Dialogical approach as professional practices

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Agenda

- My approach is very practical and reflects my experience of applying the theory of dialog in professional practices. When working with professionals doing practical work, not among researchers, your approach cannot be too theoretical.

- I introduce three different orientations to interaction: expert-centered, client-centered and dialogical interactive orientation. Through them, I look at professional client work, multiprofessionalism, and development of workplace communities. Elements of these orientations can be perceived in various interactions.

- Professionals need the skills of dialogue in different relationships with clients, communities, professional networks, political decision makers, general public, etc.
My path to dialogue

- My professional path:
  - Professional background in social and health care practices
  - A teacher for education of social and health care professionals
  - A textbook of professional client work

- Academic, scientific path:
  Studies in Social psychology (Master thesis at the University of Tampere, Ph.D. theses at the University of Eastern Finland)
  Current research interests: narrative methods in the organizational context, dialogue and joint action

- Organizational path:
  A development expert in the Salmia Development and Training Centre operating under the Ministry of Employment and Economy (MEE).
  A textbook (with Satu Roos) about the issues of work communities

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A few current examples of the use of dialogue

**Dialogical approach to client work**
- Dialogical communication
- Joint action
- Facilitation
- Promoting participation

**Coaching**
A target oriented interaction between the coach and the coachee

**Network therapy and case management**
- Aim at the active use of the psychological resources of both the patient and the family members
- A one person is an “ombudsman” who draws attention to the needs of the individual and coordinates help

**Mediation in offences and dispute**
- The parties of the conflict can meet in a safe situation in order to find a common solution

**Work counselling**
- A goal-directed support in order to promote a person or a work community

**A solution-based approach**
Focus of conversations is on the present and future in order to activate conversations about resources and past successes
Is human community a machine or a part of ecosystem?

Numerical logic

There is a logical order perceiving in the world, which can be explained by analysis and logical reasoning. There are exact measures for all phenomena.

(cf: machine)

Story telling

People construct the world in relationships and create a common story through which they navigate forward.

We do things together with words.

(cf: ecosystem – complex and systemic)

(cf: Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, Mönkkönen & Roos 2011)
Changing expertise

Traditional position of expert

- Evidence-based facts (genrelzation)
- Diagnostic approach
- Personality and identity are seen as permanent features
- An objective attitude of professional

New position of expert

- Socially constructed reality in linguisitc practices
- Dialogical constructed knowledge
- Personality and identity are not an permanent feature
- A subjective attitude of professional

(Personality and identity are seen as permanent features)

(Kuva. Satu Roos 2013)

**Discussion in groups (5 minutes)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imagine the situation where dialogical interaction does not take place in client work or any other realtions you face (supervisor- student)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Statistical work or research does not contain dialogical interaction  
Client work should be dialogical, but very stick normative target or goals restict dialogical interaction  
Some professional fields (police) does not require dialog (arresting for example) Some decisions are made without dialogue.  
However, it depends on the contexts. |
| Diagnosing by professions. Pushing on the agent?  
Very emotinal reactions restict dialogical interaction.  
Monologic teaching? Student and thecaher does not share the frame.  
Praciticies of social control. Situations of unbalanced power.  
Unegal power relations (for example between masculinities). |

Results of the group discussion
Monta tapaa olla vuorovaikutuksessa
Various ways to be in interaction

**Dominance position**
- "besser wisser"
- "exterior steering"
- "a diagnosis places the counselor in a position of authority and imposes a treatment plan"

**Expert-centred**
- "joint communication"
- "relational being"
- "not knowing"

**Dialogue**

**Customer oriented**
- "is based on the needs and views of the customer"

**Client-centred**
- "endless flexibility"
- "over understanding"
- "listening"
- "the impact of power loss"

(See Mönkkönen 2007, Mönkkönen & Roos 2011)
# Theoretical basis of dialogism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Date</th>
<th>Theoretical point of dialogue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mihail Bahtin 1991</td>
<td>Polyphony of voices&lt;br&gt;To live means to participate in open-ended dialogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Shotter 1993</td>
<td>Joint action and &quot;knowing from within&quot;&lt;br&gt;Importance of responding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lev S Vygotsky 1978</td>
<td>Intersubjectivity, shared meanings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenneth Gergen</td>
<td>Relational being</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Isaacs 2001</td>
<td>Thinking together</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Buber 1991</td>
<td>You and I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivana Markova 1999, 2008</td>
<td>Dialogical trust and responsibility&lt;br&gt;Ego and Alter</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Herbert Mead 1934</td>
<td>Taking a role of the other&lt;br&gt;I and me&lt;br&gt;Co-constructed self identity and self esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl.J Coach</td>
<td>Elements forms of social activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Open-ended dialogue

Mihail Bahtin 1991:

"As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, he has not yet uttered his ultimate word".
Dialogue is like dancing
Authority/expert centered orientation

- Interaction is strongly directed by the goals dictated by an expert or by the institution.
- A worker has to motivate and educate the client as he or she doesn´t know his or her best.
- One-sided relation where only a little emphasis is placed on the view of the client.
- The experts’ compete with each other on their knowledge.

*Besserwisser*
What is problematic in the client-centred approach?
Client-centred orientation in critical sense

- Overcaring ignores the responsibility related to reciprocity in a relationship.

- Overunderstanding can lead to too much client power (e.g. The problems in raising children)

- Concentrating on the client`s needs may lead one-sided perspective
Dialogical interaction

Joint expertism

Common understanding and knowledge is built together

New perspectives are opened during the interaction

Different experts have different kind of kompetence that is needed (importance of client’s family relationship, see Seikkula 2012)

Joint action

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Different levels in client work

1. Presence in situation
2. One-sided social influence
3. Game
4. Co-operation
5. Collaboration

(Mönkkönen 2001, 2002 see Coach 1989)
Different levels in client work

1. Presence in situation

   "The worker tries to contact, but the client is reluctant to interact"

2. One-sided social influence

   "Empty meaningless therapeutic sessions, because their way of thinking is so different"
   "The worker has some formal manners … nodding the head seriously when the client is speaking … he forgets what the client said”.

3. Game

   "The client tells many stories … many reasons why he is not able to concentrate on the treatment and sessions. The worker thinks that they are only excuses. He always tells the same stories”.

4. Co-operation

   "The client respects the worker’s straightforward and honest attitude. The client is not playing games with the worker any longer, but really does co-operate.”

5. Collaboration

   "The relationship is really confidential and relaxed. The communication is open, because the worker is not ‘above’ the client but can ask good questions. He or she also tells the client something about his or her own life.”

(see Mönkkönen 2001, 2002)
**Discussion in groups (5 minutes)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imagine how dialogue works in multidisciplinary discussions at the university?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods for reorganizing conversational space</td>
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<td>Multidisciplinary discussions are fruitful, but we don’t have common concepts</td>
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<td>Competition and power relations between disciplines</td>
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<td>Need of common object</td>
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<td>Multidisciplinary discussions are too ambitious – we need to create common ground.</td>
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Results of the group discussion
Constructing the organizational identity

(Mönkkönen & Puusa 2013)

Workers hardly know each others
Working separately in different sectors.

An One-sided information/communication
Feeling of being externally controlled

A tension between the different units
Talk about "us" and "they"

Working in a common entity
The collective appreciation of the atmosphere
Removing professional boundaries

Facing the challenges together
Team spirit
Collective-we.
Polyphony
Trust

Workers hardly know each others
Working separately in different sectors.

Formally together
Top-down steering
In different teams
Construction of common area
State of joint action

(See Mönkkönen 2005, Mönkkönen ja Roos 2011)
Could we see dialogue as process?

- Reflective listening
  - What is going on?
  - What is important to client?
  - There is not yet right to respond

- Responding and constructing a common story
  - "wondering" or thinking together

- Finding a new perspectives and solutions
  - Collaboration
  - Innovation
  - Common realization

( Mönkkönen 22.10.2013, see Gergen & Namee 1999)
Do we work alone or together?
"He is more with the team than he would be alone. He has perfect timing. He is always there where needed. He is a part of the puzzle which makes all the others to exceed themselves. He can really read the game. He is always perfectly aware of directions, the location of other players and where they will move, and he adjusts his own acts to that picture. He literally becomes a member of community, and his individuality disappears.”

( TV- document: The King Litmanen by Arto Koskinen 2012)
References

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Shotter, John 1996. Social constructionism as social poetics: Oliver Sacks and Case of Dr. P. Bayer, B. and Shotter, J (Eds.) Reconstructing the Psychological Subject, London: Sage
Seikkula Jaakko 1993. The aim oft the therapy is to generate dialogue: Bahtin and Vygostky in family sessions. The journal of Systemic Consultation And Magement 6, 21-42.