

**Gellin M. 2019. Restoratiivinen lähestymistapa ja sovittelu peruskoulukontekstissa Kohti eheyttävän kohtaamisen toimintakulttuuria.** PhD dissertation. Acta electronica Universitatis Lapponiensis 266. Rovaniemi: University of Lapland.  
ISBN 978-952-337-173-6 ISSN 1796-6310

Open access: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-337-173-6> (in Finnish)

## **Abstract in English**

Maija Gellin

Restorative approach and mediation in context of basic education

Towards culture of restorative encounters

Rovaniemi: University of Lapland, 2019

Acta electronica Universitatis Lapponiensis 266

ISBN 978-952-337-173-6

ISSN 1796-6310

The aim of this PhD-research was to explore the restorative approach and mediation in basic school context. In Finnish schools, restorative practices have been implemented since 2001. The aim of the research was to observe how restorative approach and mediation has been implemented, what significances they have brought to a school, how restorative approach in basis is understood and what challenges has occurred during several years practice in schools. The research was carried out with the Grounded Theory (GT) -process. The data was collected from school staff members (N=37), who had participated to trainings of Finnish Forum for Mediation (NGO) during years 2010-2012.

The research gives a new dimension to the discourse of wellbeing and conflict management in school communities. According to the research results the concepts of restorative approach had remained in the dialog of informants. Respectful encounter, listening, and understanding of the meaning of the participation of the parties when resolving conflicts was adopted to profession and pedagogy of informants. The data points out that the restorative approach had changed the attitudes towards pupils so that they were seen as active actors of their own lives. Informants underlined that it is meaningful to support the expertise of pupils. Teacher-pupil relationship played an essential role both in learning and in strengthening of social skills. These concepts are taking part to the wider discourse on the field of education and are connected for example to the idea of positive pedagogy. According to the research results, restorative mediation was experienced as a working and co-operative method in conflict management. The view of humanity that restorative approach had given to informants changed the way the participants in conflict was seen. Instead of seeking bullies or bullied, the teacher as a facilitator, could work without labeling the parties and could support their capability to solve their conflict. Informants experienced that after changing the punitive role of an adult to a role of facilitator it was significantly easier to support the parties to keep the promises and change their behavior. To achieve success in implementing restorative approach to a school the results underline the necessity of proper training.

The results highlighted also the challenges in implementing the new restorative thinking and practices. The critical attitudes of some school staff members and parents made the use of practices sometimes difficult. All adults are not ready to change the sanction-based methods to restorative ones. Also, some adults could not trust an active role and expertise of pupils or participatory methods used in the restorative approach. The informants saw that the adoption of new practices require planning and training, but they reported that there was not always time for that. The results point out that the reflection with colleagues and sharing information regularly was also essential when implementing the restorative approach to daily practices.

The study shows that, instead of increasing even harsher punishments, ensuring a peaceful working environment we should focus to build a restorative learning community and culture of interaction and mutual respect among community members. The local or substantive theoretical model (SGT) created as a result of this GT research process, opens up the elements of the restorative learning community.

*Restorative encounter* was found as the key concept of this GT research. The generic, or formal, theoretical (FGT) model of restorative encounter, based on the key concept of research, in turn, sharpens the views of previous research on encounters with members of the school community and answers the main question of how a restorative approach manifests and is produced. Restorative encounters are always reciprocal, and the concept opens up to three dimensions: First, restorative encounter supports the identity of each member of the community as it reinforces the uniqueness of the individual; second, restorative encounter supports human and professional growth; third, restorative encounter supports change in behavior whenever needed. The skill of restorative encounter works in support of everyday interactions so that the different views and needs of community members are taken into account and, on the other hand, possible confrontations and polarizations can be resolved by reflecting together. When fulfilling these three dimensions the schools can success to change the school culture to the whole school restorative approach.

Keywords: restorative approach, mediation, encounters, conflict management, bullying, misbehavior, restorative justice, school, learning, social skills, Grounded Theory

Permanent address: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-337-173-6>