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MEDIATION and RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AT SCHOOLS IN FINLAND



VERSO
VERTAISOVITTELU

TEN YEARS SCHOOL MEDIATION IN FINLAND: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED?

Finnish Forum for Mediation

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School mediation project in Finland

- Started year 2000 by Finnish Red Cross, continued by Finnish Forum for Mediation since 2006
- Supported by the Ministry of Education and the Finlands Slot Machine Association (under the Ministry of Social and Health Care)
- 3 full-time workers & 15 free-lancer trainers
- About 200 trainings last year
- Multi-professional steering and development groups
- Active international networks

Figures of Finnish school mediation

- 380 schools trained: primary, secondary, high schools, and vocational schools
- 7200 trained peer mediator pupils active
- 1800 trained supportive adults active
- over 9000 cases mediated in 2009
- Almost 20 000 pupils have solved their conflict in mediation
- concerns 90 000 pupils plus their parents

“It’s cool that we pupils can participate in this”

(peer mediator pupil 2009)

Mediation at schools

- PEER MEDIATION:
Pupils are mediating conflicts between other pupils
- ADULT-LED MEDIATION:
Mediation supportive adults mediate conflicts between pupils
- PUPIL / ADULT MEDIATION:
Also conflicts between pupils and teachers have been mediated successfully
- CO-OPERATION WITH VOM-OFFICE:
In a more serious case school can contact local VOM-office

Typical cases in peer mediation

- Bad name calling, gossip
- Pushing, kicking, fights
- Isolation, discrimination
- Threats and blackmailing
- Cyberbullying
- Catching and hiding other's property etc.

“In peer mediation you can learn to understand what hurts others” (peer mediator pupil 2009)

Active international networks: our training in Petroskoi, Russia



Now, let's hear your thoughts...



**HAVE YOU EVER TASTED
FINNISH SALTED LIQUORICE**

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**ARE WE ADULTS FASTER AND
BETTER TO SOLVE CONFLICTS?**

RESEARCH RESULTS

Opinions of the mediators

- 95% of mediated cases lead to an agreement and were successful after 1-2 weeks follow-up
- 89% of peer mediators feel that it is very important to deal cases immediately
- 90% of mediators think that peer mediation is very meaningful and important
- 86% of mediated cases deal with physical or mental violence

(Gellin 2007 & 2009)

"We don't always need adults to tell us what to do." (a conflict party)

Opinions of the parties

- 82% of peer mediators feel that they really have helped the parties
- 91% of parties felt that they have been listened by peer mediators
- 88% of parties told that they have kept their agreement
- 87% of parties feel that it is good that pupils may solve their conflicts in peer mediation

(Gellin 2007 & 2009)

"Finally I could tell somebody." (a conflict party 2009)

Opinions of the supportive adults

(scale 1-5) average:

” It is meaningful to be a supportive adult in peer mediation” **4,4**

”The mediators apply well the principles of mediation” **4,5**

”Peer mediation is a good early intervention method” **4,5**

- Supportive adults have mediated more serious cases
- Also conflicts between teachers and pupils have been mediated successfully

(Gellin 2009)

Challenges

- There is good intention but slow change in the school culture
- How to increase the real participation and commitment?
- *"I can do it faster and better myself"* – how to move from this teachers' attitude to the insight that pupils are capable experts of their own communities?

(Gellin 2009)

Our responses to challenges

- New book of mediation in Finnish society
- Actively affecting to national curriculum
- Developing further training modules in mediation at university level
- Developing Master Degree in Mediation at university level
- Coming: Research results of learning aspects in mediation and restorative practises

Our responses to challenges

- Local network seminars for peer mediators and their supportive adults
- Creating virtual mediation arenas to youngsters with youngsters
 - Tv-program starting in January 2011
 - Mediation rooms in facebook and IRC-gallery
- Mediation lessons for every teacher to use

**IS PEER MEDIATION A YEAST OF
THE BREAD OR THE CREAM ON
THE CAKE?**

Pedagogic basis of peer mediation

Pupils learn valuable skills and values through mediation.

“We have all learned equality, belonging, forgiveness, responsibility, and promise keeping” (peer mediator pupil 2009)

“Mediation skills are useful in own life, for example in human relations, in marriage, with friends, in work etc. I think I can be a bit better part of society!” (peer mediator pupil 2009)

“In mediation you learn to look things from new and different viewpoints” (a party 2010)

“We have learned good social skills for our coming marriages.”
(peer mediator pupil 2009)

Mediation is learning for life

- Peer mediators have learned:
 - to listen
 - to respect different kind of attitudes
 - to understand other pupils
 - to co-operate
 - self-confidence
 - that it is more usefull to solve the conflict than try to find the quilty one

(Gellin 2010)

Also the parties are learning

- The parties have learned:
 - to discuss
 - to understand the feelings of other pupils
 - social skills
 - to respect the other people
 - to take response of their behaviour
 - that even small conflicts are better to solve before they grow too large

(Gellin 2010)

Expertise of peers

"See, we mediated a case where Jake had called Julia really ugly names, because she had forced him to be a rabbit when they played zoo in the school yard. I'm sure we understood their feelings better than you adults have had, since we are in same age. You don't remember how to play zoo, but I do."

(a 10 year old peer mediator pupil 2010)



Mediation builds up safety

*“.. so, first mediation makes our school
more peaceful, then our city
more peaceful, and finally
the whole country more peaceful!
It starts like expanding all the time...”*

(peer mediator pupil 2009)

Case Kuusamo

- Small city in northern Finland, 17 000 inhabitants
- One of the biggest industries is tourism and it brings good income to Kuusamo city
- No other cities nearby
- 1300 employees work for Kuusamo city. About 70 persons work on management level

Case Kuusamo

1993 VOM
training
(again -96,
-01, -07)

2002
peer
mediation
training:
2 primary
schools,
2 secondary
schools

2007 workplace
mediation
training:
I City management
group
II 60 other
managers/team
leaders
III 450 employees

2008
10 persons
trained to
work as
workplace
mediators
Also one
company
using
workplace
mediation

Sense of community

- *“When I grow up, and in my workplace there appears bullying between my workmates, I can help them by mediating and they do not need to fight anymore”*
(a primary school’s peer mediator pupil)

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