em-

phasizes the work community aspect in the maintenance of work ability (MWA) activities. He mentions that it is, finally, the work community that creates organizational factors, such as, ergonomics, strategies, combination of tools and, in addition, the mutual interaction, that either improve or disintegrate work ability. He continues that "A significant amount of the mental work requirements is actually generated at the work community level--", meaning, for instance the communication circumstances in the workplace (Hussi, 2004, 9-10). (Hussi, 2004.)

2.2 Bullying in Finland

Harassment and bullying type of behavior is general in the work communities in Finland and it happens in various fields of work (Pietiläinen, 2000). Ministry of employment and the economy stated in 2011, that 22-26% of the employees (female-male) had experienced bullying in the work places (Ministry of employment and the economy, 2012). The Finnish work safety laws and occupational health care are contradicting with the amount of work related bullying in Finland, which both are in the top edge in European level (Hynynen, 2012, 42).

Pehrman (2010) acknowledge that bullying type of behavior in Finland is common nowadays in work communities because there is lack of tools and knowledge to intervene in the situations. The lack of intervening in the face of inappropriate behavior manifests in Finland, not only, in the workplaces but, also, in other contexts, such as in schools (see for instance; Gellin, 2011) and in family relations (Poikela, 2010).

Small tensions and conflicts are part of everyday interaction in work communities but if they remain unresolved they have a tendency to grow up to bigger conflicts that decrease the efficiency and the welfare of the work community in many ways. In addition, they can cause mental distress or even premature re-

tirement, which is a huge economical loss for the employer and immeasurable inhumane loss for the employee. (Pehrman, 2010.)

2.3 Services for the well-being of employee

Labor protection, shop stewards and the occupational health care together provides reasonable amount of services and legislation for the protection and well-being of the employees in Finland (Hynynen, 2012). However, the occupational health care is an institution that offers services outside the work community, whereby, the labor protection, shop stewards and mediators influence, first of all, inside the work places. In my study, I have focused on the internal actors in the work places concentrating, first, on the mediators and their needs and, second, on the labor protection. Labor protection is the main internal actor in the Finnish work communities related to well-being and safety of employees. In the following chapter the theoretical framework of the mediation and the labor protection is discussed briefly.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the research concentrates mainly to produce information about the mediators' experiences, a small theoretical overview about the mediation method is included. I regard, that a small outlook into mediation is needed to make the reader more aware about mediators' work and position in work places and to understand more fully their experiences. In addition, the position of the labor protection is discussed later in this chapter, as well as, the concept of self-help.

3.1 Mediation and its theoretical perspective.

In this chapter, I first concentrate to describe general conflict resolution principles and later focus on the specialty of the mediation among the other conflict resolution methods. In overall, the conflict resolution is a vast subject and covers diverse areas and there exists a continuum of informal and formal conflict resolution methods that are available to workplace disputes and conflicts. (Doherty & Guyler, 2008.)

3.1.1 Conflict resolution principles and tools.

According to the Dorothy and Guyler (2008, 47), the awareness of the conflict thinking has expanded in recent decades to offer us "less pathological and more healthy model" in understanding the conflict and its resolution possibilities. Acknowledgment of the new positive elements of the conflict such as, interdependence and transformative route thinking, has emerged recently even leading to regard conflict as a way that can lead to a better adjustment of relationships and improved joint outcomes. The new awareness of conflicts involves understanding of; underlying differences that are acknowledged and respected; conflict that is based on interests between people who interact; people who are will-

ing to invent options for mutual gain; using objective and not personal criteria. (Doherty & Guylar, 2008, 47.)

According to the Masters and Albright (2002, 98) the field of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) (alternative to litigation or some other formalized governmental adjudication) encompasses a variety of conflict resolution approaches, such as negotiation and facilitation to mediation and arbitration. One can also find methods such as minitrials, partnering, conciliation, neutral evaluation, final offer arbitration, variants of mediation, ombuds, and peer reviews (Masters & Albright, 2002). According to Pehrman (2011), other tools that aim to reduce disputes in work communities are, for example, cooperation trainings, manager education, different work community meetings and development discussions between the manager and the employee. Doherty and Guylar (2008) list the conflict resolution areas, such as international conflict, labor and industrial disputes, community conflicts and cultural integration, domestic, marital and family court mediations and workplace mediation.

According to Doherty and Guylar (2008), the popularity of the mediation as conflict resolution tool for work communities has seemingly expanded in the last decades. Bush and Folger (2005, 8) state that, in addition to the labor disputes, the use of mediation has grown over the last three decades and it is used nowadays in other contexts as well, such as community, family and interpersonal conflicts. Many courts run various mediation programs nowadays, based on the use of professional and voluntary mediators and, in overall, the use of for-profit mediation services is expanding in many fields (Bush & Folger, 2005, 8). Masters and Albright (2002, 98) refers to mediation as a conflict resolution procedure, which has a clear status in the field of ADR.

3.1.2 Mediation and conflict resolution

Bush and Folger (2005, 8) acknowledges, that "Across the mediation field, mediation is generally understood as an informal process in which a neutral third party with no power to impose a resolution helps the disputing parties try to reach a mutually acceptable settlement.". However, mediation can be approached in many different ways and lots of divergence in opinions about its purpose and practice exists in the field. Depending of the institution and the field of practice, it is highlighted different aspects of the mediation and different goals are kept in value. (Bush & Folger, 2005.)

According to Bush and Folger (2005), depending of the mediation approach the process highlights elements, such as: the fulfillment and satisfaction of human needs; reduction of suffering; community empowerment; transformation in social interaction in institutions. Bush (1984, cited in Bush & Folger, 2005, 22) argue that it is almost impossible to produce all these benefits together and the most important element of the mediation is the capacity to change the mindset of people who are involved in the process. The usefulness of mediation in conflict resolution is much based on its capacity to produce acknowledgment, understanding and empathy for the situation and the views of the other. Another important aspect is that individuals restore their sense of value and strength and their own capacity to make decisions. Successful mediation produces both: recognition for the situation and the other party; and individual empowerment in handling own life's problems. (Bush & Folger, 2005.)

The mediation can transform the conflicts from destructive social force into a positive and constructive interaction, starting from individual level and ending up to influence the whole community. This transformative potential of mediation is receiving increasing attention and support in mediation theory and policy, and it is influencing into practice. Transformative dimension, meaning the empowerment and the recognition, is the most important state that can be achieved in

the interaction between the disputing parties in the mediation session. (Bush & Folger, 2005.)

3.1.3 Mediation process

The mediation process aims to create an experience of a powerful shift in interaction, which can be felt by the disputing parties and which is supported by the mediator. This shift in energy, from being closed, defensive and self-absorbed towards more open, trusting and acknowledging allows the exchange of perceptions, feelings and desires. This process clarifies what is important to each other and the participants gain more accurate understanding of each other's perspectives. (Bush & Folger, 2005, 31.)

Mediation is a process where the parties can learn from each other through listening each other's experiences. In the process all the feelings are allowed to co exist and are considered as essential part of the situation. As Takala (1998, 2) acknowledges, mediation is a tool, which enables the dealing of the feelings in a way that satisfies the parties involved. It is central in the mediation that the parties can bring their feelings and thoughts up and that, through effective listening and reflection, it is ensured that they get the feeling of been heard in their experiences.

Pehrman (2011, 62) states that successful mediation session promotes openness, trust, understanding and cooperation towards each other. In addition, it clarifies own motives and perspectives, which all promote the change in behavior. The mediator's role in the process is to enable the interaction between the conflict parties, which is called facilitation. It is up to mediator's consideration and experience to know how often and when it is time to intervene in the process and the progress of the situation rely much on the mediator's skills and experience (Pehrman, 2011, 64). The intervention can mean different things in different phases of the mediation process and the facilitator can, for instance,

reconstruct arguments and deliver messages or ask the other party to repeat certain things that the other has said (see for instance; Larson, 2011; Doherty & Guyler, 2008).

In mediation, the concentration is put into the participants' needs and feelings, instead of, what is interpreted as their problems. The role of the mediator is to enable the communication and dialog in the situation between the parties and lead the discussion forward. In the facilitative mediation the mediator works only as a facilitator of the communication and the mediator does not provide solutions for the parties in their conflict (Pehrman, 2011).

Poikela (2010) suggest that mediation could work, also, as a tool to hinder the traditional confrontation between the employer and the employees and that mediators could work as educators and work counselors. In addition, Doherty and Guyler (2008) mention that mediators may work inside the organization in many roles but that it can be a challenge for the mediator to distinct these roles in the actual mediation session.

The mediation process has normally a strong influence on the whole community because the intervention is solely independent of the status of the disputing parties. It can involve different levels of hierarchy under the same table and, usually, the mediator himself is one of the personnel who possess the role of the internal mediator in the organization.

3.1.4 Challenges and possibilities of mediation

Different mediation projects have had remarkable results in conflict resolution in institutional context in Finland (see for instance: Gellin, 2011; Pehrman, 2011). However, the traditional leading practices in work communities, still, rely much on the understanding, which lacks real mutual exchange and cooperation between different parties in the community. Pehrman (2011, 211-214) acknowl-

edges that leadership in work communities, still, builds much on traditional ways of governance, such as on strict instructing, demanding and top-down deciding, instead of individual's independent decision making and thinking.

In a work community, which implements mediation culture, the understanding of efficient leading practice relies on more humanistic understanding. Instead of hierarchical guiding, the point is to let the workers to think on their own and to encourage them to communicate their experiences to other co-workers and employees. Openness is key concept in building up new mediation awareness in a work community. (Pehrman, 2011.)

In addition of being a concrete method for conflict resolution, the mediation should be understood and discussed as a part of a larger culture and awareness where, instead of demanding and instructing, the individual learning happens through interaction with others. When a work community tries to adapt this type of new working culture, where the leadership is more shared and interaction between the institutional stages more open, the actual mediation works only as a part of the whole new culture. (Doherty & Guyler, 2008; Pehrman, 2011.)

According to Doherty and Guyler (2008, 108), the best way for the management level to introduce the mediation into an organization is to form a separate “mediation policy” that “--outlines and details how mediation can be accessed and used appropriately”, so that “—employees can request a mediation without making it into formal grievance or harassment complaint that can have the effect of pushing people into adversarial positions even before they begin”. This would be a clear message from the organization that constructive resolution of conflicts and differences is promoted at an early stage. (Doherty & Guyler, 2008, 108.)

Poikela (2010, 171) mentions, that best way for mediators to spread the awareness of mediation in work communities is, simply, by practicing it. He continues

that the most concrete way to spread the message in the community is to mediate as much as possible (Poikela, 2010, 171). However, if the administration level is not active in giving the message of the mediation as accepted and supported model in the community, it may turn out to be difficult for the mediators to mediate or get requests for mediations.

In conclusion, when adapting the mediation into a work community, it asks the whole work community to be open for learning new ways to interact and communicate together. It requires much from mediators, since they are the ones in the organization, who possess the skills and the awareness of the new concept. The actualization of the wider organizational awareness and change through mediation practices is heavily dependent on the initiatives and efforts of the mediators.

3.1.5 Culture change

Doherty and Gulyer acknowledge that (2008, 154) "Traditionally managers have been trained and equipped primarily to deliver results around systems of 'performance management'" and, in addition, our "--compensation culture add even more pressure on an already overworked or over-stretched management". The philosophy of mediation can contribute to positive organizational development by introducing elements of shared control, deeper involvement of employees and teams, and the empowerment of the organizational actors. (Doherty & Gulyer, 2008.)

Doherty and Gulyer (2008, 170) has described the organizational change in the following figure where the right hand diagram describe the values of team empowerment, employee participation and reduced management structures.

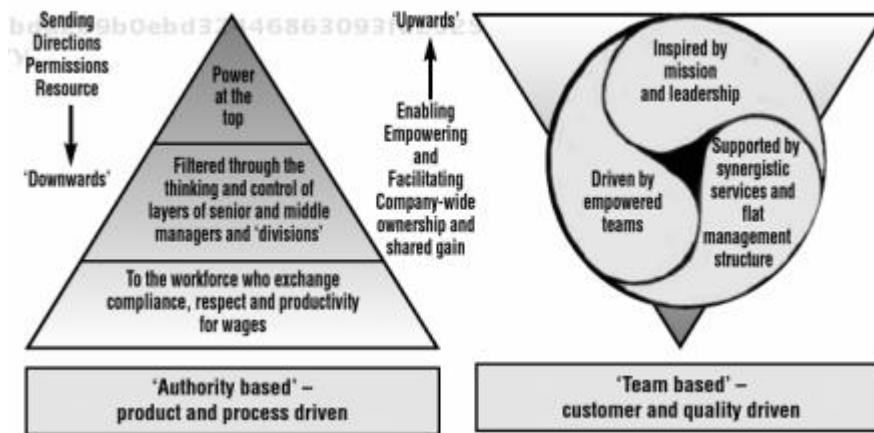


Figure 2. Upending the pyramid of organizational structure and working relationships.

The move from authority based model to democratic participation has, already, in many ways happened through social movements, such as trade unionism and the emerging of the welfare state. Experiments in employee participation and alternative management and leadership have provided positive results, also, improving the efficiency of the organizations. Gradually the awareness has grown that empowered and enabled workforce is not, only, improving the social well-being and atmosphere but, also, increasing the efficiency of the dynamics and structures in the organization. (Doherty & Guyler, 2008.)

The method of mediation is supporting the dynamics of more participatory management style because the mediation process itself highlights the elements of empowerment and shared control and power. The philosophical approach of mediation highlights the essence of the mutually beneficial solutions, where all the parties and their needs are heard and appreciated. The involved parties own and resolve their problems and their participation in the process is always voluntary. (Doherty & Guyler, 2008.)

In conclusion, the philosophy of mediation is based on elements of participation, empowerment, shared power and responsibility of own life. Implementing medi-

ation in organization can contribute to a wider cultural change which promotes increased involvement and participation of all the institutional actors.

3.2 Labor protection

Labor protection in Finland tries to affect on different risk factors in work and the main goal is to provide safe and healthy working conditions for the employee. Different programs have been developed for employers to improve the safety and health of work places, including things from emergency safety plan to equality proposals. Different physical and psychosocial stress factors, that hinder the working conditions of work places, should be developed together in the cooperation with the employer, employee and labor protection representatives. (Centre for Occupational Safety n.d.)

Mental labor protection in Finland tries to affect on various mental distress factors in the work place, such as on bullying, dysfunctional interaction and cooperation of the employees, sexual harassment and discrimination. Guidelines for the prevention of inappropriate behavior highlights the employee's responsibility to take action in the case of experienced maltreatment. Employees are encouraged to ask support, either from the labor protection representatives, or from other work mates in the organization. In addition, it is the responsibility of the employer to intervene into every disruption situation in the work place if they compromise the health and safety of the employee. Legislation obligates the employer to intervene, at the latest, when the situation creates a risk for the health of the employee (The Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act). (Centre for Occupational Safety n.d.)

The Finnish labor organizations have tried to provide intervention guidelines for the employers to increase their means to resolve problem situations in the work places (Centre for Occupational Safety n.d.). The guidelines conclude that

"smooth cooperation" in the work place is a sign of practical place to work and, in the case of cooperation problems, the employee representatives can support the target of inappropriate treatment. (Andersson et al., 2010.)

Guided by the legislation, the occupational health service provides the workplace with professional help and can support management and personnel where necessary (The Finnish Occupational Health Care Act). The occupational safety and health authorities supervise the workplaces adherence to legislation, including the aspects of harassment and inappropriate behavior, and, if necessary, they can give the employer recommendations and instructions or advices and help, if requested (Anderson et al., 2010). Liira et al. (2001) describe the Finnish occupational health and safety structure in the following figure.

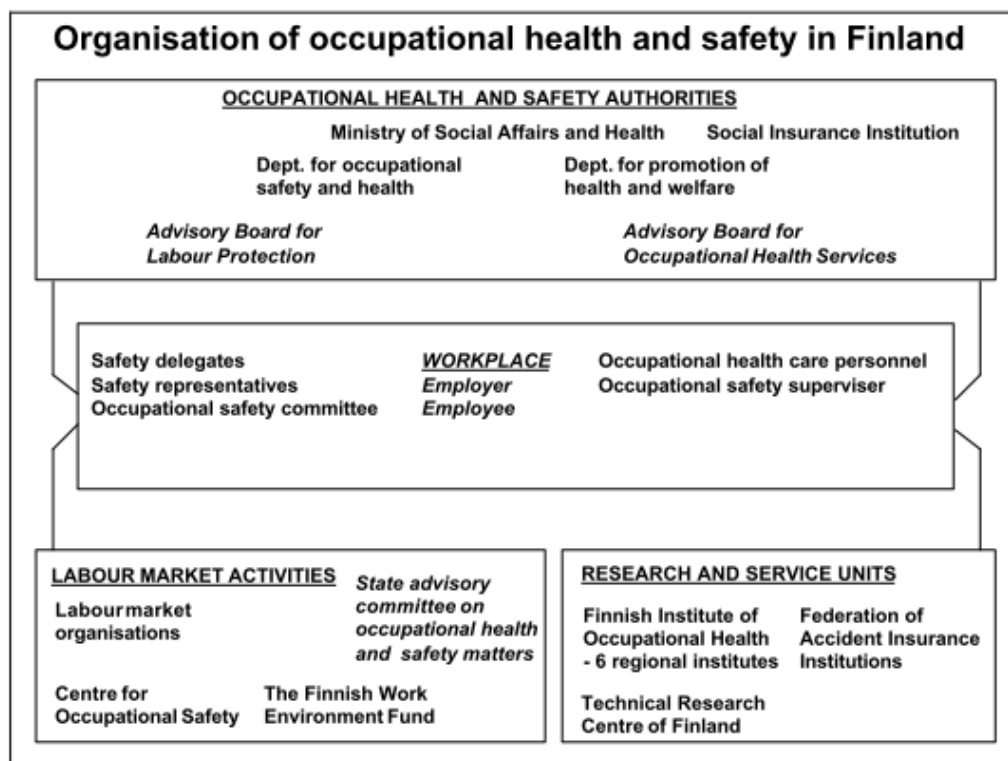


Figure 1. Structure of occupational safety and health services in Finland.

In conclusion, the occupational safety and health authorities acknowledge and try to provide means of resolving conflicts in the workplaces. The primary responsibility in the conflict situation lies on the target of inappropriate behavior whose task it is to take the first action. In the need for support, he or she can first turn towards the personnel representatives, namely on the labor protection representatives and the shop stewards, and if the health is compromised or the support is not sufficient, then the occupational health service can be consulted. Health service personnel can support the employee and the employer in their needs to resolve the conflict situation or to set requirements for the employer if needed.

3.3 Self-help and mediators' needs

The idea of the self-help among the mediators is based on the needs that roused up directly in Pehrman's survey in 2011: sharing information, learning from experiences, promoting self-esteem as mediators, challenge traditional roles and values (such as organizational leadership and hierarchy, see for instance; Pehrman, 2010) and carrying out publicity. Thus, it shares the basic acknowledged values of the general self-help (see for instance; Wann, 1995), which was chosen as one of the research topics of the study.

The mediators' need for sharing experiences differs from the traditional self-help concept in that the problem of the participants does not derive from their personal life but, instead, from their professional context. Thus the idea of the mediators' self-help group does not fall into any generally acknowledged categories of self-help groups, such as, physical illness or addiction groups. However, according to Wann (1995, 104), even those groups, which are concerned more with shared activities, such as sport, leisure or art "--can be included in a broad definition of self-help being self-determining, co-operative, and committed to mutual support to meet members' needs". I consider that this group of media-

tors would identify itself in somewhere between the traditional self-help, and the more activity-based self-help and peer support groups.

Sharing experiences in self-help groups has many acknowledged benefits in various situations. Literature of the concepts of peer support and self-help is extensive and the context varies depending of the needs of the group participants. In this study, the concept of self-help is discussed from mediators' point of view and the concentration is put on those benefits of the self-help that reflect the particular needs of mediators. These aspects consists information, awareness, practical skills and social support.

The benefits for the self-help group participants can include information and resources, coping strategies, social support, and self-image improvement (Lyons et al., 2001; Somerville, 1998; Weissberg, 1999, cited in Cheung, Mok & Cheung 2005, 354-77). Social support, together with practical skills and information correlates strongly with personal empowerment (Cheung et al. 2005, 354-77).

Wann (1995) mentions that, in addition to emotional support, information, advice and practical help, the self-help can also serve in carrying out publicity and education, fundraising and campaigning. It can also exert wider changes, such as challenge established values and traditional roles and promote research. (Wann, 1995.)

4. METHODOLOGY

On one hand the research follows a humanistic-phenomenological research methodology, and on the other hand, a heuristic research. In this chapter, I briefly reflect some theory of these approaches and their connectedness to this research. In addition, the chapter includes description of implementation steps, data gathering methods, analysis method and ethical considerations of the research.

4.1 Humanistic-phenomenological and heuristic approaches

Humanistic research is based on the belief that people contain knowledge that one may have access to by engaging in free and unconstrained conversation. This idea supports interview as primary research method. Phenomenological orientation focuses on the essence of experiences and on the meanings of the situation as experienced by the participants. The investigation is turned from facts to meanings, which makes the research more as psychological reflection. (Schneider, Bugental & Pierson, 2001.)

Similarly to phenomenology, the heuristic approach emphasizes the meanings and the experiences of the interviewees but it puts more focus on the connectedness to the phenomenon investigated (Schneider et al., 2001, 264). Moustakas (1990, 39) describe the heuristic interview method as "--interviews which often take the form of dialogues with oneself and one's research participants." and that, "In dialogue, one is encouraged to permit ideas, thoughts, feelings, and images to unfold and to be expressed naturally". This supports the situation to reveal particular human experience in a vivid way (Moustakas, 1990, 41).

All three interviews concentrated on the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees and on the meanings that they gave for different topics. The dia-

logue was created by being open of the researcher's own commitment to the subject and by allowing the conversation to live naturally. The connection to the interviewees was valued in the research because it helped the situation to become natural and relaxed.

In addition, the process of heuristic study highlights the importance of question formulation in research, so that the questions are stated in simple, clear and concrete terms. In addition, the research should reveal the researcher's personal commitment and passionate desire to know more about the subject and this devotion should guide the researcher to formulate accurate questions. (Moustakas, 1990.)

The question formulation is, also, highlighted subject in mediation because questions are one of the main methods for the facilitator to create a dialogue in a situation. Questions in mediation serve, of course, the informational purpose in increasing the understanding of the experiences but, in addition, accurate questions can provide empathy and feeling of being heard for those who share their stories (Rosenberg, 2003). This can help in creating trust and confidentiality between the mediator and the parties.

Similarly to heuristic and mediation (conflict theory) approaches, the questions were formulated in this study as detailed and accurate as possible. In the survey it was possible because the questions based on the previous data from Pehrman's survey. In the interviews, the questions based on the survey answers which were already analyzed. The third interview explored a new area of labor protection and the questions were, thus, more general by their nature than in the mediators' interviews. Every interview focused on exploring thoughts, feelings and needs and all these aspects were encouraged to co-exist which served the dialogue in the situation.

4.2 Purpose and objectives.

The purpose of this research is to increase the public awareness of the work community mediation and to produce updated information about the needs and experiences of the work place mediators. The main research question is to discover what experiences work community mediators have in trying to implement the mediation in work places. Sub-questions were three: How mediators experience the status of the mediation in work communities? What kind of support the mediators need to implement the mediation in work communities? How mediators have networked together and how they consider the idea of self-help support?

4.3 Implementation

This research was implemented as a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The combination of the interview and survey research is beneficial because the survey can reach large amount of research participants and the interviews can deepen the data to explain and confirm the survey results. When the research focuses to investigate cultural aspects of certain place, then the survey alone is unlikely to give a complete picture of the issue. The interviews are often needed to explain why the survey results emerged as they did, whereby the survey results can describe more the status of the issue. (Listyowardojo, Robertson, Leyshon & Blix, n.d.)

The original need for the research came from Timo Pehrman who I met during my practical placement in Finnish Forum for Mediation (Suomen Sovittelu Foorumi, SSF) in 2012. Pehrman expressed a wish if he could somehow explore what support the work community mediators need in their work at the moment. Pehrman's survey from 2011 had explored the needs of the mediators and some conclusions were already made about the topic.

The research themes of the survey, which were based on the main findings of Pehrman's survey, concerned the status of the mediation, the support for mediators and the possibility of self-help among mediators. I started by making a survey where these themes were modified to internet questionnaire using Webropol-surveys and it was sent to 44 work community mediators, whose e-mail addresses I had picked up from Pehrman's study. The mediators were approached two times through the e-mail and the final amount of responses was 10. The number of the responses surprised the researcher because the survey was relatively short, only having 11 questions and half of them in open form, and the researcher considered it as an easy-to-respond by its nature. Reasons for the small amount of responses are further discussed in the evaluation chapter 6.2.

After analyzing the survey results, the research proceeded to make interviews with two mediators who had responded in the survey. The researcher approached three mediators, from which two agreed on interviews. The purpose was to explore more deeply the mediators' answers in the survey, which all of them were not clear for the researcher in their meaning. These two interviews enlarged and deepened the information of the mediators' experiences.

The third interview was made with an expert of labor protection in social sector. The interviews with the mediators roused up a new theme that was seen meaningful to investigate. The theme of non-cooperation between the labor protection representatives, shop stewards and mediators is further reflected in the results and discussions chapters. After all the interviews were done, the research proceeded to analysis part using the content analysis method, which is reflected more detailed in the chapter 4.5.

4.4 Dialogue in the interviews

In general, interview data can be approached from two directions; either it represents a reality outside the interview or then the reality is formed in the interview session (Seale, 1998, 202-216). According to Moustakas (1990), a research approach, which emphasize dialogue in interviewing, stresses open and direct relationship between the researcher and the interviewee. Interviews of this study were implemented as dialogues following the heuristic and humanistic-phenomenological research principles.

The two first interviews with the mediators were different, according to the role of the interviewees and the structure of the interviews, than the third one with the labor protection expert. Thus, the interviews are described separately in this chapter. All the interviews were recorded which, as a data collection method, served dialog and connection in the interview session.

4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews with mediators.

The first two interviews were done with two survey respondent mediators who agreed on interviews. The first interview was implemented as a telephone conversation because of the long distance in the location and the second interview was done as face-to-face interview. These interviews included focused questions, based on the survey responses of the participants, which were in an open-ended form.

Özerdem and Bowd (2010) have described the semi structured-interview as participatory research method, which is flexible and reflective by its nature. They state that feminist researchers prefer to use semi-structured or unstructured interviewing because it helps to build more sympathetic relationship and highlights the importance of listening and respect. It supports the research par-

ticipants to express themselves openly and respects the differences among them. (Özerdem & Bowd, 2010.)

In both of the interviews, the mediators were asked more detailed questions based on their survey answers. Although the same survey base existed at the background, different themes were discussed in diverse order and with distinct emphasis. Because the mediators stressed different aspects of the same subject, the discussion turned easily into various rails, depending on what type and how much the interviewees had experiences in mediation. Highlighted in the heuristic research, the open expression and dialogue was valued in the meetings over strict question structured interviews. This served the purpose of understanding more deeply the interviewees' expressions.

Interviews with the mediators were limited to two because it seemed slightly difficult to reach the mediators and get them involved into the research in the first hand. Also, it was visible that the two interviews supported each other so that similar information roused up in them and it seemed that saturation in the mediators' interviews was already achieved.

4.4.2 Labor protection expert interview

The third interview was made with expert of labor protection in social sector and it was different by its purpose and nature than the two previous interviews with the mediators. The purpose of the third interview was to discover how the labor protection expert regarded the mediators' experiences about their status and relationships in the work places, which some of them concerned the cooperation with the personnel representatives. The purpose was, also, to widen the picture of the environment where the mediators implemented their work and to use this information in exploring some possibilities to meet the needs of the mediators. These ideas are included into the discussions at the end of the study.

This third interview was semi-structured and dialogue based because there was question structure at the background (questions based on the mediators' responses) but the discussion was very open and turned into various directions. This conversation concentrated more to explore ideas and thoughts of the interviewee, instead of involving so much feelings and needs into the discussion. The interview was more about "changing ideas", as the interviewee expressed at the end of the session, meaning that the structure was very open and most of the questions led to discussions that revealed various information from different subjects. Similarly to other interviews, dialogue and flexibility were valued in the interview for the benefit of the mutual interaction in the situation.

4.5 Content analysis

The content analysis method was chosen for both; the survey and the interviews. The content analysis is practical method to analyze information that is in an open form and requires reducing irrelevant material by classifying and coding the texts. In the content analysis the relevant expressions, which communicate with the research questions and interests, are marked and separated from the total material. Then, common themes are searched from this new data, which is called as classifying the text. Finally, unifying the similarities together from the sub-categories, the main categories and the results of the analysis process can be created. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2006.)

For the survey, the content analysis was beneficial method because the questionnaire collected mainly qualitative information with majority of open formed questions. Different written expressions were united into sub-categories and common themes were searched from them. The analysis of the survey was beneficial because, in the interviews, I could continue the research from the main findings of the survey results. The analysis of the survey explained the problem and the needs that the mediators have in the work communities and it

gave valuable information from various perspectives. However, the analysis of the survey could not give answer to the question of why the mediators had these needs and problems that were mentioned and that is why the interviews were implemented.

The content analysis method was, similarly, chosen for the interviews because the interview data consisted of meanings, instead of facts, and classifying and discovering common themes from this information was crucial. After the interviews were littered, which produced around 10 pages of text, the analysis proceeded to investigate similarities and differences from different expressions of the research participants. The similarities in the expressions were united into different categories and named by their contents. These categories were, finally, abstracted and united into theoretical concepts. Lots of data needed to be reduced through the process because only some of it was relevant from the point of view of the research questions.

The content analysis of this research revealed three main categories that were linked into the theoretical framework. These categories included: awareness raising about the mediation among work communities; sharing experiences together among the mediators; non-cooperation between different personnel representatives and mediators in the work places.

4.6 Ethics

Confidentiality is important element to be addressed in implementing a scientific research and, especially, when doing interviews. The anonymity of the interviews should be able to perceive in the process of analyzing the data. The results should be expressed so that no individual persons could be recognized from the descriptions in the final report. (Mäkinen, 2006.)

The participants of this research were aware of the anonymity of their answers in the research process. The issue was addressed in the beginning of the interviews and it was guaranteed throughout the process. The confidential information in this research concerns the organization and the status of the interviewees and the local examples they used. All this information is removed from the description of the final results and the essential meanings of the interviews are presented in a way that respect the confidentiality of the research.

When describing the results, the researcher faced one ethical question that concerned the confidentiality of the last interview. This interview was done with the expert of labor protection and it came to a question, whether the status of this interviewee could be used openly as an expert statement. However it was crucial to clarify the opinion of the interviewed person and respect it according to the research principles and after discussing the matter together we ended up to consider the interview anonymously, similarly to the two other interviews with the mediators. I speak about this interviewee in the study as an “expert of labor protection in social sector” and this name was agreed together with the interviewee to be used in the text.

5. RESULTS

The results of the interviews and the survey reflect entirely subjective experiences. The data of the interviews and the survey has being interpreted and analyzed and the final results have been developed through this conversation between the researcher and the data.

The main findings of this research I have named as "awareness raising", "need for sharing together" and "need for cooperation". I describe the results so that, the survey questions are marked from Q1 to Q11 and the direct quotations of the interviewees are named as participant 1, participant 2 and participant 3, where participant 1 and 2 describe the answers of the mediators and participant 3 the perspectives of the labor protection expert.

5.1 Awareness raising and culture change

In the survey, I approached the mediators first by asking if they had mediated before in some working community (Q1). Six out of 10 answered that they had mediated before and the amount of the mediations varied from one two 12 times. The second question was directly about how they had experienced the awareness of the mediation practices in their work community, first among the management stuff and, second, among the workers (Q2), and the result average from these two categories was 2,3 in the scale of 1 to 5, where one had the significance of not knowing at all and five of being actively present in the community. This result revealed that the mediators experience that the mediation practice is poorly known in a work community among the management stuff and among the workers. The result was slightly better (2,5) among the management stuff than among the workers (2,1).

The lack of awareness of the mediation practice among the work community was discussed throughout the survey responses. For instance, when asking about their mediation experiences (Q3), two responses concerned the need of increasing awareness of the mediation among the involved parties and, especially, among the administration staff. In addition, when asking what kind of support the mediators would appreciate in their work community (Q6), the achieved seven responses discussed all about the theme of awareness rising of the mediation practice in the work community. The answers expressed the need for support in discussing about the mediation and keeping it on the stage in the work community. Also, increasing the understanding about the mediation among the administrative staff was seen important in several answers.

Interviews with the mediators highlighted the importance of the awareness raising and provided more information around it. Both of the interviewees (participant 1 and participant 2) brought up how important it was for the mediators that the awareness of the mediation practice was spread as widely as possible in the work community, especially among the administrative staff. In addition, the supportive attitude of the management level, seen as acceptance and common will, was mentioned several times as highly important factor.

Participant 1: "The support from the administrative level is central...The administrative staff were active and took the issue forward- there was a common will that now we are going to handle this (speaking about the major recent mediation in the work community)."

Participant 2: "If there is not a full support from the administrative staff, the mediation is going to become really difficult- in one way or another, the support needs to be achieved. The support means that they have expressed it openly, that the mediation is accepted and supported method in the work community"

In addition, in both of the interviews roused up a need for increasing theoretical or practical knowledge about the mediation among the administrative staff. In the case of participant 1, one of the administrative staff persons had been in-

volved in the mediation training and the knowledge was widely spread in the management level. He considered that the knowledge of the mediation was important factor for the administrative staff to become engaged to the mediation in the work community.

Participant 2, then again, considered that the necessary understanding of the mediation can always be created by the facilitator in the actual mediation session and, that deeper knowledge of the mediation method is an ambitious request towards the administrative staff. In his perspective, the attitude of the administrative staff was equally important but could be supported by the facilitator by practicing the new interaction model in the actual mediation sessions.

In both of the interviews, the aim result of the awareness raising was described through the theme of culture change. Participant 1 acknowledged that different tools, such as self-assessment and work environment surveys should be actively present and used in the work community and, in along these "positive" tools, the mediation method should, also, be at the stage. Then again he saw possibilities to use the mediation knowledge in the implementation of the self-assessment in the work community.

Participant 1: "Improving the culture of communication is essential. Per se, the development needs to emerge through positive and, thus, the mediation cannot be the main tool because it is for conflict situations when the other tools, such as self-assessment, have not worked. Then again, the self-assessment is also mediation".

Participant 2 spoke a lot about the culture change, especially in the administrative level, as an aim result of the mediation work. The culture change was, also, referred as "something permanent", which is external from the individual work communities and is part of the wider awareness of the population.

Participant 2: "Efficient way to change the culture of interaction in the work community would be to inspire the administrative level about the idea of the mediation, for example, by advertising and selling it as a new method of conflict resolution. However, the easiest way to market the mediation is through using the dialog when facilitating as a mediator or interacting in other ways with people and, in this way, inspire them about the culture change."

As mentioned in the theoretical reflection of the mediation, the culture change towards more participatory management style and organizational culture is one of the dimensions of mediation in organizations. The administrative staff's support and acceptance for the mediation concept in an open way can mean, for instance, writing mediation down as a separate policy alongside the personnel guidelines. If supported and acknowledged, the mediation itself as a tool to resolve problem situations in the work place can be a key to make the long term culture change happen. (Doherty and Guyler, 2008.)

5.2 Need for sharing together

The survey included also questions concerning the mutual exchange that the mediators had among them. When asked about the interaction between them (Q7), half of them (5) had been in some contact with other mediators and half not. Interaction had consisted of discussing together, giving advices and sharing knowledge and sharing mediation requests. About the question of importance of sharing the experiences together (Q9), all seven answers expressed the benefits of the mutual sharing but few of the respondents expressed lack of time for it. All together, the answers concerning sharing of experiences shows that, even though some would not need more intense sharing, still over half of the respondents expressed interest towards sharing together and forming a group.

Sharing experiences together was seen valuable theme by the mediators in the survey results and they saw different possibilities for the sharing, such as group meetings and internet-based sharing. In the interviews, the need for awareness

rising was highlighted more and sharing of individual experiences, at least the need for emotional support, was at the background. Participant 1 stressed the point that there was no need for emotional support from the group but that learning from each other's experiences could be useful. Participant 2 pointed out that, first of all, the group should be research and development focused so that wider changes and awareness could be promoted.

Participant 2: "There exists more or less permanent organizations (in the field of mediation in Finland) but they have not been able to state the message of the mediation towards the ministry or wider public. It would only require a good research or a competent person to give the first shot and then the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Finnish Forum for Mediation (SSF) and the ministry could take part of it and make it in public".

As mentioned in the referred self-help literature (see chapter 3.3), sharing of experiences in a group can serve many purposes, such as publicity, information, research, coping strategies, practical skills and awareness. In addition, a self-help group can form of people who, instead of sharing the same problem in the life, share the same activity, such as work, sport or leisure (Wann, 1995). Personal empowerment is essential for promoting whatever change and self-help can have strong empowering aspect for the participants (see for instance, Cheung et al. 2005).

Mediators self-help and peer support groups is not a new idea and it is implemented in Finland, at least, among the "Mediation in criminal and civil cases" (see for instance; National Institute for Health and Welfare, n.d), which is the most known form of mediation in Finland. In the guidelines of the Mediation in criminal and civil cases, it is mentioned the importance of mediators' regular gatherings to vent out their experiences and tell about their problems and results. Specific mediation offices (exists for the mediation in criminal and civil cases in all over the country) offer the space and resources for this type of sharing but the mediators' activity is also required. (Iivari, 2007.)

5.3 Need for cooperation

The theme of non-cooperation between the mediators and the personnel representatives was reflected by one mediator in the survey and later the same issue was confirmed in the second interview. The mediator in the survey had experienced shop stewards as problematic because, according to his experiences, they do not know about the mediation method and they are afraid of the mediators to diminish the authority of their status.

The interview with the expert of labor protection in the social sector gave an insight to understand the situation of the shop stewards and the labor protection representatives in the work communities. According to the expert, the shop stewards and labor protection representatives have different roles in the work community in ensuring health and safety at work and in negotiating different disputes between the employee and the employer. However, according to this interviewee, the training of both of these actors, still, lacks of awareness and tools to face and deal with conflicts and emotional tensions at work. Both of the roles are still highly focused on ensuring physical protection and safety at work concentrating much, for instance, on the legislation.

Participant 3: "The mental health and safety is still on very general level and the occupational health and safety, as a whole, is still focused mostly on physical labor protection. The situation in mental health and safety is weak because they are quite incapable in the face of the causing factors, such as inappropriate behavior, bullying etc."

Mediation was seen as one possibility to increase the personnel representatives' preparedness for emotional labor protection. However, mediation was, also, seen as having an unclear position in the organizational structure, which can affect on cooperation in a negative way causing mistrust and reluctance to be open for new possibilities. In addition, non-cooperation between mediators

and shop stewards surprised the interviewee because the mediation itself is a tool to increase cooperation.

Participant 3: "It seems that mediation has not clear place yet in the organizational culture. It, also, easily happens that people (referring to shop stewards and mediators) end up in competition position in the work life and some can experience the mediation as a threat. What I am wondering is that why not to use the competence of the mediators to increase the understanding and trust towards themselves and their profession?"

According to the interviewee, most of the Finnish employers experience the labor protection as a threat, instead of seeing it as a common issue for the benefit of all. To market the mediation inside the occupational health care networks would, thus, not help too much because the labor protection needs still convincing and marketing of itself among the employers.

The culture change towards more interactive organizational culture was described, also, as one of the long-term aims of labor protection, especially in the work places where social aspect is highlighted. The joint operation of the employers, personnel representatives and the employees, for the common well-being of all the work community actors, is needed to allow this change happen. From the labor protection perspective, there is a need and to answer into the questions of; how to integrate mediation into work communities and how to define the status of mediation among the already existing occupational welfare networks. In addition, there is a need to define the question of whether separate mediator and labor protection person is needed in the organization and when, or should the tasks be combined, for instance, in the case of small companies.

6. DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter I concentrate on the evaluation of the research together with the reliability considerations. In addition, I chose to further discuss about the issue of non-cooperation between the mediators, shop stewards and labor protection representatives because the topic is new in the field and it seems to consist potentiality to meet the needs of different parties.

6.1 Non-cooperation and mediators

The mediation theory is based on the knowledge that resistance is an expression of unheard needs from the other party and the cooperation in the situation can be created by making sure that everyone is being heard and appreciated in their needs (Marshall, 2003). Mediation in work communities is a process to improve the dysfunction of the organization when there is a general atmosphere of lack of cooperation in the work place (Doherty and Guyler, 2008).

One of the findings in this research is that, in addition to the disputing actors in the organization, also, the mediators suffer from non-cooperation in their work field. Mediators suffer from lack of cooperation with the personnel representatives in the organization, namely with the labor protection representatives and the shop stewards. In the light of this research, it seems that the non-cooperation of these actors is, similarly to other conflicts in the work place, a subject of different needs and lack of understanding and awareness.

According to the research results, mediators have experienced resistant attitude from personnel representatives towards their work and position in the organization. From the perspective of the labor protection, the unclear position of the mediation in the organizational structure can make it slightly confusing and contradictory concept to face for personnel representatives.

Guidelines of the Centre for Occupational Safety state clearly that personnel representatives are the persons to support the employee in the case of inappropriate behavior. The possibility for cooperation with the mediators is not mentioned in the guidelines of the Centre for Occupational Safety, or in the material of the TJS-opintokeskus. (The Centre for Occupational Safety n.d; Lohi-Aalto, 2010.)

Doherty and Guyler (2008) acknowledge that it is the task of the administrative staff to decide whether to write the mediation into the already existing personnel policies or to create a new mediation policy for the organization. Because the clarity of the mediation status in the organizational structure is heavily dependent on the managerial decisions, it is visible why mediators have experienced it hard to improve the cooperation towards labor protection and shop stewards. Mediators long for support and acknowledgment for the mediation in work communities instead of confrontation.

Another finding is that the knowledge base of the personnel representatives lacks of tools to support the mental well-being of the employees, whereby, the mediators' knowledge is focused to support and empower the employees in the mental distress situations. Moreover, the mediators could benefit from the labor protection support in their needs for awareness rising and alliances in the work community.

In conclusion, the cooperation of these actors would be mutually beneficial in promoting both of the parties' needs. One option to improve the cooperation could be to make sure that the labor protection representatives are aware about the mediation services already in their education period, by mentioning the mediation in the education material. As stated before in the chapters, mediation is not mentioned in the material of the Centre for Occupational Safety or in the TJS-opintokeskus. Mediation knowledge could, also, be beneficial for the labor

protection education to increase the personnel representatives' preparedness for the mental labor protection.

One discussed possibility to spread the mediation could be marketing it, for example, towards the "TJS-opintokeskus", which is a training and service organization administrated by Toimihenkilöjärjestöjen Sivistysliitto ry, one of the main work unions in Finland. At the moment, TJS-opintokeskus provides the training material for the labor protection representatives in the social sector, also including the guidelines in the case of inappropriate behavior, which is called as "Reilu Peli" (Lohi-Aalto, 2010.)

Under this research, it was not possible to further investigate this theme but it would be interesting topic to make research in the future. Reasons for the lack of cooperation can be many and both of the parties have their own perspective towards the situation. The research about this topic should include an insight about the experiences of shop stewards and labor protection about the mental tensions in the work places. In addition, it should include the mediators' perspective towards the mental distress in the work community and, finally, the research should involve both of them experiences concerning the cooperation.

6.2 Evaluation of the research

Harrison (2006) highlights the importance of evaluation and argues that; "There is no point in setting objectives if you do not have a way of measuring results; therefore, measuring performance is all about developing yardstick to measure how you are doing." (Harrison, 2006, 32). He also speaks about performance indicators to measure success but acknowledges that, within the social services, it is not always an easy task to do. It is often needed to create indicators for the quality instead of the quantity and "--there is not always clarity about what constitutes a desirable outcome." (Harrison, 2006, 32.)

6.2.1 Indicators of the research

The goal of this research was to produce information about the experiences of the mediators and to explore possibilities to support their needs. One indicator for this success is the amount of the answers received for the survey and the amount of the interviews. Second indicator is more qualitative and reflects the atmosphere behind the answers about how meaningful the questions were for the respondents in the survey and in the interviews. In addition, the reasonability of the new ideas to meet the needs of the mediators was one indicator for the success of the last part of the research.

6.2.2 Results of the evaluation

The meaningfulness of the questions in the survey and in the interviews was more difficult to measure than the amount of the answers in the survey. The quantity of the responses was 10 out of 44, which was less than the researcher expected and a small backlash in the beginning. The reason for not responding can be many, such as meaningless questions or lack of time and motivation. Still the researcher's expectations were higher towards the mediators' willingness to participate.

The meaningfulness of the questions was evaluated by the devotion that was interpreted from the answers. In the survey, the questions were experienced in both ways: some found the open questions really meaningful and expressed it with agreeing or disagreeing strongly and some had left answering or expressed more neutral feelings behind their ideas of the issue. Over half of the respondents answered to every open question and all ten to every quantitative question.

In the interviews, the meaningfulness was interpreted from the atmosphere in the conversation and from the direct feedback that was given about the ques-

tions. Participant 1 expressed open frustration concerning the theme of sharing experiences in a group but found other questions, especially, about the awareness rising as really meaningful. Participant 2 expressed interest and devotion towards most of the questions but the theme of group sharing got, also, less attention from him. In the third interview, the meaningfulness was interpreted from the atmosphere in the conversation, which provided the feeling of devotion for the researcher. At the end of the meeting the participant 3 expressed being slightly surprised that the meeting reminded more about changing ideas than a actual interview but, even then, the expression carried devotion within it.

In conclusion, the small amount of responses to the survey may reflect something about the insignificance attitude of the mediators towards the research. However, the reasons for this can vary from insignificant questions to the lack of time to respond. It is, also, one acknowledged challenge of the survey research, especially in the case of e-mail surveys, that the questionnaires can be lost into the sum of many other mails that people receive daily. All these reasons may have influenced on the willingness to respond into the survey.

6.2.3 Reliability

In mediation, the mediators hear different stories of the same issue depending of different parties that are involved in a conflict. However, the mediator role is not to make any evaluation of the stories that are told but, instead, to try to remain open attitude towards all the aspects in the situation. The information that is gained through the interviews in the mediation only helps the mediator to understand the background factors of the conflict and the emotional state that the parties are in the moment. The concentration is on the question how the parties give meanings for the things through their stories and the information in the interviews is based on the present dialog between the mediator and the interviewee. (Pehrman, 2011, 130)

In the same way, the interviews in this study were implemented as a dialog and the primary information was kept out of the researcher's evaluation, as much as possible. Moreover, the purpose was to produce local and subjective information, which would reliably express the mediators' views without being shaped by the researcher's interpretation in the first hand. The researcher possesses some mediation training and has done a practical placement in a family mediation project in the Finnish Forum for Mediation. Through the mediation experience, the researcher has learned to be familiar with observing his own interpretation of the world and to be able to separate it from the actual observations of the situation. Using the researcher's personal orientation in doing the research, also in the analysis being aware of own thoughts and interpretations, the information of the research is considered reliable.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This research gives a brief insight into the experiences of the mediators in the work communities and explains some of the main issues they face in their work. It is my hope, that this research can contribute in spreading the awareness of the mediation in public and raise some discussion in the work places among the mediators, personnel representatives and other organizational actors. In this chapter, I shall briefly reflect the main findings of the research and discuss the community development perspectives of the research together with my own personal learning.

Marketing and spreading awareness of the mediation in work communities and in public is the main need of the mediators. Similarly to labor protection and personnel representatives, mediators needs joint operation with the administration level to gain more acknowledged, accepted and clarified status in the Finnish work life. The cooperation between the mediators, shop stewards and labor protection representatives is not well acknowledged and there exists even confrontation between these actors. The possibilities of the cooperation are not acknowledged or investigated either.

Attitudes towards self-help and group meetings among the mediators were positive and reflect different self-help benefits, namely, the promotion of publicity and research, informational support, coping strategies and practical skills. The face-to-face group meetings were the most supported method for the self-help.

Labor protection and shop stewards lacks of tools to face inappropriate behavior and other mental stress related factors in the work community. In addition, the position of labor protection itself long for acknowledgment and joint operation of employers. Mediation in work communities is not well acknowledged

among the labor protection and the personnel representatives are left quite unaware of the work community mediation in their education.

7.1 Community development perspective

Community development represents a slightly alternative and radical discipline within the mainstream social work because it has a focus on challenging social structures from the grassroots level. The value-base distance community development from social work in its strengths-based and empowerment emphasis. (Mendes, 2008.)

In addition, Mendes (2008) mention, that negotiation is part of the knowledge-base of the community development practitioners. The radical and challenging nature of community development can put the practitioners into different conflict situations where negotiation is needed. Increased negotiation skills are appreciated among the community development practitioners. (Mendes, 2008.)

Mediation in work communities promotes the participation and inclusivity in the organization at large. It encourages to cooperation where, through increased communication and interaction individuals actively tries to effect on their well-being and, at the same time, increase their understanding of the other party. Thus, the mediation method has a lot of common with community development ideology and both of them respect the same core values of participation, inclusivity and empowerment.

In the work communities especially important aspect regarding the community development is the leadership culture. According to Pehrman (2010), the leadership can either maintain the conflicting atmosphere in the organization or it can serve as a platform for empowerment and communality. Mediation can serve as a key tool to able the change towards the new leadership culture. It has similarities with the community development work in that it can put the me-

diators into a challenging situation in trying to establish a whole new culture of interaction in the work places and there is the negotiation skills needed in the first hand.

7.2 Personal orientation and learning

My personal orientation with the concept of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) (see further; Marshall, 2003) has provided an insight, also, into the mediation. In addition, I was involved in a project of family disputes mediation while doing my placement in the Finnish Forum for Mediation in 2012. These personal and professional experiences have increased my interest and attachment into the issue of mediation which, again, helped me to understand more the mediators' experiences in the research. I wish I can continue working among the issue of mediation in the future and possibly provide help in making further research to extend the awareness of this useful concept in public.

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APPENDICES

Appendices 1. The survey of the research (in Finnish).



Kokemukset ja tuen tarve työyhteisösovittelijana

Kokemukset työyhteisösovittelusta

1. Oletko toiminut sovittelijana työyhteisökonflikteissa omassa -tai jossakin toisessa työyhteisössä?

- En ole
- Olen, kuinka usein?

2. Millaiseksi koet työyhteisösovittelun tunnettavuuden työpaikallasi?

	Ei tunneta	On ollut joskus esillä	Tunnetaan joten kuten	Tunnetaan hyvin	On aktiivisesti esillä
Johdon parissa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Työntekijöiden keskuudessa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Kuvaile kokemuksiasi työyhteisösovittelun toimivuudesta ja tärkeydestä työyhteisössäsi?

Tuen tarve työyhteisösovittelussa

4. Oletko työyhteisösovittelijan roolissa toimiessasi saanut tukea sovittelun käynnistämiseksi tai toteuttamisessa työpaikallasi?

	Olen	En ole
Johdon puolelta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Työntekijäpuolelta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joltain muulta taholta, miltä?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Millaista tukea koet, tai et koe, saaneesi? Miksi?

6. Millaista tukea kaipaisit ensisijaisesti työyhteisösovittelun edistämiseksi työyhteisössäsi? Perustele, miksi juuri tämä tuki hyödyttäisi sinua eniten.

Verkostointi työyhteisösovittelijoiden välillä

7. Oletko ollut yhteydessä muihin työyhteisösovittelijoihin sovittelijakoulutuksen jälkeen?

Jos olet, niin mitä yhteydenpito on koskenut?

- Olen
 En ole

8. Koetko, että kokemusten vaihtaminen muiden työyhteisösovittelijoiden kanssa auttaisi sinua omassa sovittelijantyössäsi, miksi?

9. Millaista yhteydenpitoa kaipaisit lisää sovittelijoiden välille?

- Ryhmätapaamisia
 Nettifoorumia
 Puhelin -tai Skypekeskusteluja
 Jotain muuta. Mitä?
 En kaipaa tiiviimpää yhteydenpitoa

10. Kuinka halukas olisit vaihtamaan kokemuksia muiden työyhteisösovittelijoiden kanssa etänä, esimerkiksi internetfoorumissa, Skype:ssä tai puhelimesta?

En ole kiinnostunut kokemusten vaihtamisesta etänä 1 2 3 4 5 Olen todella kiinnostunut vaihtamaan kokemuksia etänä

11. Haluaisitko vielä lisätä jotain työyhteisösovittelijoiden verkostoitumiseen ja kokemusten vaihtamiseen liittyen?