

## Abstract

Title: The Promotion of Health: A Sociological Study of the Institutionalisation of Health Promotion.

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The principal aim of this thesis is to study the institutionalisation of health promotion. To depict the process of institutionalisation, health promotion is studied both as a discourse and as a practice. The principal aim is made explicit in two subordinate aims. The first of these is to describe and analyse the discourse of "the new perspective on health" focusing upon the fundamental question: "What is health promotion?"

The second subordinate aim is to describe and analyse the outcomes of health promotion, in terms of knowledge base and actual practice, when health promotion ideas are "put to work" by health promotion experts.

The thesis is comprised of three studies. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis are used. The analysis of the nature of health promotion is based on a discourse analysis of central text within the current debate on health promotion. The analysis of health promotion in practice is based on a twofold data collection strategy. In the autumn of 1998 a questionnaire was sent to all of those students who had graduated from the "Education and Health Promotion" program at the University of Trollhättan/Uddevalla in Sweden. A total of 118 questionnaires were distributed and 94 of them were completed and returned (80%). In addition to this, 12 interviews were carried out among 10 respondents from the survey study and 2 health promotion experts with another educational backgrounds.

The conclusion of the discourse analysis is that health promotion lacks a thorough discussion of its principal aims and strategies as well as a comprehensive theoretical frame of reference. The discourse on health promotion also demonstrates a strong ambivalence as regards the control and regulation "from above" versus "from below".

Attempts to organise and form a common professional identity have not been identified in the material analysed in this study. The lack of distinct educational and professional requirements within the field makes it difficult to mark professional boundaries. Related to these findings there is also an apparent vagueness concerning the knowledge base of health promotion. It is difficult to get a clear picture of the types of knowledge and specific competence that is unique to health promotion.

The general representation of the health promotion expert that appear in this study is the image of an organiser with a broad general competence and an ability to think strategically with regard to health matters. This same person has, however, an uncertain professional identity and an unclear professional status, although does enjoy a relatively high degree of professional autonomy.

All in all, health promotion is neither natural or self-evident in Sweden today. It does not hold a central position in relation to important social institutions. Health promotion should best be viewed as a semi-institutionalised idea and strategy; i.e. it is an idea and strategy found to be valuable and with a number of specific uses, but at the same time one whose future remains uncertain.

Keywords: health promotion, institutionalisation, professionalisation, organisation, ideology, discourse, practice, social movement