



# Contextuality of Professionals

in the rural areas of Northern Scandinavia



Tromsø, Norway:

- Kirkelig utdanningscenter i nord

Oulu, Finland:

- Diaconia University of Applied Sciences
- University of Oulu, Department of Nursing Science and Health Administration

The project “Contextuality of Professionals in Rural Areas” was designed to develop models for contextual education for the Rural Areas of the Northern Scandinavia.

*Contextual professionalism is taking actual cultural and social environment as key factors of the work in the local context.*

Work in the municipality or in the parish setting in a small community means serving same people in need.

Same problems are faced both in municipality and parish.

How the professionals integrate their professional knowledge and local conditions?

Interviewees were diaconal workers and social work and healthcare professionals in Northern Norway and Finland.

Most of them they were working in the rural areas but some in Oulu and Tromso city.

# Three ways to conceptualize relation between professional work and local context in the rural areas

Local context as an object

Local context as a challenging environment

Local context defining professional work

## 1) *Rural context as an object.*

The goal is to formulate strategies and means to deliver predetermined schemes of the professionalism without defining schemes with local community.

“Selling” or “forcing to adapt” models.

(Hodgins et. All 2004).

## 2) *Rural context as a challenging working environment.*

There is discrepancy between professional and local context.

Small community causes role conflict for a professional.

Support for professional's adaptation process is needed or adaptation is determined to be unreachable. (Green 2003).



### *3) Rural context as a defining aspect in the professional work.*

A different context requires diverse means and probably also different qualities of a person.

Interaction between locals and professional is crucial for creating common understanding of the situation and relevant ways to intervene.  
(Case-Ziolek & Striepe 1999).

See: Community work with romans

The goal of the research was to get understanding, how to develop education in a way, that it helps professionals adapt on environment and communities in the district.

## Findings of the research:

Vocation

Communication

Commitment and Advocacy

Some Norwegian deacons communicate a strong sense of Christian vocation (Norw. 'kall'). In the Norwegian material the idea of vocation is pinpointed as one of the main concepts in the education of deacons.

Finland: Health and social workers do not use Christian terms to describe their commitment. Diaconal workers expressions of vocation are similar to municipal workers.

However, some of the health and social workers have a commitment so strong that it can easily be described in vocational terms.

Finnish diaconal workers' double graduation including training as a nurse or social worker can result in similar ways of expressing themselves as professionals working in municipalities.

Adaptation to the local context is dependent on personal qualities. Social and communication skills serve as a key factor in crossing borders (“white lines”)

Some of the “southerners” working in the north described themselves as independent survivors.

Work in context is thus about communication, about speaking the people’s language, and about personal qualities and communication skills.

Lack of anonymity, multiple roles and relationships and unpredictable workdays are seen as a feature of rural communities,

Some of interviewees expressed this as the motivation for their work.

Conceptualization of context seems to be based more on their personal experiences than their education.

How professional training can strengthen the students' communicative skills in different contexts and support the students' growth to autonomous persons?

These qualities are not realized by conventional teaching methods.

They are connected to self-direction and expertise connected to the ability to move between different local and professional contexts.



Professionals are in close interaction with their community. They do not perceive themselves as representing someone from the outside of it.

Some professionals understand their professional work as a commitment to the local community.

They consider themselves as autonomous mediators, or as advocates between the context and the social system.

Ethnical issues are polarized: either not outspoken at all or proclaimed with a high degree of commitment and a sense of struggle.

This depends to a high degree on the professionals' own ethnic identification.

Some Sámi professionals committed to be advocates for other Sámi who cannot communicate their needs to the public healthcare system.

1. Relying in one's own social- and communicational skills
2. Ability to take actions independently
3. Autonomous ethical solutions, which take local community in the account
4. Ability to notice and use community's natural way to operate
5. Skills to reflect one's actions and position in the community. (Community as a partner)

What are main challenges in the rural areas of your country?

What are qualities needed for professionals doing work in those rural areas?

JORUNN JERNSLETTEN, BERND KRUPKA, KARI RUOTSALAINEN  
& TIINA ERVELIUS

Contextuality of Professionals in the Rural Areas of  
Northern Scandinavia. Diakonian tutkimus 2/2010  
[http://dts.fi/files/2010/11/DT2\\_201werkko.pdf](http://dts.fi/files/2010/11/DT2_201werkko.pdf)

KARPPINEN, KIRSI

Ammatilliset tiedot ja taidot diakoniatyöntekijän arjessa  
syRJäseudulla / Kirsi Karppinen. University of Oulu, 2011.

- Chase-Ziolek, Mary; Striepe, Jan (1999) A Comparison of Urban Versus Rural Experiences of Nurses Volunteering to Promote Health in Churches. *Public Health Nursing*, Aug99, Vol. 16 Issue 4, p270-279.
- Dreyfus, HL, Dreufus, SE (1988) *Mind over Machine. The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer*. New York: Free Press
- Green, Rosemary (2006): Social work in rural areas: a personal and professional challenge. *Journal of Library Administration*, 2006, Vol. 45 Issue 1/2, p185-202.
- Hodgins, Gene; Murray, Greg; Donoghue, Adrian; Judd, Fiona and Petts, Alison (2007): Introducing a professional development programme to a rural area mental health service: the importance of context. *Australasian Psychiatry*, Feb2007, Vol. 15 Issue 1, p52-57.
- Lauvås, Per, Handal, Gunnar (2004) : *Veiledning og praktisk yrkesteori*. Oslo: Cappelen (3rd edition)
- Teslo, Anne-Lise (red.) (2006): *Mangfold i faglig veiledning for helse- og sosialarbeidere*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget (2nd edition)
- Vråle, Gry Bruland (2006): *Veiledning som kompetanseutvikling – et differensiert veiledningstilbud belyst ut fra Patricia Benner*. Pp 200-213 in: Teslo