Tracing teachers' needs in the process of school reform

Analyzing and interpreting data

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Summary of research plan: Theoretical framework

- School reform as an **expansive learning process** (Engeström & Sannino, 2010)

  a new type of agency, an expanded pattern of activity, theoretical concept

- **Self-Determination Theory; Cultural-Historical Activity Theory**

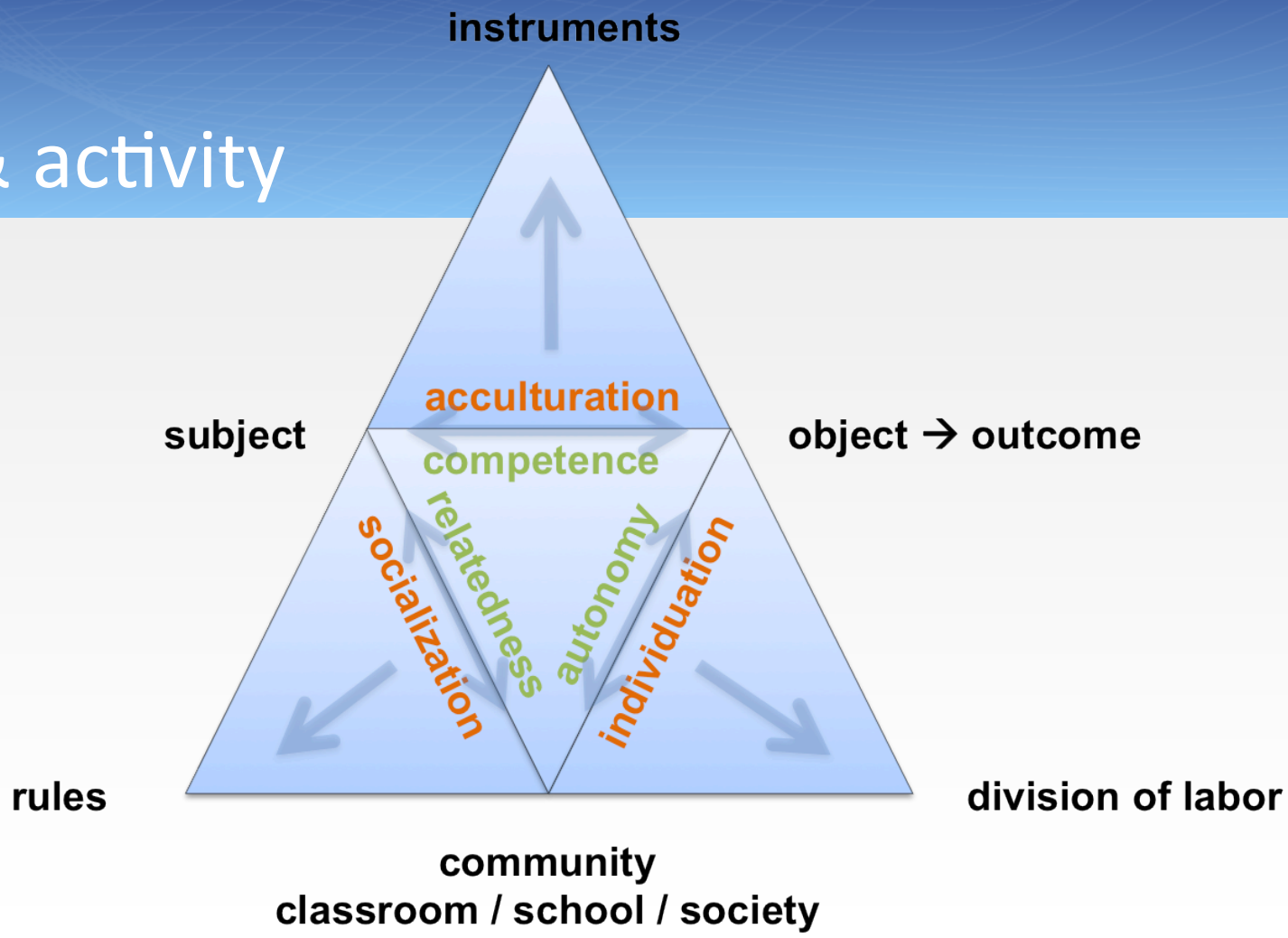
- diametral approaches of both theories concerning the **concept of needs**; these approaches are interpreted as complementary

- **individual needs** as opposed to **societal demands** are interpreted as universal need forms on an individual and collective level (Fraser, 1998)

Research questions

- What would be a concept of need that serves as a workable tool to analyze change in educational settings and that brings together insights both from CHAT and SDT traditions? -> **a tool that makes needs in their activity context visible**
- How can such a tool be utilized to **foster and analyze an expansive learning process in a school community**?

needs & activity



research site

- small rural secondary school
- I teach and research there

Methodological implications:
Looking for a suitable unit of analysis

Every **cultural phenomenon** can be studied as **communication**.

Umberto Eco, 1999

Looking for a suitable unit of analysis

The **word** in its external form **includes action and image as its internal forms**; the action in its external form includes words and image in its internal form. Finally, the action and word are the internal form of the image.

Zinchenko, 2012

Beyond verbal and written language, **discourse encompasses ways of being in the world** (Gee 1996), including semiotic acts other than linguistic symbols. Along with words, discourse encompasses values, beliefs, moral orientations, social identities, and attitudes (Gee 1996; Rymes 1995)

Souto-Manning, 2012

Looking for a suitable unit of analysis: Parker – Approaches to discourse analysis

	temporal/historical dimension		spatial dimension	
societal (macro) level	SA	semantic analysis	PDT	political discourse analysis
	CDA	critical discourse analysis	FDA	Foucauldian discourse analysis
personal (micro) level	NA	narrative analysis	TA	thematic analysis
	CA	conversation analysis	EM	ethnomethodology

Parker, 2013

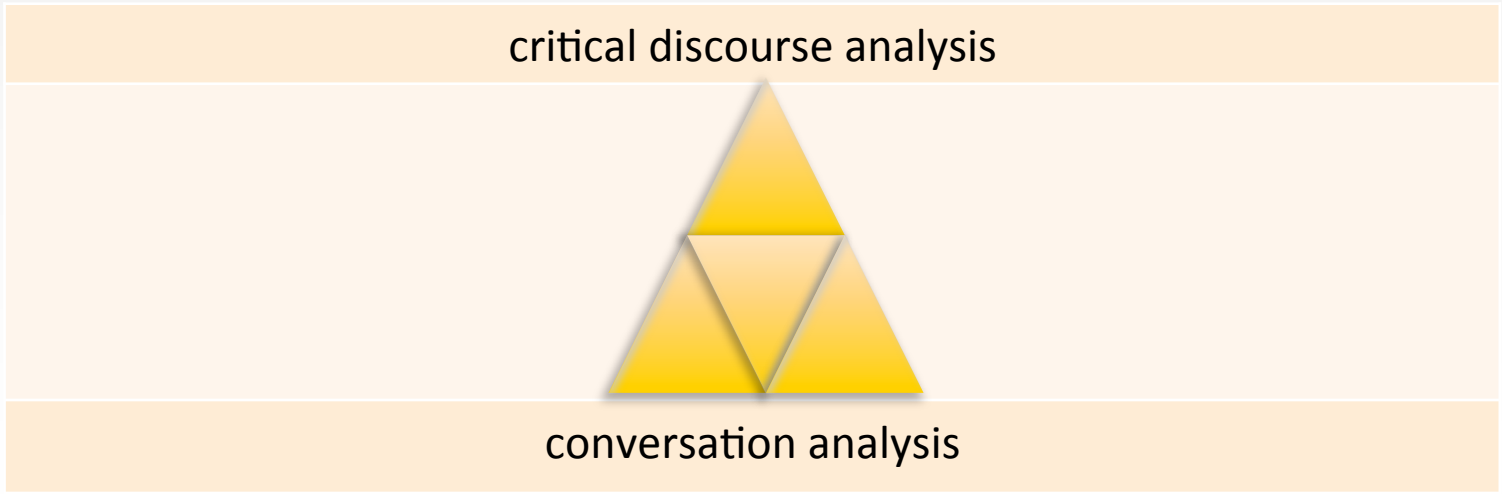
Looking for a suitable unit of analysis: Souto-Manning – Critical narrative analysis

Through analytically identifying micro and macro discourses and realms in a narrative, individuals can develop **critical meta-awareness** (Freire 1970) and **engage in personal and/or social action** as a result of **identifying and questioning the social construction of their situations**. By identifying institutional discourses intertextually recycled in their narratives and understanding these macro discourses apart from their immediate (micro) experiences and beliefs, they can start challenging and changing their stories.

Souto-Manning, 2012

Activity system as unit of analysis

"Thus, between the artificially-isolated fragment of discourse and the ambiguously-global argumentative social fabric, there is the middle ground of the situated activity system." (Engeström 2001, p. 173)



Activity system as unit of analysis: Intermediate theoretical tools

- Disturbances, innovation and **contradictions*** in the activity system
  (*historically accumulated dynamic tension between opposing forces in an activity system; Il'enkov, 1977)

- **Multivoicedness** of discourse
  Social languages being invoked in the voices / speech actions of participants

- **Transitions in the overall pattern of object-oriented interaction** in a given activity system:
  coordination (sript-regulated actions of the different actors);
  cooperation (analysis and resolution of the problem);
  reflective communication (members of activity system look at themselves in relation to the problem) (-> *critical meta-awareness*)

Engeström 2001, pp. 177-179

Making needs visible in discourse

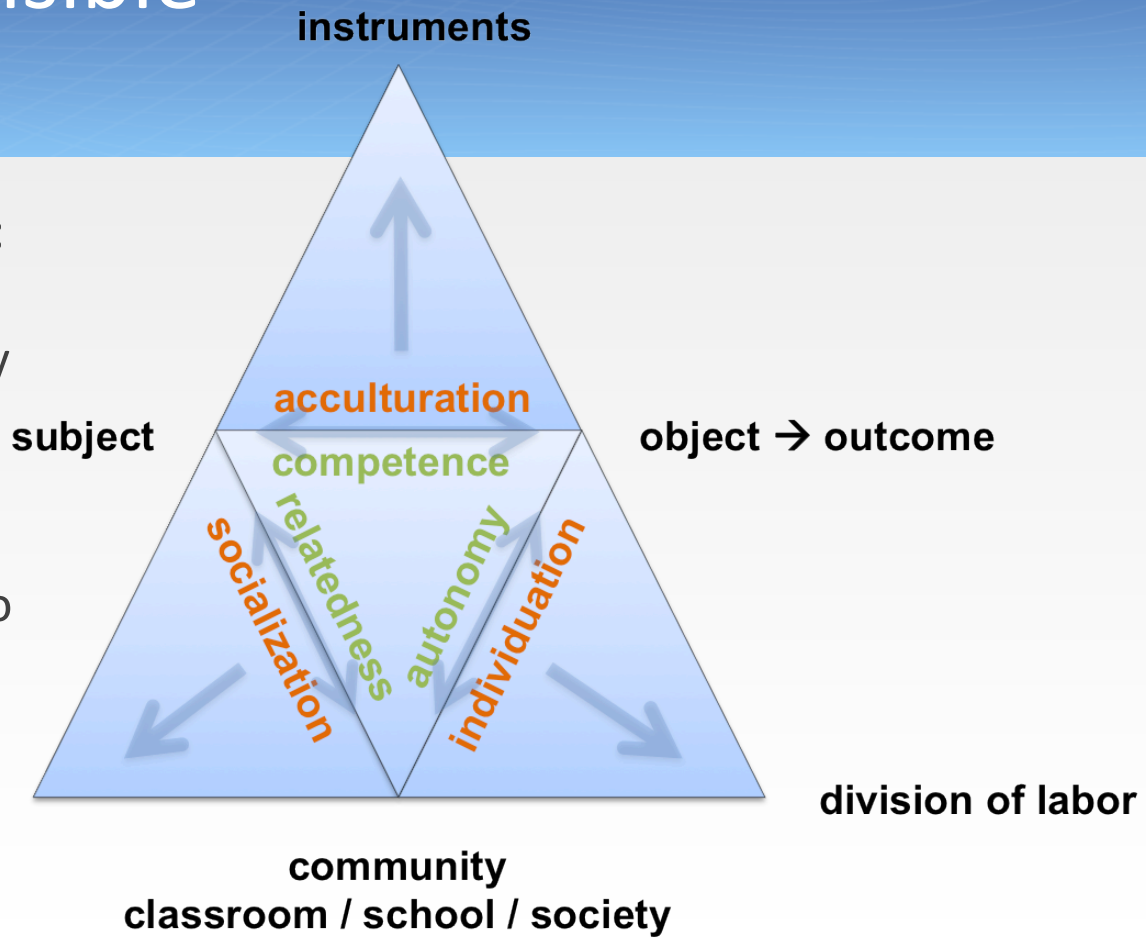
- Disturbances, innovation and **contradictions**:
  Look for discursive manifestations of contradictions (dilemmas, conflicts, critical conflicts, double binds; Engeström & Sannino 2011)
  They may reveal the underlying needs – how they are met or thwarted

- **Multivoicedness** of discourse
  Identify different social languages becoming evident in participants' voices
  What do they tell about the relation between BPN and societal demands?

- **Transitions in the overall pattern of object-oriented interaction:**
  Analyze the pattern of interaction: Needs are expected to become visible in cooperation and especially in reflective communication

Making needs visible in activity

- basic psychological needs: universal need forms, effective between primary constituting elements of activity system
- societal demands relate to instruments, rules and division of labor



Data / analysis

- Data collected so far: interviews; articles from magazines and newspapers; questionnaire (not taken into account so far)
- Only some very preliminary analysis at this stage of the research – the preliminary analysis that can be found in my conference paper is a very first attempt and does not take into account the most recent considerations.

Expected findings

- Contradictions between basic psychological needs and societal demands
- Contradictions becoming evident between different social languages between participants and also between different roles of a participant
- In the course of the interviews, discussions and school development conferences, I expect a rise of reflective communication, expressing an emerging meta-awareness.

Questions for discussion

- Suggestions concerning how needs can be made visible and traceable in discourse / in the activity system?
- Suggestions concerning other approaches of discourse analysis?

- Key reference / must read:
  Packer, M. J. (2011). *The science of qualitative research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Kindle edition available!)

Selected references

- Engeström, Y. (1999). Communication, discourse and activity. *The Communication Review*, *3*(1-2), 165–185.
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Thanks for listening!