Culture Handbook for a German Kindergarten in Finland: Kindergarten ry

Stephanie Sammek

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences
Bachelor's Thesis
2022
Bachelor of Business Administration

Abstract

Author(s)
Stephanie Sammek
Degree
Bachelor of Business Administration
Report/thesis title
Culture Handbook for a German Kindergarten in Finland: Kindergarten ry
Number of pages and appendix pages
44 + 15

This bachelor's thesis concentrated on developing a culture handbook for the case company Kindergarten ry. Its purpose is to support recruitment and organizational communication. Kindergarten ry is a small organization with less than ten employees; therefore, it is of high significance that when hiring employees, they are a cultural fit, rather than solely being a skill fit. For successful new employee socialization, it is essential to share the organization's values and adapt its culture.

The concepts of this thesis centered around organizational culture and employer branding, which form the theoretical framework of the study. The culture theory was based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory regarding differences between Finland and Germany and Edgar Schein's model of organizational culture. The employer branding theory was concerned with how organizational culture can be used to improve the employer brand and how these two aspects are linked.

The research for this product-based thesis utilized qualitative methods in the form of interviews. Two sets of interviews were conducted in December 2021, one set face-to-face with the six employees and the manager, and another in written form with the five board members. Under the guidance of the case company's manager, the culture handbook interconnected theoretical framework, employee and board member assessments, as well as clients' expectations. Subsequently, the resulting handbook was completed in April 2022 and was handed over to the case company.

The proposed handbook's and research findings' contents not only provided a clear description of the organization's mission, vision, and values but also implemented a comprehensive strategy for teamwork and organizational communication based on the organizational culture. This facilitates employees' identification with the organization on a more personal level and allows the kindergarten to boost employee retention and satisfaction.

Keywords
Culture handbook, organizational culture, employer branding, cultural dimensions

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1   Introduction

The job market is, in many fields, characterized by a shortage of skilled workers. Especially small and medium-sized organizations are more likely to have problems filling vacancies compared to large companies. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a further complicating factor affecting the immigration of skilled workers. Similarly, particularly foreign companies often struggle with the lack of professionally qualified employees due to the operating location's deviating requirements and challenges in recognizing foreign qualifications. Apart from that, however, it is more important, especially in small organizations, to not only find a skill fit but an organizational culture fit. However, this is even more difficult for foreign companies due to the differences in the national culture of the organization compared to the operating location's culture.

Organizational culture is an essential part of the employer brand and vice versa. Only an organization, aware of who it is and what it stands for, can attract and identify suitable employees and consequently keep them long-term. A strong employer brand is characterized by a high degree of anchoring in and correspondence with the corporate culture. Thus, it is based on a high, shared core of values that are adamantly and distinctly anchored in the individual employees and is confirmed in their everyday work.

A culture handbook mainly acts as an organization's internal guide. However, when publicly available, it acts as an employer branding tool as well. Besides the fact that it examines the organization's mission and vision, as well as history, it also elaborates on the organization's approach to solving problems and its communication customs. Additionally, a culture handbook contains customs for interpersonal behavior and practical instructions for operations within the organization.

1.1   Background

I have been engaged in Kindergarten ry's affairs for over 12 years. During that time, I got to observe various internal and external processes. Working as a Substitution, Teacher Assistant, as well as Management Assistant, I familiarized myself with their operations from different angles. Particularly in the role of Management Assistant, I got involved in the organization's human resource management practices.

During a talent development course, when creating a recruitment action plan, another student made a comment which made me reflect at length. They stated that, when it comes to hiring, especially in small companies, a cultural fit is more important than a skill fit. Knowing the obstacles, the kindergarten constantly needs to overcome in terms of hiring

and organizational communication, I approached the organization's manager. Together, we contemplated the kindergarten's organizational needs, as well as methods to improve internal communications. It quickly became clear that the staff needed a common guideline clarifying the culture of the organization, which had not been sufficiently elaborated to this point. Thus, the idea for the culture handbook was established.

1.2   Objective and delimitation

The objective of this thesis is to develop a culture handbook that portrays the principles of the case company's values, as well as its mission and vision. The research concentrates on the handbook to refine the employer brand, ultimately supporting the recruitment process and organizational communication.

The purpose of the culture handbook is to support and guide new hires in adapting to the organization's culture and facilitate joining the new workplace. In addition, it allows potential applicants to evaluate the company's values regarding their own work culture and expectations. Nevertheless, it is also valuable for existing employees, as it identifies the organization's approach to challenges, as well as the fundamentals of its communication. Additionally, it offers informative insights for clients and other stakeholders.

The thesis focuses exclusively on the case company Kindergarten ry, a German kindergarten in Finland. Therefore, other German kindergartens and institutions in Finland are disregarded during research. The study evaluates the case company solely from a business perspective; it covers the case company's organizational culture as well as employer brand, and it does not evaluate or study its pedagogical methods.

1.3   Thesis type and research methods

The thesis is product-based and utilizes the qualitative research approach. Semi-structured interviews are developed as the research method, which collects data by consulting the various stakeholders of the kindergarten. The reason for conducting semi-structured interviews was to have a catalog of preset questions and a consistent structure for each interviewee while providing an opportunity for further extending questions. (Drake & Salmi 2018.) In those interviews, the participants are interviewed to establish and identify the organization's mission, vision, and values, as well as to empathize with and define the organizational culture and communication.

The sample participants, which are the research basis, comprise the case company's key stakeholder groups: employees, manager, and board. The ground for selecting the partici-

pants was their affiliation with the case company. Every member of the respective stake-holder group was selected as a participant. In addition, however, the sample characteristic of the employee participants was permanent employment, regardless of whether they were part-time or full-time employed.

The interviews with the manager and employees were conducted face-to-face, whereas the board was interviewed using Zoom. The interview participants were each interviewed once. Subsequently, the gathered data was thoroughly and thematically evaluated and analyzed to form the culture handbook's basis.

1.4   Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six main chapters, which in turn are divided into various sub-chapters as required. This chapter of the thesis serves as an introduction to the study, detailing the background, research topic, and purpose, as well as establishing the thesis type and the used research methods. The commissioning organization is introduced in the second chapter. It includes the history, organizational structure, and administrative arrangement elements.

The third and fourth chapters explain the idea underlying the final product's development. Chapter three presents a theoretical foundation on aspects of culture based on various publications on the key concepts. This includes the cultural dimensions by Hofstede, as well as organizational culture as described by Schein. The correlation between employer branding and organizational culture is introduced in the following fourth chapter.

The results of the 12 interviews with the target group are presented and analyzed in chapter five. The evaluated research findings acquired in this manner determine the kindergarten's organizational culture and provide essential data for the product's development.

Chapter six offers conclusions based on the research and recommendations established on the study and feedback. The final chapter concludes with self-evaluation, examining the whole thesis writing process and discussing personal learning experiences.

The three appendices are the questions used for the target group interviews, the organization's manager's feedback on the product, and the product itself – the culture handbook.

2   Kindergarten ry introduction

The case company for this thesis is Kindergarten ry, one of three German-speaking kindergartens in the Helsinki Metropolitan area located in Lauttasaari, Helsinki. The kindergarten manager is Nora Schröter, and her pedagogical team consists of three full-time teachers, two part-time educators, and a varying number of interns. Based on the Finnish education system, the content of the kindergarten and preschool work is centered on the questions that the children bring with them. In the daily language circles, the German language is essential and promoted, and the prerequisites for acquiring cultural techniques are developed. The fields of environmental education and exercise in nature form the focus of everyday life in kindergarten.

The institution was founded in 1893 by the Deutsche Wohltätigkeitsverin (German Charity Association) as the first German-speaking kindergarten in Helsinki. Then in 1922, the newly founded school association of the German School Helsinki (DSH) took over the sponsorship of the kindergarten. Until 1975, kindergarten operations were maintained in four different departments by the DSH when it had to be restricted and eventually completely discontinued in the spring of 1976. However, as there was significant interest in a German-speaking kindergarten in Helsinki, the "Kindergarten ry" association was founded in May 1975 to fulfill that interest and continue the tradition and activities. In June 1995, the kindergarten association then signed a contract with the DSH, from which on, the kindergarten was also able to carry out the preschool work of the DSH.

2.1   Structure

There is a very flat hierarchy in the kindergarten with only two organizational levels: Board/ Management and Employees. There are only very slight hierarchical patterns between the employees, characterized by group leaders (kindergarten teachers) having more responsibility than other educators, for example. Similarly, interns are fully integrated into the team, clearly with less responsibility and the training aspect considered.

Effectively, the organizational structure in the kindergarten can be described as horizontal. A horizontal or flat organizational structure has few levels between upper management and staff-level employees. This structure encourages less supervision and more involvement from all employees. Advantages of this structure are that employees are given more responsibility, easier decision-making processes, as well as the fostering of open communication. (Meehan 12 February 2019.)

Figure 1. Kindergarten ry's organizational structure

2.2 Kindergarten association and board

The purpose of the association is to maintain and develop the German language skills of the children and to support and supplement the domestic education of the children by offering them activities appropriate to their age and development. The association fulfills its task by maintaining a German-language kindergarten in the city of Helsinki, which is primarily intended for the children of its members. It is not the association's purpose to strive for profit or economic advantages in any form for those involved in its work.

Except for the kindergarten employees, any natural or legal person of legal age who is willing to promote the association's activities and pay the annual fee can become a member of the association. The membership rights will be retained if the person has become a kindergarten employee after admission to the association.

The association delegates handling matters relating to kindergarten operations to the kindergarten board. This consists of the board of directors, the kindergarten management, and the parent representation, which are two members elected by the board of directors

for one calendar year each. The tasks of the kindergarten board result from the kindergarten regulations. The chairman of the board of directors is also the chairman of the kindergarten board.

The kindergarten board assumes all tasks that result from the statutes and its capacity as the sponsor of the kindergarten. It can also delegate various tasks to workgroups or individuals. Additionally, it ensures coordination and cooperation among members and employees, as well as that the members are informed and can use their opportunities to participate.

3   Cultural context

> "Every man's ability may be strengthened or increased by culture." - Sir John Joseph Caldwell Abbott

To comprehend how culture functions, culture content and the fundamental values that define it must be examined. Experts of anthropology and sociology have been researching culture for a considerable time. Through their work, multiple models and concepts related to culture have developed. The majority of these classifications pertain to different types of cultures, such as countries, vocations, and large-scale corporations, thus macro cultures. However, several classifications are also applicable to micro-cultures. (Schein 2017, 3.)

According to Hofstede (2001, 373), the difference between national and organizational cultures results from the different roles played by the respective manifestations of culture. He argues that cultural differences at the national level are primarily about values rather than practices. The core of a corporate culture lies in the shared perception of daily practices. The notable difference between country and organizational culture is also that membership in an organization is usually partial and voluntary while belonging to a nation is permanent and involuntary.

An organization's culture not only has a significant impact on the well-being and associated work motivation of its personnel. The culture contributes significantly to employee satisfaction and the identification of the employees with the company. Many employers, therefore, attach great importance to potential employees having values that are as similar as possible to theirs. It is assumed here that a high level of agreement is reflected in long-term motivation and employee retention. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004.) For example, a high cultural fit can be reflected in an employee's ability to work in a team since colleagues with similar characteristics and ideas interact better with one another than if they are fundamentally different in nature. It can also help to minimize staff turnover and make it easier to hire new personnel. As a result, a positively viewed corporate culture has an indirect impact on the company's economic performance. For this reason, cultural fit also plays a central role in company-specific goals, such as employer branding.

Culture fit refers to the possibility that an individual will be able to adapt to the organization's core values and attitudes. According to a 2005 research, employees who are a good match with their organization's culture and surroundings are more likely to stay with the organization and, as a result, perform better on the job. (Bouton 2015, 2.) It's crucial to recognize that culture fit doesn't imply aiming to hire individuals who are alike – it is about cultivating a diverse workforce.

Cultural fit is best described by explaining the organizational culture. All fixed and unspoken rules of an organization, as well as the resulting actions and behavior of all employees, give expression to organizational culture (Schein 2017, 17). In addition, it is influenced both by decision-making processes and by internal manners, such as, e.g., addressing each other. Conversely, the corporate culture also affects the individual characteristics of the employees.

3.1 Cultural comparison according to Hofstede

Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede 2001, 9). In an empirical study with more than 116.000 IBM employees between 1967 and 1973, he developed the model of cultural dimensions based on factor analysis. The national culture dimensions are based on every society's fundamental problems and their different solving approaches. The cultural dimensions correspond to individual predilection relating to one situation that characterizes countries from one another. (Hofstede 2001, 41.)
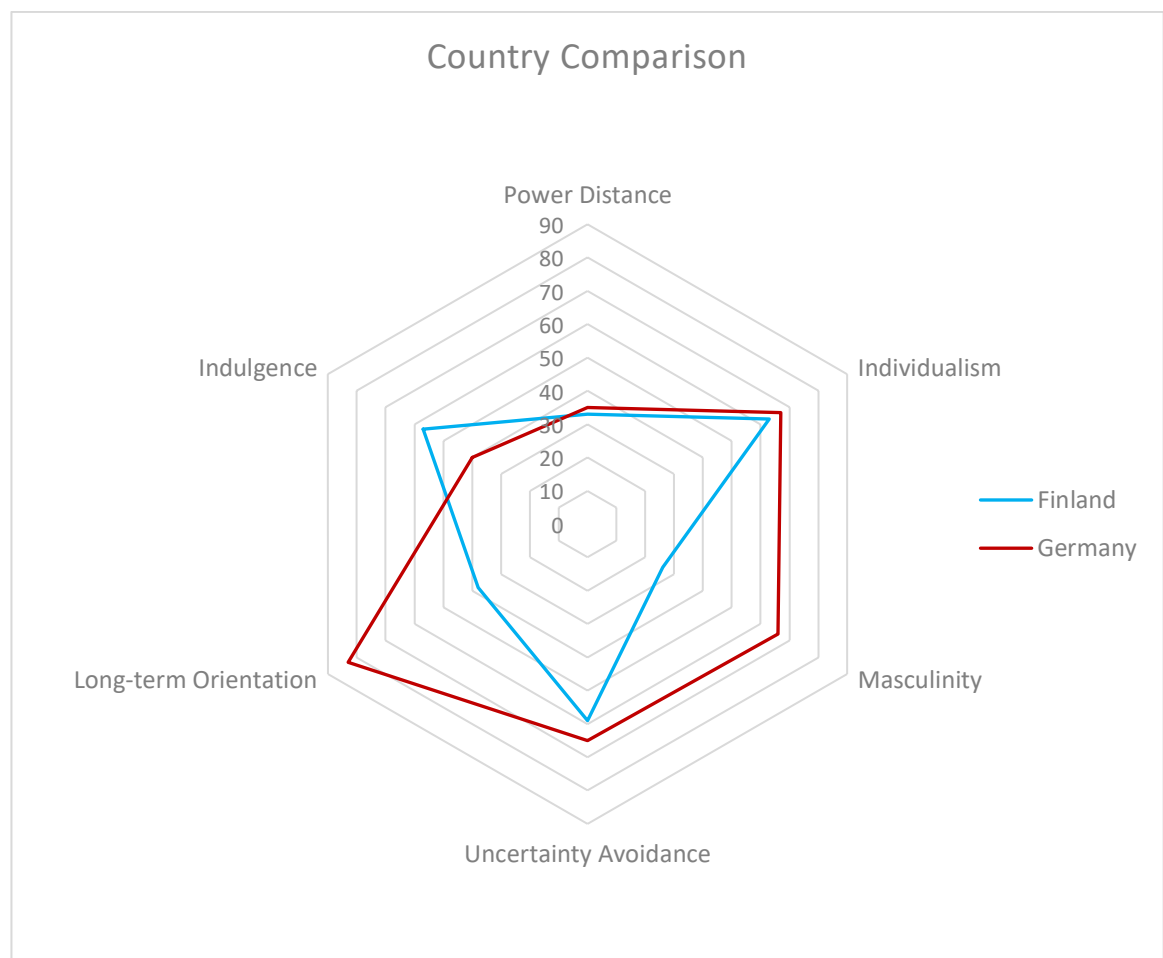

Figure 2. Comparing Finland and Germany according to the Hofstede 6D model of national culture (Hofstede Insights 2021)

The Hofstede model of cultural dimensions provides therefore a sufficient basis, an abundance of different indicators, as well as various evaluation options for comparing two countries. In the following subchapters, Finland and Germany are compared regarding their Hofstede dimension scores (figure 2).

Power distance

Power distance describes the extent of the power relations in a culture and how they are distributed, as well as human inequality. In cultures with a high-level power distance, it is common for decision-making processes to proceed from "top to bottom" and for these decisions not to be contradicted. The smaller the power distance, the more participatory the decision-making processes are. (Hofstede 2001, 79.)

Finland's score of 33 is relatively low, which means that it is considered to: be independent, implement a convenience-based hierarchy, and have equal rights. The decentralized power promotes superiors to be empowering and trust their teams' skills, while employees anticipate being consulted. Communication is straightforward, participative, and somewhat informal with superiors. Control is disliked in Finland. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

With a score of 35, Germany scores insignificant higher than Finland. The low score is due to the country's high decentralization and a strong middle class. Just as in Finland, Control is disliked. The communication style is also straightforward and participative. The management must take the relatively wide-ranging co-determination rights into account; additionally, management is most accepted when demonstrating expertise. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Individualism

This dimension illustrates the cultural link between collectivism and individualism. It describes the extent to which the interests of an individual are subordinate or superior to those of the group. In collectivist cultures, groups and families are usually very large, and the group bonds are correspondingly strong. In individualistic cultures, however, the focus is on individual self-fulfillment and the nuclear family. It is learned to think about oneself in the I-form, contrasted to the we-form in collectivism. Essential communication styles are also ascribed to the cultural characteristics of individualism/collectivism: low-context communication in individualistic cultures and high-context communication in collectivistic ones. (Hofstede 2001, 209.)

With a score of 63, Finland is an Individualist society. Thus, the social structures are somewhat loose, meaning individuals are only taking care of themselves and their close family. In Individualist societies, wrongdoing leads to loss of confidence, as well as re-morse and shame. Employment relationships are based on contracts and bilateral bene-fits; additionally, any decisions are based on merit only, not social factors. (Hofstede In-sights 2021.)

Again, the German score of 67 is very close to the Finnish one. A focus on the nuclear family is most common and much emphasis is placed on self-realization. Individual prefer-ences towards people, conscientiousness, and a sense of responsibility are the grounds for loyalty. This is further characterized by the employment contract. German communica-tion is brutally honest, which gives the possibility to improve performance. (Hofstede In-sights 2021.)

Masculinity

This cultural dimension is a socio-cultural category and is dedicated to the distribution of roles in culture. Men's and women's roles are usually evenly distributed in feminine socie-ties. Men are just as responsible for the household and family, and women are allowed and should have a career. In contrast, there is a noticeable differentiation in the gender roles in cultures with a high level of masculinity. Furthermore, the members of masculine cultures are more oriented towards material gains, high-performance expectations, and assertiveness. Compared to feminine societies, which are more oriented towards relation-ships and cooperation. (Hofstede 2001, 279.)

The Finnish score of 26 indicates that Finland is a Feminine society. This means that the emphasis is on "working in order to live," leadership seeks agreement, combined with great appreciation of solidary, equal, and valued workplaces. Negotiations and agree-ments are used to settle disputes. Free time and flexibility are highly valued incentives, as well as emphasizing happiness rather than prestige. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Germany's score of 66 is significantly higher than the Finnish one, making it a Masculine society. Thus, "work in order to live" is indicated, and people derive a considerable amount of self-confidence from their occupation, and status symbols are displayed and valued. Performance is highly regarded, and it is expected as early as the age of ten when children are divided into separate school types. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension is primarily about how to deal with unfamiliar situations. Members of societies with a high level of uncertainty avoidance try to make the unknown/uncertain predictable and controllable using analyzes and plans. Law and order are in the foreground; additionally, there is a high degree of rule orientation, as well as more significant concerns about health and money. An essential criterion for the professional context is a significantly lower, up to almost non-existent, error culture with various strategies not to make mistakes. However, in cultures with a low level of uncertainty avoidance, uncertainty is generally accepted, worries about health and money are much less pronounced, and as few rules as possible should be put in place. (Hofstede 2001, 145.)

Finland has a high tendency to avoid ambiguity, scoring 59 in this category. Countries with a high level of Uncertainty Avoidance have a rigorous ideology and conduct rules and are prejudiced against unconventional behavior and ideas. There's no time to waste in these cultures; individuals have an innate drive to be busy and work hard, accuracy and reliability are standard, and security is a key aspect of personal motivation, although innovation may be rejected. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Like Finland, the German score of 65 is on the high side, indicating a slight predilection for Uncertainty Avoidance. There is a significant tendency for reasoning and acting based on facts rather than on observations - to progress, a logical outline is necessary; this is due to Germany's famous philosophers' background. The legislation indicates this as well; besides, specifics are just as crucial in instilling confidence that an undertaking is of a carefully planned nature. Germans seek to compensate for their higher uncertainty by depending strongly on knowledge, which is exacerbated by their low Power Distance. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Long-term Orientation

This dimension expresses the degree to which societies are oriented toward short-term success or long-term solutions. In long-term cultures, the focus is on building personal relationships or relationship networks that are designed for the long term. Furthermore, a high level of respect is shown for higher-ranking people and older people as well as for traditions. In short-term cultures, value is placed on profit in a shorter time (1 year and less); also, there are more valid guidelines about what is good and bad. (Hofstede 2001, 351.)

Finnish society may be classed as normative due to its low score of 38. People in such cultures are preoccupied with determining the fundamental truth. They have high regard

for tradition, a strong desire to get immediate results, and a low proclivity to invest in the future. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Germany's opposingly high score (83) suggests that the society is pragmatic. People in pragmatic countries think that truth is highly dependent on circumstance, context, and occasion. They demonstrate a capacity to readily adjust traditions to changing circumstances, a solid proclivity to invest, frugality, and tenacity in reaching goals. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Indulgence

The sixth cultural dimension was defined in 2010 and is still relatively new. It describes how a society deals with the free fulfillment of one's own needs. These include the questions of how enjoyment-oriented leisure activities are, how openly sexuality is lived out, whether more or less colorful clothing is worn and whether there is a more optimistic or pessimistic view of the future. In more constrained cultures, members feel more in control of their own life: maintaining law and order is a high priority. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

Finland is classified as an Indulgent country due to its comparatively high score of 57. People with high indulgence cultures are more likely to follow their instincts and wants when it comes to appreciating living, usually having a good mindset and being more optimistic. Furthermore, they value leisure time, as well as spending money and acting as they wish. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

In this dimension, Germany scores 40, indicating a Restrained culture. Pessimism and cynicism are common in societies with a low Indulgence score. In addition, these societies place less importance on leisure time and exercise greater control over the fulfillment of their needs. Cultures with this viewpoint believe that their behaviors are constrained by societal standards and that indulging is immoral. (Hofstede Insights 2021.)

3.2 Organizational culture

An organization is a place where an array of individuals with diverse intentions and pursuits act collectively to accomplish a mutual objective. The development of communicative discussion about how the objectives can be accomplished begins instinctively as those individuals choose to adapt to the organization. Thus, the organizational culture is shaped by the results of positive and negative attainments, combined with the ideas and the, over time developed, communal importance for correct action. (Thornton, Mansi, Carramenha & Cappellano 2019, 38.)

Therefore, every organization develops a culture that determines the collective organizational behavior and behavior of individuals in organizations accordingly. It arises from the interplay of values, norms, attitudes, and paradigms that employees collectively share and shapes the coexistence within the organization as well as the external appearance. Consequently, organizational culture describes the emergence and development of cultural value patterns within organizations. It affects all departments of an organization integrative and influences, inter alia, decision-making, leadership, relationships with stakeholders, and communication. Every endeavor in an organization is based on its culture and is subsequently culturally influenced by it. Hence, the self-conception of the organizational culture allows organizational members to better realize goals, and stakeholders get an advanced comprehension of the organization through this understanding.

3.2.1 Organizational culture according to Schein

> "Organizational cultures, like other cultures, develop as groups of people struggle to make sense of and cope with their worlds" (Schein 2017, 11).

In this section, some of the ways of defining culture are provided to display by what means it covers the majority of the points that a group has learned over the years. While it is important to define a culture that fits the particular group or organization that is being studied, the more complex it is, the more it needs to be interpreted.

Especially for microcultures, the definition of culture should be more consolidative dynamic. Culture can therefore be defined as the collectively gathered learnings of a group that have been made to solve its internal and external adaptation problems. It is a pattern or system of values, beliefs, and behavioral norms that are often taken for granted and set in the unconscious. (Schein 2017, 6.)

While the group performs, it gets responses on the way it is acting and whether it is achieving its intention. If the group is effective, its beliefs and behavior patterns will be accepted and presumed, and the group's identity will be established based on those values and beliefs, then are regarded as notions that new fellows, when joining the group, are required to accept and embrace. Culture is often considered to be mainly about behavioral issues, but through shared learning, the group's ideas and feelings develop to be more similar over time. (Schein 2017, 7.)

Culture connotes **structural stability, depth, breadth, and patterning or integration**, which arises due to the idea that culture is a taught reality for the collective, just as personality and character are for individuals. (Schein 2017, 10.)

Structural Stability

Culture indicates that a group has a certain extent of structural stability. When anything is described as "cultural," it is implied that it is a common value, as well as a constant attribute since it identifies a community – this is specified to be "basic assumptions" and "cultural DNA." Those are the primary founding factors when achieving a sense of group identification, which is a vital component of culture, and it will not be lightly abandoned. Even when some members of the organization leave, the culture of the organization endures. Since group members seek stability as a source of meaning and predictability, cultural DNA is difficult to change. Simultaneously, the interaction between group members defines the more superficial features of culture. More systematized relations reinforce cultural DNA, as well as offer further stability. However, in new situations, along with additional people joining the group, the DNA will be strengthened, as well as adjusted. (Schein 2017, 10.)

Depth

As a culture's core ideas are generally the innermost and instinctive components of a community, they consequently are less concrete and perceptible. Various culture definitions place much too much emphasis on observable cultural expressions, though they are not essential for culture definition. The cultural DNA creates the essence of culture and is made up of accepted, non-negotiable ideas, values, and social norms, providing stability through being firmly rooted. (Schein 2017, 10.)

Breadth

Once a culture is established, it encompasses all aspects of a group's operation. Culture is widespread, affecting every facet of how a company approaches its core goal, its internal processes, and its diverse settings. A frequent error is to confine the idea of culture to the internal workings of the organization, neglecting that it also encompasses fundamental operational processes, as well as organizational strategy, mission, and structure. These are all subsequently the result of shared learning, and they will regulate the types of adjustments that the company may undertake. (Schein 2017, 11.)

Patterning or Integration

Patterning or integration of the aspects into a wider concept that connects these various aspects at a deeper level is another feature of the notion of culture that offers stability. The core of what is understood as culture entails the integration of rituals, beliefs, and behaviors into a unified entirety. The corresponding patterning or integration stems from

people's need to make their surroundings as practical and methodical as possible. This is portrayed in the pursuit to decrease uncertainty by building a more dependable and expectable vision of reality, as chaos or senselessness causes uneasiness. Nevertheless, contradictory motifs based on various things learned at different periods and in diverse techniques can be found within the cultural DNA. Additionally, when organizations grow and establish subgroups, subcultures are created. These subcultures might then differ from one another and even the greater organizational culture. (Schein 2017, 11.)

Subsequently, the established culture of a group will be conveyed its components to subsequent generations of members. New fellows typically try to figure out what the operational standards and expectations are when joining a group. However, only through witnessing the incentives and reprimands imposed by established members on new ones as they try with various forms of conduct can this be effectively understood. This means that consequently, whether it is unintentional or ad hoc, there is always a teaching process taking place.

Various professions evolve their own cultures. This demonstrates that culture is a consequence of shared learning which leads to joint beliefs and expectations regarding internal interactions and performance. Provided that significant socialization takes place throughout the period of instruction and preparation, and the perspectives and values taught at this time remain stable as assumed expectations even when the person is not in a group of professional fellows, then such professions unquestionably have cultures. These cultures are considered universal in the sense that members of one profession are taught the same values and skills. However, macro-cultures, such as the specific country in which a person performs, have an influence on the profession's definition. Therefore, making these distinctions identifying what is ethnical, national, professional, or organizational even more difficult. (Schein 2017, 13.)

Connection with Leadership

Essential for success in learning is the right leadership. When the expected does not turn out as anticipated, the group experiences disappointment or other invalidation; this is when learning takes place. When it comes to culture development, learning happens when a leader utilizes their personal influence and requires different conduct that is aimed at reaching a goal. If a problem is encountered by the group, leadership again suggests a different approach and solution, which, when being successful, is set by the culture as an expectation of leaders. Continuous problem solving will eventually develop the culture further. (Schein 2017, 14.)

3.2.2   Levels of culture according to Schein

Schein examines culture in his model on three levels, whereby the expression "level" refers to the extent to which the cultural occurrences are evident. In this context, they are defined as an array from the tangible, apparent presumptions which can be clearly observed and experienced to the profoundly ingrained, subconscious, fundamental beliefs that characterize culture's core. Several espoused beliefs, principles, customs, and standards of conduct that are portrayed in the culture are present.

1. Artifacts
difficult to decipher

• Visible and feelable structures and processes
• Observed behavior

2. Espoused Beliefs and Values
may or may not be congruent with behavior and other artifacts

• Ideals, goals, values, aspirations
• Ideologies
• Rationalizations

3. Basic Underlying Assumptions
determine behavior perception, thought, and feeling

• Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values

Figure 3. The three levels of culture (adapted from Schein 2017, 18)

Artifacts

Generally, artifacts are considered as the tangible experiences that people have when they come across another group with an unknown culture. They can be characterized by the products and services of the group, its language and culture, and its various expressions and traditions. Included in these artifacts is the group climate, which is considered by some experts to be the equivalent of culture, although it is rather a manifestation of it. Other observations, such as the rituals and routines that members perform, are artifacts as well. The foremost aspect of this cultural level is that it is easily perceived and hard to interpret. That is, although people can describe what they see, they cannot deduce what the group's culture really represents to them. When joining another culture, the parts that are hard to decipher can only be figured out by seeking advice from group insiders. (Schein 2017, 18.)

As a result, artifacts are the directly visible symbols and signs that depict and express an organizational culture. There are numerous examples of this, such as the company building and its architecture, office furnishings, employee clothing, or an organization's logo and identity. The artifacts also include symbolic acts performed by the members, such as addressing one another, rituals such as going to the canteen together, and various anecdotes. The artifacts are also linked to espoused values and beliefs, as well as basic underlying assumptions. They reflect these and are thus a direct expression and consequence of an organization's values and basic assumptions.

Interventions in the artifacts may provide an opportunity to influence and change values and underlying assumptions. Here, specifically, is a starting point for culture-focused change management. If the modification of the artifacts is implemented well, such activities can result in a reflection of the employees' underlying values and basic assumptions. Influenced by the artifacts, these can then change.

Espoused Beliefs and Values

People's individual values and beliefs, which are separate from what is, underlie all collective learning. As a group is formed, its initial responsibility is to attempt to resolve a problem or issue that has been brought to it, is based on the members' own beliefs. Leaders or founders of a group will later be identified as the people who had influenced the group to take a certain course of action when resolving the initial problems. Anything suggested will be interpreted only in terms of what the leader desires. There is no shared foundation for evaluating if the leader's decision will be legitime until the group has taken some collective action and viewed the outcome of that action jointly. (Schein 2017, 19.)

It is not possible to change or transform all values and beliefs into assumptions. Only those that can be tested and are still capable of solving the group's problems will be considered for transformation. Certain value domains, such as aesthetics or moral matters, may not be testable at all. Also, since it could be difficult to establish a connection between strategy and performance, these may not be tested except through general agreement. The espoused beliefs and values that are unambiguously communicated in the organization's policies and practices continue to be premeditated and are used to direct the group's actions and behavior. Hence, their embodiment in the philosophy or an organizational ideology. (Schein 2017, 20.)

Espoused values are the answers that employees and insiders give when asked what is most important to them, what they value, which values are lived and what the mission and vision look like. They include a sense of how things are meant to be; collective values are,

for example, "honesty" or "friendliness" i.e., attitudes that determine the behavior of employees. Ultimately, these can be abstract and contradict one another. Large areas of behavior are frequently left unexplained by espoused beliefs and values, giving the impression that a piece of the culture is understood, but the entire culture remains elusive.

Taken-for-Granted Underlying Basic Assumptions

Once the best solution to a problem has been verified or proven false, it becomes recognized as fact. The group has begun to understand that this is how it naturally operates. The concept of basic assumptions has grown to be consequently taken for granted that people tend to adopt a uniform set of beliefs and values within a social group. This is not surprising since frequent implementations of these values and beliefs have led to a level of general agreement. (Schein 2017, 21.)

Culture, when being an array of fundamental assumptions, identifies what members of the group look out for, internal contexts, emotional responses to events, as well as behaviors in different settings. Subsequently, through the development and integration of these assumptions, the members will be more comfortable in the group and the people around them. (Schein 2017, 22.)

Basic assumptions, then, are the things that are taken for granted in the way one responds to the environment. They are not questioned or discussed, as they are so ingrained in the mind that they are not consciously perceived by members of the organization and are the existential core of the organization. These are unconscious principles that are constant over the long term, but they significantly influence what is perceived as correct behavior. On the one hand, they can prevent personal and organizational development of resources; on the other hand, they can help to deal with cultural fears and problems from the ground up.

4 Employer branding

Employer branding is the practice of developing an outstanding company, followed by marketing it to prospective employees with the skills and expertise that are essential for the organization to achieve its objectives and purpose (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 8). Therefore, employer branding is comparable to consumer branding in that it focuses on building a favorable reputation that will assist the recruitment of skilled workers when they are required.

Below are key examples of how employer branding may help an organization succeed:
- Recruiting - A well-known employer brand can help attract and retain qualified individuals, which lowers the total recruitment costs.

- Employee engagement - Employer branding shows the employer's commitment to its employees and the satisfaction of the workers. It increases the productivity and satisfaction of the customers.

- Employee retention - A great place to work is a place where employees can feel valued and secure. This is also the reason why many employees stay with the company. A good employer brand also emphasizes what potential candidates can anticipate from the company before applying.

- Competitive Advantage - Through employer branding, an impressive team can be created, which is composed of the finest and smartest individuals in the industry, gaining a competitive advantage.

(Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 9.)

4.1 Employer branding and organizational culture

Since almost everyone spends more time at their job with coworkers than at home with family, it could be reasoned that happiness at work accounts for more than half of having a satisfying life. Workplace dissatisfaction does not end when the work shift is over; it pervades every area of a person's life. Consequently, it can be summed up that while organizations aim for success, individuals strive for happiness. Company success can be achieved by optimizing for happiness and focusing on what connects the two: organizational culture. The employer brand influences and identifies the culture. (Adams & Marshall 2020, 50.)

Figure 4 below shows the three main reasons which make employees experience happiness at work. *Belonging* means the idea of fitting in, where common principles are shared with others, while *Impact* concerns the belief that something which is done makes a difference in the world, and *Purpose* is the thinking that something important is to be achieved to have a reason for being here. Employee happiness can be attributed to two sub-reasons: first, a feeling of achievement deduced from impact and purpose, which provides a

sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, as well as a sense of being valued; and second, fun, which is obtained from all three main reasons: belonging, impact, and purpose. Fun is very important to create a positive and memorable work environment, showing how happy employees are. (Adams & Marshall 2020, 52-55.)

1: Belonging	2: Impact	3: Purpose
• Ethics, social conscience • Culture and values • Working environment • Inclusion and diversity • Team and people • Brand perception and reputation	• Benefits and reward • Compensation • Management and Structure • Technologie and resources • Career mobility	• Mission and vision • Stability and consistency • Ethics, social conscience (again) • Learning and development • Mentorship • Innovation

Figure 4. Traditional consideration of employee experience (adapted from Adams & Marshall 2020, 56)

With these aspects in mind, it is feasible to create a powerful employer brand and enhance organizational culture. Creating a shared purpose and alignment between work and personal goals can create a sense of belonging and fulfillment (Adams & Marshall 2020, 75). Only when employees perceive belonging, impact, purpose, and the resulting achievement, as well as fun at work, will it have a beneficial impact on the work environment and organizational culture, consequently strengthening the employer brand.

Adams and Marshall (2020) declare "trying to repel the many in order to compel the few". They refer with that statement to the result of improved matching of individuals to occupations and careers where they can find those aforementioned aspects. The aim is that individuals who are not suitable for a position or would not fit in with a company's culture won't apply.

People who are interested in learning more about a company's culture are also likely to ask about the behaviors that are commonly observed in the workplace. Doing so will help them gauge how well the company fits their expectations. However, most employer brands communicate culture as a perk and something that employees are fortunate to belong to, whereas in reality, it is more of an issue of whether there is a good cultural fit or not. However, only claiming to have an amazing culture is not enough to be considered by potential candidates as great; the organization should have evidence to prove its culture's

effectiveness. A common way of communicating culture is by highlighting the organization's values. Though, as values are subjective, abstract, and invariably positive, they are insufficient to appropriately create expectations of the culture in an organization.

It's much easier to showcase the experiences which are made working in an organization when the supportive actions and challenges are communicated. This can help potential candidates decide whether they fit in a certain culture. Usually, challenges originate from leadership and corporate strategy, while supportive actions derive from leaders and employees reacting to that pressure. In conclusion, the outcome is an evident understanding of what is necessary to succeed rather than just cope. (Adams & Marshall 2020, 101.)

4.2   Defining the appropriate cultural fit

The culture fit between a potential employee and the organization is determined by a variety of factors, such as goals, values, and motivation. Having a well-matched employee can help a company grow and succeed, and therefore show if the hire was profitable. As of this, a successful hire is not only determined by the skills of the candidate but also by the personality fitting of the organization.

To achieve their resourcing needs, organizations often require a diverse set of skills and experiences. Nevertheless, before subdividing the personnel into separate objective talent segments, its general characteristics in terms of the intended values and culture need to be identified. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 29.)

As a rule, the three types of desirable characteristics are:

- The collective purpose is to achieve a shared goal. This includes the ability to work together with others to reach that goal, as well as focus on customers, mutual respect, integrity, and transparent communication.

- Mental agility is the skill to overcome obstacles by adapting own thinking in the workplace through originality, creativity, understanding, and analytics.

- Drive is the effort to reach a target. It can be defined as the person's passion, initiative, or focus on performance.

(Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 29.)

Although all these qualities are desirable, the distinction between a good talent profile and the employer brand's specific profile is key. To achieve this, it must be clearly stated what the culture of an organization is which will allow people to outperform. (Mosley & Schmidt 2017, 30). This means that employer branding isn't targeted at a talent pool. Assuming it was the case, everyone applying would be hired. Instead, it is about developing a compelling and authentic story that explains why people should care about an organization. (Adams & Marshall 2020, 76.)

5   Handbook research

The following chapter deals with the evaluation of thesis research, and in addition to the objective and the methodology used for the research, it also includes the research type and methods for data analysis. For the objective of creating the handbook, qualitative research was undertaken to establish the empirical framework of the study.

Empirical research is typically classified into two categories, namely qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research seeks to describe, comprehend, or explain occurrences and to provide answers to questions such as what, why, and how. (Drake & Salmi 2018.) It is about the detailed investigation and interpretative evaluation of individual cases, and, furthermore, it describes a method for collecting and evaluating non-standardized data with the aim of gaining deeper insights into individual decision-making criteria and motivational structures.

It is worth mentioning that qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are not mutually exclusive and can be utilized in tandem. Withal, as of the character of the objective, which is to establish and analyze the organizational culture in the kindergarten, a qualitative method was chosen for this study. For the purpose of carrying out a qualitative study, it was decided to hold interviews with the target group.

Sometimes, groups in organizations have strong perceptions about certain things that are not true. In most cases, this phenomenon is considered a perception versus reality issue, and these perceptions are often based on personal experience and biases. The reality is that the truth is not always what everyone thinks it is. Therefore, it is critical to validate the discovered outcomes along with the research by contrasting and cross-checking. It must be kept in mind that there is no one true truth, but there is a spectrum of individual truths. (Adams & Marshall 2020, 110.) After the concluded research, the objective is to have a defined organizational culture that most employees acknowledge and which values the current work experience, along with accepting the notion that it is not feasible to please every stakeholder.

When preparing an interview, it is critical to clearly define the aim and thus the information requested. This includes identifying the people who will be interviewed, i.e., the target group. The chosen target group are the kindergarten's key stakeholder groups: employees, manager, and the board. In total, 12 interviews are conducted. The interviews are conducted face-to-face with the educational staff, including employees and manager, and in written form with the board, during December 2021.

Additionally, it should be mentioned that all employee interviewees are permanent team members of Kindergarten ry, this is regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time employed. However, either long- or short-term substitutes and interns are not interviewed. All face-to-face interviews were recorded with the interviewee's permission.

The interview questions (appendix 1) are divided in three sections:
1. Background Information
2. Mission, Vision & Values
3. Teamwork & Communication

Section one includes questions regarding the professional background of the interviewees. This section aims to provide the participants the opportunity to warm up to the interview situation and establish their expertise. In section two, the focus is on the kindergarten's mission, vision, and values, which are effectively the organization's DNA, and define what it does, how it does it, and why (Cady, Wheeler, DeWolf & Brodke 2011). As a result, the questions attempt to find a common definition for these three cornerstones to determine the organizational culture. The questions in section three seek to find solutions to the kindergarten-specific collaboration requirements and ways to prospectively improve inter-employee communication.

Each participant voluntarily took part in the study and was given the option of choosing their interview date to prevent them from feeling stressed or overwhelmed during the interview. The concepts of organizational culture and a cultural handbook were introduced to the interviewees at the start of each interview. This was necessary to ensure that participants knew the distinction between national culture and organizational culture. Furthermore, it was clarified that the interview was not about pedagogical approaches but only about the organization.

It is essential that the recorded conversations are transcribed to be able to evaluate the interviews. Once the recordings were no longer needed, the files were deleted. With the transcript of the interviews with the staff and manager, as well as the written interviews with the board, the basis for the evaluation is generated by utilizing the qualitative content analysis. In this manner, the text can be analyzed, and individual text passages can be assigned to categories. Qualitative content analysis is a standard evaluation method for qualitative interviews. (Kohlbacher 2006.) The participants were assured of complete anonymity during the interviews to create an open and unbiased atmosphere for discussion. With the background that it is a small organization where it is possible to distinguish someone by their responses, the transcripts are not added as an appendix to be able to guarantee anonymity. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the manager's answers are alternately included in the evaluation, either in the employees' or the board's answers,

depending on the content of the question. This is due to her dual role as a member of the educational but also the administrative team.

It should be noted that due to the high volume of interviews and the consequent number of responses, the evaluation focuses on the recurring and repetitive responses of the majority.

5.1 Employee interviews

It was decided to be preferable if the face-to-face interviews occur in an atmosphere with which the interviewees are acquainted. As a result, the interviews are conducted at the respective workplace. However, doing the interview at work only makes sense if the working atmosphere is as peaceful and undisturbed as possible. The interview dates consider the participants' peak performance and, as a result, usually exclude lunchtime. Appointments are scheduled in conjunction with those who will be questioned.

Individual interviews were conducted with all participants to prevent respondents from consciously or unconsciously influencing each other's answers. After the welcome and introduction, first, the background and goals for the interview are briefly presented to give an overview of the course of the conversation. Depending on the interviewee, it was beneficial to create a trusting atmosphere for a conversation by having a short, personal conversation about a current topic.

5.1.1 Background information evaluation

As mentioned above, the first section of the interview comprises the background questions of the participants. These are used to determine the participants' degree of expertise and corroborate this study's validity. The employees were questioned about their years of work experience in any pedagogic field. The evaluation considers that many years of pedagogical experience do not necessarily indicate a better understanding of the organizational culture.

To verify to which degree, they comprehend the organization's diverse operations, it was asked how many of those years they have been working in Kindergarten ry and in which positions. Again, a recently joined member of the team can provide just as valuable insight into the culture as they have a fresh perspective on the organization. Likewise, the views of an established employee are valuable since they are more deeply rooted in the culture.

The questions concerning completed education and its qualification recognition in Finland are not directly related to the study. However, they demonstrate the problems that the employees face upon commencing employment in Finland. Apart from one person, every employee had to either go through an extensive, time-consuming, and costly procedure to get their degree recognized or complete entirely new training. The recognition procedure has declared the training valid in the country of origin, invalid in Finland.

Table 1. Employee Background Information

In peda-gogic field	In Kinder-garten ry	Positions in Kin-dergarten ry	Education	Qualification
17 years	12,5 years	Intern, Educator, Pre-school Educational Assistant, Kindergarten Teacher	State-recognized Childcare Worker *(abroad)*	Successful recognition process
12 years	8 years	Educator	Previous education not specified Child Counselor *(in Finland)*	Obtained degree in Finland
10 years	6 years	Substitute, Educator	Certified Social Pedagogue *(abroad)* Child Counselor *(in Finland)*	Obtained additional degree in Finland
20 years	3,5 years	Pre-school Teacher	Special Education Teacher *(abroad)*	Yes
3 years	2,5 years	Intern, Kindergarten Teacher	State-recognized Childcare Worker *(abroad)*	Recognition process ongoing
27 years	1 year	Kindergarten Teacher	State-recognized Childcare Worker *(abroad)*	Recognition process ongoing

5.1.2 Mission, vision & values evaluation

In this section, the first question concerns the mission of the organization. The mission provides two key objectives, namely external and internal communication as well as motivation (Cady & al. 2011). This means that the mission is not only aimed at the employees but also at the external stakeholders, like customers or cooperation partners.

The participants were asked what, in their opinion are, the organization's purpose and its overall intention. A consensus manifested in the answers, which referred to the preparation for admission to the DSH and the preservation of German culture:

"Our goal is to preserve the German language and culture in Finland."

and

"The aim of the kindergarten is to prepare the children for admission to the German school".

Following these evident responses, the participants went further into detail, and additionally, a majority of respondents explained that they consider the mission to be to instill values in the children, support them to become socially competent beings, and give them the tools they need to operate in society. Based on this, it was correspondingly added that the kindergarten thought out to be a place where all those involved feel comfortable and where children can be challenged and encouraged according to their age and development.

The mission is defined as a statement that covers an organization's philosophy, identity, and values, providing meaning to its goals, conventions, choices, actions, and everyday behavior from a cultural viewpoint. Employees may create an emotional relationship with the firm and its objective through the mission statement, which is not merely a strategic instrument. (Babnik, Breznik, Dermol & Nada 2014, 613.) It has become evident that the mission has been successfully implemented, even though the organization does not present an official mission statement. This becomes apparent from the unanimity in the answers given by the participants.

The next question examined the vision of the organization. The vision should outline the most important values in an organization's culture and result in the desired outcomes (Peralta 2021, 36). Although simply publishing a vision statement doesn't indicate that employees will recognize it and put it into action (Cady & al. 2011). An organization's vision and mission are more than just the summary of its most significant objectives, though they have a lot in common. In this respect, the vision and mission result from the fundamental organizational goals. They must be consistent and compatible with each other.

The interviewees were inquired to give an overview of where they see the kindergarten in the next 15 years, encouraged to set ambitious goals. Again, there was agreement in the majority of the answers, which included an updated and professional property.

"It would be desirable if the kindergarten moved to a more modern property, which is actually designed to be a kindergarten. Adjacent natural and movement opportunities would also be important."

Furthermore, the premises of the kindergarten were considered as a potential meeting place where, in addition to childcare, various offerings to maintain German culture for various target groups may be held. Besides that, it was mentioned that the educational approach adjusts and adapts with the changing times. Although those ambitions are not essentially an organizational vision, nor does the kindergarten have a defined one, they do reflect a collective vision of future growth. Conveying a vision and values that engage and include employees in the development of the future are substantial initiatives for a viable workplace (Peralta 2021, 2).

The last set of questions in this section concerned values, personal and organizational, as well as core and wish values. For these questions, the participants were given a list of various values for them to be able to comprehend the variety of values and get inspired. Organizational values are those values that an organization represents internally and externally. These guiding values serve as a basis for decision-making, action orientation, and standards of behavior for employees, as well as for managing the organization. Organizations are evolving entities with their own cultures, which are shaped by values as those define the essentials of the organization (Cady & al. 2011) and are the core of the organization's culture (Hofstede 2001, 394).

When asked how the participants would define the core values of the organization, a wide range of values were named. However, the majority of those questioned answered in some way that Germanness or German culture is one of the most important core values of the kindergarten respectively. Every organization, and thus the associated organizational culture, is embedded in a national culture, and the members of the organization are at the same time members of a national culture (Werner 1999, 3).

The following question regarding personal core values concerning the work in the kindergarten was not of importance for the study. The intention behind this reflective question is that the interviewees can think about their perceptions and actions before leading them to the question about personal wish values in the kindergarten team. Wish values, in this case, were defined as the values that are, in the opinion of the interviewee, important for the team to function competently and effectively. The majority of participants acknowledged that their personal core values could not be projected upon their coworkers. And as everyone has diverse interests and core values, each employee has distinct demands on a functioning team.

Even though these questions were included in Mission, Vision & Values, content-wise, they belong in the next section of Teamwork & Communication. However, to make it easier for the participants, these questions have been kept in this section.

5.1.3   Teamwork & communication evaluation

In this section, the first question asked about the participants' most significant challenge when joining the team. The answers to this question stated the obvious and confirmed the author's assumption that understanding the existing group's dynamic and finding one's own place and belonging in the group are most difficult for new team members. As once a new member joins the group, one of the main things they do is try to figure out the operational standards and beliefs (Schein 2017, 12).

Successive to the same theme, the participants were asked what generally the biggest challenge is when working in a team. Here, it turned out that the interviewees attach great importance to professionalism rather than emotionality.

> "Togetherness instead of against each other."

In detail, this means that there is a basic understanding of emotional actions. However, it is desirable to remain professional at work and in dealing with colleagues, which also applies to conflict situations. Collegial action should be the basic principle when working together in a team. Additionally, it was brought up that by enjoying their work, people inspire one another, while when being constantly exhausted and overloaded, they paralyze others.

In concurrence with the last question in section two, the next question seeks to discover what the ideal teammate, in the eyes of the respondent, would be like. Before going deeper into the question, it was first met with a slight rejection.

> "THE ideal teammate does not exist!"

Nevertheless, the general idea of the perfect teammate emerged as someone that knows whenever their help is needed without being asked for it, is intellectually complimentary and encouraging, as well as being caring, and always has an open ear. Evidently, such a person does not exist. However, this question was kept abstract on purpose to encourage broad thinking and gather open ideas.

Following, the interviewees were requested to describe successful teamwork in the kindergarten. Teamwork is a collection of interconnected ideas, behaviors, and reactions of every member of the team, which are necessary to thrive as a group and that merge to enable integrated, responsive performance and job objectives that contribute to results of increased value (Salas, Sims & Burke 2005, 562). This request elicited a variety of perspectives on what constitutes a successful collaboration.

> "Communication is key."

Fundamentally, it is identified as mutual respect and acceptance of the team members' different approaches. Mutual support and encouragement, as well as the exchange of ideas, are highlighted in particular.

Subsequently, the participants were requested to elaborate on the best way to give feedback to colleagues. Reciprocal feedback from a team member allows the feedback recipient to be more aware of their performance (Salas & al. 2005, 576). The majority of those interviewed agreed that feedback, both positive and negative, is appropriate and desirable, intended for improving personal job execution. Positive feedback gives a sense of accomplishment, while negative feedback should give suggestions for improvement, and ultimately, both give the chance to reflect and grow. Nevertheless, especially with negative feedback, the importance of right timing and wording was pointed out, as well as the significance of being objective about the reaction.

When asked about resolving internal conflicts, the interviewees' answers were in consensus. If an emotional distance from the situation is already established, an open discussion with the other person should be sought to solve the problem. If the exclusion of emotions or individual problem solving is not possible, the manager, or if necessary, an impartial mediator, is consulted. It is regarded as essential to remain objective and find compromises.

A manager enhances the team's performance by coordinating workplace behaviors and interactions, utilizing their understanding of the external conditions. If internal problems arise, the manager must identify which adjustments and actions are required to restore performance expectations and standards of conduct in accordance. (Salas & al. 2005, 573.)

5.2   Board interviews

While in the case of face-to-face interviews, the interviewer sets the pace of the dialogue and ensures that the order of questions is followed, in the written version, the interviewee is left to his own devices. This form of interviewing is particularly suitable for questioning highly industrious people, as filling in the form is not tied to a specific date but is determined by the respondents themselves. Especially in the case of the board members, this is applicable as they are all full-time employees, and the board duties are done on a voluntary basis. In addition, written surveys are always advisable when information is requested that requires increased cognitive effort or, as in this case in the bylaws, must be looked up.

The board members can allocate as much time to the interview as required and may, among other things, first read the questions in their entirety or answer them in any order. However, this indicates that some participants answer the questions very carefully and thoughtfully, while others may fill them in very hastily.

Since the questionnaire is the only link between the interviewee and the researcher, it has been made sure that the wording is straightforward to understand. Nevertheless, in the form of a semi-structured interview, the participants were given the option for additional remarks and comments during the interview, as well as during post-interview follow-up questions. The instructions that the participant needs to fill in are always positioned where they are relevant, and the instructions are not bundled to avoid unnecessary page-turning.

5.2.1   Background information evaluation

As in chapter 5.1.1, the board member interviews commence with a section of background information. These questions should ascertain the professional competence regarding the work in the board and establish the relation to the kindergarten. Hence, the first question inspected how long the participant had been involved in any form with the kindergarten and how long they had been a board member. In this case, it can be assumed that the longer these two periods are, the higher the participant's experience concerning the organization's scope for action.

Table 2. Board Member Background Information

Involved in Kindergarten	Board Member	Professional Background	Reasons to join
11 years	5 years	Finance	Have chance to make an impact and enjoyment
10 years	5 years	Sports Coach	Gather insights
5 years	3 years	Entrepreneur	Joined without consent
4 years	Just joined	Entrepreneur	Promotion and further development of German-speaking culture abroad
0,25 years	Just joined	Finance	Further development of organization and German-speaking culture abroad
Alumni	Just joined	Project Manager	Gather insights and have chance to make an impact

However, newer members can also provide valuable insights from other fields that help develop the kindergarten. These insights and experiences are directly related to the next question, which relates to the participants' professional backgrounds. Participants from different professional fields bring new development opportunities for the kindergarten

through their wide-ranging experiences. For reasons of data protection, only a general description of the professional background is published in this study.

The final question in this section addresses the participants' reasons for joining the board. For ease of illustration, the responses have been grouped under similar categories. This question serves to stimulate reflected thinking for the further course of the interview. As when someone visualizes the reason for their work, it provides them with motivation (Schröter 22 December 2021).

5.2.2 Mission, vision & values evaluation

The interviewees were asked to state the organization's purpose and its overall intention, namely the mission of the kindergarten. The mission is a communication method that conveys the values, viewpoints, and techniques set by the management, to the organization's employees as well as stakeholders (Babnik & al. 2014, 614). Here the participants referred to the bylaws, in which the mission is stated, and elaborated that the purpose of the kindergarten is to maintain and develop the children's German language skills and to support and supplement the home education of the children by offering them a learning activities appropriate to their age and development. The kindergarten is primarily intended for the children of the association's members.

The management's engagement in establishing an action plan to achieve the main mission strengthens the quality organizational culture and promotes organizational change (Aithal 2015, 155). The mission of an organization contributes to anchoring the goals in everyone's consciousness, thus creating an opportunity for identification with the organization. If employees identify with the organization as an employer, they can develop loyalty, a sense of responsibility as well as initiative and passion for the desired goals. Therefore, it is of great importance for the organization's success to communicate the company's mission effectively internally and externally and to actively emphasize it.

Subsequently followed the question concerning where the participants see the kindergarten in the next 15 years. The vision embodies the organization's defined future objective for the duration of the strategic action plan, and it serves to inspire and encourage employees as it is considered feasible (Aithal 2015, 154). A company's vision describes an ideal state in the future that the company would like to achieve. It is an important component of organizational management as it elucidates to all employees what is at stake in a concise and precise formulation. The company's vision can also include and name individual elements on the way to this ideal state.

> "I think more Germans will move to Finland in the next few years. The demand for German kindergarten places already exceeds the supply."

Again, most responses were comparable. Almost all participants envision the kindergarten in a larger, more appropriate building with more children. Renewals of the central premise were also introduced, such as the establishment of a group for younger children and the provision of "Open Daycare" services.

When leaders develop a vision, general data is collected during an external analysis, which presents them with a shared understanding of emerging developments and concerns (Aithal 2015, 154). Organizational management plays an essential role in developing a mission. However, the company's image can change over time, for example, depending on changes in the company's environment or through personnel changes in the company itself. An external analysis can indicate that a change in the strategic goals is required. This sets in motion a process of the company finding itself, culminating in an adapted or new vision.

In this section, the next question for the participants deals with the organization's core values. Successful leadership is built on the ability to define and convey a compelling future vision; only leadership built on a common purpose, vision, and, most importantly, common values generates trust (Gill 2002, 312). Here, the interviewees' answers varied widely but were similar in their core statements.

> "[…] trust in the common good will for the benefit of the kindergarten, promotion of the independence and individuality of the children, quality of the educators, and openness and willingness to constantly develop the kindergarten."

The majority named openness, along with that everyone is taken as they are, as the most important core value of the organization. Additionally, competent educators, exercise, and nature were named as the kindergarten's pillars.

Establishing and fostering common values is an essential part of successful leadership. A strong organizational culture that supports and instills dedication to a common objective is characterized by shared values. (Gill 2002, 313.) The more consciously organizational values are lived, the more the culture of the organization is expressed. In contrast to norms, where changes in behavior are brought about based on clear rules and standards, the inner attitude of all those involved is the focus of values.

The last question in the section examines which core values the interviewee expects from the kindergarten staff. The core values of the personnel do not have to be the exact same values of the organization. However, employees must bring a certain set of prerequisite values to be successfully integrated into the organization and convey its values in their

work. All participants identified the expected core values like honesty, fairness, and respect with total unanimity. It can be assumed that these values are not specifically geared to the work in the kindergarten. However, they represent the expected minimum degree of a competent and trustworthy person or worker.

5.2.3 Teamwork & communication evaluation

The following section involves teamwork and communication in a kindergarten internal setting and how the board members assess this from the outside. To begin with, the participants are asked what they think are the significant challenges for the staff when joining the organization.

> "Adapting and settling into Finnish culture and society can be a challenge, since you are in a, at least to a certain extent, German system."

It is assumed that the contradiction between the national culture of the country and the national culture in the organization can lead to some difficulties in adapting, depending on which culture a person comes from. In addition, it was mentioned that the kindergarten is a small workplace with a small group of colleagues. Accordingly, everything in this team is a bit more intimate and personal, and adapting to the new team takes place not only on a professional but also on a personal level. Correspondingly, due to the organization's size, there is no long training phase; a new employee will be employed directly in everyday life and must find their way around quickly.

Next, the interviewees were asked to describe successful teamwork in the kindergarten. The participants elaborated that it is important that the entire team subscribes to, internalizes, and actively lives the shared vision and values. Within this value system, the individual team member should have the freedom to carry out their job according to their qualifications, expectantly with great joy and idealism. As it is a small organization, team spirit and flexibility are extremely important; likewise, innovative cooperation with the various stakeholders in order to cope well with more critical situations.

Additionally, good collaboration is characterized by mutual trust and a sense of unity, promotes constructive communication, which helps solve problems more efficiently, and motivates team members to take action. Furthermore, the team's functioning is reflected in the satisfaction of the various stakeholders. Teamwork presupposes the coordination of team members, which is achieved through a shared perception of the environment and performance expectations, leading to the forecast and expectation of the needs of others (Salas & al. 2005, 565).

Following this, the participants could elaborate on which method is used to give feedback to the manager and staff.

> "Feedback is actually more left to the kindergarten manager; the board is more entrusted with organizational tasks."

The participants stated that feedback should be a mix of individual discussions and group discussions, whether during a board meeting with the manager or team internal staff meetings. It should create an openness between leadership and staff, and above all, clarity about the expectations of both sides regarding performance, values, and future. If possible, positive feedback should prevail, as it is of an encouraging nature; moreover, asking questions should encourage reflection from the feedback recipient.

Finally, the participants were asked how staff internal problems should be dealt with. Both supervisors and employees have different experiences; therefore, they perceive their environment differently and interpret it in different ways. Therein lies a significant cause of conflict.

> "Open and direct. Everyone involved should sit down with the manager. After the discussion, it is recorded in writing how the situation can be improved."

The main task of the board and manager are to ensure that the employees perform as required. Therefore direct intervention in every disagreement is not necessary; it should only be intervened in those conflicts that reduce the performance of your employees. The interviewees found that conflicts should first be dealt with in small circles until there is sufficient clarity. This means that if the problems cannot be solved internally, the manager will be involved, and, if necessary, the board will also be involved. Personnel issues are often sensitive, and to avoid pre-judgment, they should not be widely communicated too early.

5.3   Results

In this following chapter, the answers of the two groups of participants, or three, if the manager is viewed as a separate group, are compared with each other and cross-checked, as mentioned in the previous chapter. According to Adams & Marshall (2020, 128), the primary challenge for the interviewed manager and board is distinguishing between aspirations and reality. For employees, on the other hand, the key challenge is trying to separate perception from reality. Therefore, it is crucial to authenticate both views so the essence of the organizational culture can be identified.

Holistically, the interviews brought significant information and valuable answers for the research of this study. Through the constant comparison of the resulting answers with the theoretical framework, these concepts were largely confirmed. Consequently provide the resulting findings the foundation and starting point for the development of the culture handbook.

5.3.1 Mission, vision & values

The mission of the kindergarten is, in its essence, the preservation of the German language and culture, as well as to challenge and support the children in an age- and development-appropriate way. This is implemented by teaching the children values, assisting them in becoming socially competent individuals, and providing them with the techniques required to act in society. The kindergarten's vision is for potential expansion. More specifically, this does not refer to larger groups but to other age groups and the formation of external offerings that establish the kindergarten as a gathering point for German culture. It is especially noticeable in the case of the vision that there is consensus between leadership and employees. It indicates that the vision is feasible, and that management has effectively conveyed it to employees. A shared vision establishes a common organizational identity and enables employees to collaborate securely and effectively (Gill 2002, 313).

Even though there were minor deviations in the organization's basic beliefs for each participant, four core values stood out in particular (see figure 5 below). Expectedly, employees contribute the most insightful understanding of an organization and provide the most precise perceptions regarding values (Adams & Marshall 2020, 129).

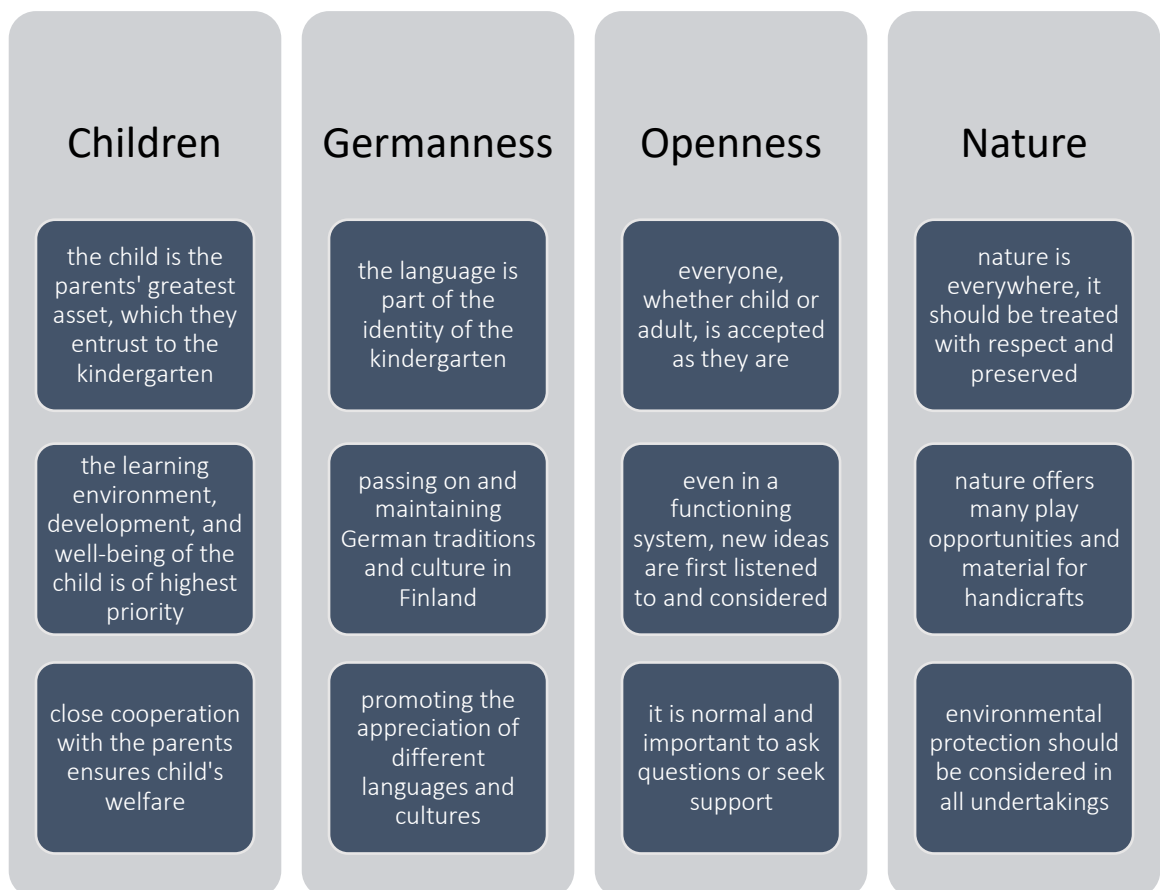| Children	Germanness	Openness	Nature
the child is the parents' greatest asset, which they entrust to the kindergarten	the language is part of the identity of the kindergarten	everyone, whether child or adult, is accepted as they are	nature is everywhere, it should be treated with respect and preserved
the learning environment, development, and well-being of the child is of highest priority	passing on and maintaining German traditions and culture in Finland	even in a functioning system, new ideas are first listened to and considered	nature offers many play opportunities and material for handicrafts
close cooperation with the parents ensures child's welfare	promoting the appreciation of different languages and cultures	it is normal and important to ask questions or seek support	environmental protection should be considered in all undertakings

Figure 4. Core values of the kindergarten

The evaluation of the mission, vision, and values revealed that management and the board had successfully conveyed these to the employees or had successfully recruited personnel in accordance, respectively. Conclusively, the principles of leadership impact organizational culture, but shared practices are how the culture affects employees (Hofstede 2001, 394).

5.3.2 Teamwork & communication

The most difficult challenge for new team members is integrating into a small, well-established team with pre-existing structures. Furthermore, the variations in pedagogical culture between a German kindergarten and the Finnish system in which it operates, necessitate adjustments by the new team member. The most important and, at the same time, most challenging while working in a team, however, is continuously being professional and objective. This is particularly difficult as it is a profession in the social field which requires frequently responding to the emotions of others, i.e., children and parents. Having said that, it is appreciated if teammates are aware of their colleagues' current projects and offer assistance in their implementation. Furthermore, it is hoped that educational techniques and recommendations for development in these and other initiatives be exchanged, which additionally involves mutual encouragement and support.

Teams must be able to facilitate and cooperatively communicate with one another to achieve set goals. This requires a common awareness of the team's capabilities, objectives, and the restrictions under which the team operates. (Salas & al. 2005, 577.) The most vital aspect of successful collaboration, regardless of the issue or the manner in which it is presented, is open communication. It applies to communication in all directions: top-down, bottom-up, or on the same level - the standard is to treat everyone involved with respect. It can be further learned that successful teamwork results from internalizing the organizational values of each of its members.

Feedback must be given in such a manner that every team member recognizes that its objective is to enhance the team's effectiveness and not to assign blame or make an individual appear incompetent (Salas & al. 2005, 577). Feedback in any form and any direction is always appreciated. In doing so, it should be considered that it should encourage reflection, and objectivity should be maintained, especially with negative feedback, where attention must be paid to the right timing and formulation. Asking questions is a valuable type of feedback since it allows the feedback receiver to elaborate on their theorem or train of thought, settle any possible misunderstandings or ambiguities, and eventually evaluate their own actions. This strategy is beneficial for reflecting on the matter.

In the event of internal staff problems arising, a three-step approach is used to solve them (see figure 6 below). This approach provides a standard, ensuring that conflicts are re-solved as efficiently as possible and thus restoring the full potential of those involved. However, the application of this method is dependent on the type of conflict, which should therefore always be evaluated.
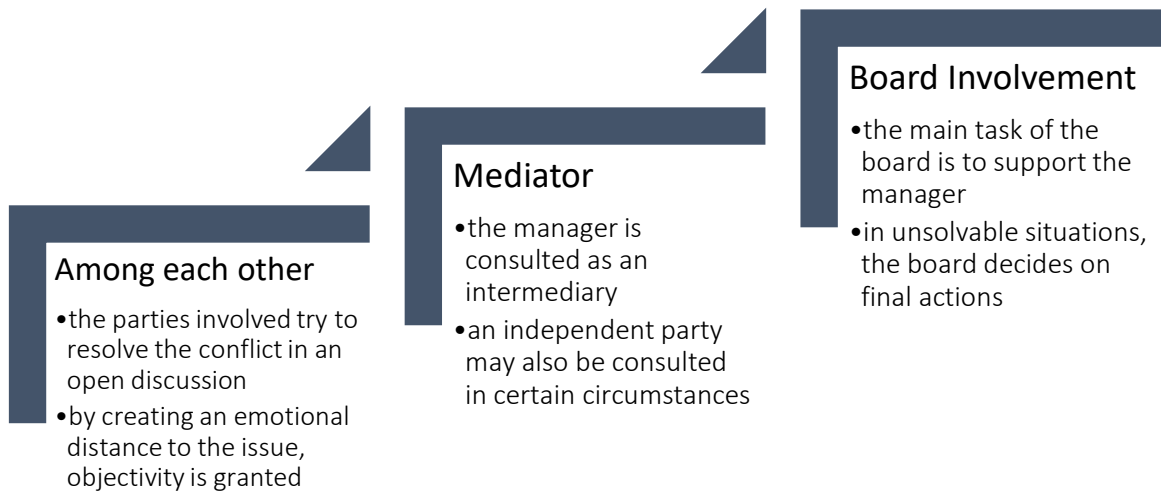
Among each other
- the parties involved try to resolve the conflict in an open discussion
- by creating an emotional distance to the issue, objectivity is granted

Mediator
- the manager is consulted as an intermediary
- an independent party may also be consulted in certain circumstances

Board Involvement
- the main task of the board is to support the manager
- in unsolvable situations, the board decides on final actions

Figure 5. Three-step approach for conflicts

When reviewing this section, it was noted that all participants involved had a unique view-point on how teamwork and communication work effectively. This is probably due to the fact that leadership has not set any predetermined principles for this.

6   Discussion and evaluation

In the sixth and final chapter of this thesis, a conclusion of the overall thesis development will be presented. It will discuss by what means the theoretical framework correlates to the research, feedback from the commissioning organization, as well as reflection on own learnings.

The key purpose of this thesis was to develop a culture handbook for the German Kindergarten ry in Helsinki, which depicts organizational culture, values, principles, and communicational approaches. The handbook's objective is to enhance their inter-personnel communication and assist new team members in assimilating to the organization's culture and facilitating their transition to the new workplace.

The interview study conducted with existing employees and the kindergarten's board of directors revealed a clear need for a handbook at the institution. Although employees' points of view frequently coincide, a written handbook provides validation of one's own beliefs and support, security, and stability in everyday encounters with one another. In circumstances when individual approaches differ, the handbook outlines the organization's intended course of action as well as the standards of action. Not only is this beneficial for the existing team to ensure optimal collaboration, but also for newcomers to have a better grasp of the organization's conditions and thus enables a faster integration into the team and organization. Equally, for the board members, the handbook offers an in-depth perception of the kindergarten and its values. This understanding should be considered when making decisions in accord with the organization and favorably influencing them.

In addition to influencing the team's collaboration, the organizational culture highly impacts employee retention. Future and current employees can determine if the kindergarten, its mission and values, conventions and standards, and the conduct of others correspond to their personal values and expectations and successfully align with them. As a result, an established organizational culture is a crucial element when it comes to integrating into the organization and identifying with it. A high level of employee loyalty has a beneficial impact on work satisfaction and length of employment. Consequently, this has a positive effect on the employee turnover rate of the kindergarten, enabling it to stay more competitive as the loss of employees is always associated with costs. The framework within which these costs move depends primarily on the required qualifications of the employee, as the costs for recruitment, training, and loss of know-how are directly related to the required profile of the position.

6.1 Conclusions

Whenever a foreign institution is based in another country, in this instance, a German organization in Finland, cultural differences can significantly impact the workplace environment. Even though all the employees are from German-speaking regions, the national location factors into the organization's day-to-day operations. Examining the cultural dimensions between Finland and Germany demonstrates that the two distinct countries can have quite similar interpretations regarding cultural aspects. These cultural dimensions offered insight into the national distinctions. This component has been crucial in assessing which elements are essential for the existing and potential employees of the kindergarten to understand the organization Kindergarten ry.

This is also evident in the handbook since its contents do not deviate significantly from that of a German-based organization and its standards and policies. It demonstrates that if enculturation is identical among two nations, it may not have a negative impact on organizational culture. With the kindergarten's employees all being native German speakers, everyone is acquainted with the German cultural features of the organization, with the variations that the handbook provides further guidance in communications and an understanding of organization-specific standards.

In the study of organizational culture, the following themes, among others, were constantly encountered: values, shared objectives, commitment, cohesiveness, supporting and assisting others. As we are dealing with other people, these characteristics are prevalent in all facets of life. Organizational culture, in essence, investigates these fundamental patterns of human behavior and needs that are inherent in everyone. Perhaps this is why when studying the organizational culture of Kindergarten ry it seems like being at the core of an organization's operations and management since the topic itself is people oriented. Thus, one element of organizational culture is that sentiments play a significant role. Thus, studying organizational culture provides a certain level of humanity to the professional environment. Even so, considering the employees of the kindergarten work closely together in a small team and are constantly in contact with each other, the children, and their parents.

On the other hand, leadership in organizational culture attempts to take these individual and social needs into consideration and, when feasible, direct them in the desired direction. Noteworthy about managing a culture is that a leader can't just give out orders, as they require an examination of people and their environment and an awareness of external stimuli. Finally, true culture management is remarkably connected to the individuals,

including actions such as feedback and dialogue, which is already successfully implemented in Kindergarten ry. Each member of the organization contributes to the creation of the kindergarten's culture in their own manner; however, the manager, in particular, has a significant role in this aspect. Leadership may thus be perceived to be affected by individual approaches from the angle of organizational culture.

6.2 Recommendations and feedback

To fully utilize the handbook's potential, it is recommended that each employee and board member read it and attempt to internalize and identify with its contents. A printed version of the handbook can be made available to everyone on the kindergarten premises at all times to provide stability and guidance in uncertain situations. As a result, it can be consulted at any time, inter alia, if there are communication discrepancies.

It is also suggested that a version of the handbook be posted on the organization's website. The kindergarten's company brand and employer brand are strengthened by making this information public. Potential applicants can gain a better understanding of the organization and determine whether there is a cultural fit between the applicant and the employee. It may also be of interest to prospective customers to learn more about the kindergarten as an organization. The public display of corporate culture can significantly help to attract new customers.

An organization's culture is continually evolving and adjusting to changing times. The culture handbook must also take part in this transformation. As a result, it is vital to maintain that the culture handbook is up to date on a regular basis and, if required, adjust it to organizational culture changes. It can be assumed that the kindergarten's core values or mission will not change fundamentally in the future. However, when reviewing and revising the culture handbook, the opportunity should be taken to assess and reflect on how current and suitable they are. This is best carried out together with the team, e.g., in a designated annual workshop. This workshop can be held kindergarten-internal, though it would be beneficial to consult an HR professional, at least in the beginning, that can guide them through the process.

The final version of the handbook (appendix 3) was sent to the manager and two board members for feedback on its content and usability for the kindergarten. Additionally, a pre-finalized version of the thesis was made available for reading. The feedback from the commissioning party received on 25 April 2022 can be viewed in the original language as appendix 2.

The manager found that the handbook provided important information and a valuable extraction of the organization's culture and provided a better understanding of how the team and board worked together. Through the defined vision and values of the kindergarten, she was capable of adapting her own goals for the growth of the team and the kindergarten. As a result, the culture handbook serves her as a tool for governance and encouragement. According to the manager, the culture handbook also had an impact on the board, causing them to reflect on their role in the kindergarten. As a result, the board would like to be more present for internal team matters and be active in external cooperation. The content of the research and the resulting handbook was considered a delightful result for the manager, as it states that all members of the organization, whether team or board members, share more or less the same ideas regarding concepts of conflict communication and feedback, teamwork, and future agendas for the kindergarten. (appendix 2.)

6.3   Reflection on personal learnings

The thesis concept developed from a genuine interest in organizational culture. Throughout my professional career, the reasons behind organizational procedures and the relationships between individuals have always piqued my curiosity. During my studies, I was introduced to the notion of organizational culture for the first time.

This concept appeared to be attempting to find answers to the very questions I had been pondering in my own professional career. For a considerable time - to be precise, as soon as I learned of culture handbooks - it was evident that I wanted to write my thesis on this topic. The idea was brought up with the commissioning organization, and they were so enthusiastic about it that we decided to work on this project together.

Although the theoretical framework relies on rather general and widely known theories, I have attempted to provide an organization-specific perspective on the subject using these theories. The thesis incorporates recent studies and perspectives published in scientific articles. Despite this effort, I believe there could have been more diverse and novel perspectives. As a result, the thesis could have been extended more comprehensively.

With 12 interviews to analyze, the practical implementation of the thesis was very time-consuming. However, I am confident that everyone's voice and views, whether employee or board member, is essential, especially in such a small organization. Only through this, it is possible to carefully tailor the product to the needs and objectives of the organization.

I believe the initial objective and the final outcome of this thesis complement each other well. On a personal level, I genuinely think this project has taught me a lot. First and foremost, this is the largest single project I've undertaken on my own. Consequently, several challenges concerning practical implementation arose, but I am pleased that the thesis project as a whole was completed on time.

Second, I initially assumed that my own information retrieval abilities were slightly better than they were, but this skill has improved significantly throughout the project's progress. If I started a new project right now, I would most likely search for information much broader, more systematic, and efficient. I also believe I have significantly gained more in-depth knowledge about organizational culture and leadership. Furthermore, were other various topics and HRM-related themes that I encountered during my studies also expanded upon during my thesis work - which is of great value for my future career, in my opinion.

It was a wonderful experience producing a practical culture handbook. For me, combining academic and practical research, along with relevant insights and recommendations and assembling it into a valuable and appealing handbook, has been one of the best parts of the thesis process. Moreover, I appreciated the close collaboration with the organization, particularly their manager. This increased my capability to work in a team even more, but due to the manager's continuous constructive feedback, I was able to develop personally and professionally.

Overall, I found the thesis process to be both demanding and fascinating. I've encountered several difficulties along the process, personal as well as professional. Nevertheless, through determination, I was always able to overcome them and finally created a thesis that was satisfactory for me, as well as a product that is useful for the kindergarten.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

	Employees	Manager	Board
Background Info	How long have you been working in early childhood education or another pedagogical field? How long have you been working in Kindergarten ry and in which positions? What's your education? Were you qualified to work in early childhood education when starting at the kindergarten?		How long have you been involved with the kindergarten? How long are you a board member? Why did you choose to join the board? What's your professional background?
Mission, Vision & Values	What's *in your opinion* the organization's purpose and its overall intention? (Mission)		What's the organization's purpose and its overall intention? (Mission)
	Can you give an overview of where do you see the kindergarten in the next 15 years? (Vision) How would you define the core values of the organization?		
	What are your *personal core values* regarding the work in the kindergarten? What are your *personal wish values* regarding the team in the kindergarten?	What core values do you expect from the kindergarten staff?	
Teamwork & Communication	What was your biggest challenge when you joined the team? What would the ideal teammate be like? Generally, what is most challenging when working in a team?	What are the challenges for you when someone new joins the team? What would the ideal employee be like? What would the ideal team be like?	What do *you think*, what are the major challenges for the staff when joining the organization?
	How do you describe successful teamwork in the kindergarten?		
	What's the best way to give feedback (positive and negative) to colleagues?	What's the best method to give feedback to the staff?	Which method is used to give feedback to the manager and staff? How can that be improved?
	If internal problems arise, how should they be solved?	If staff internal problems arise, how should they be dealt with?	

Appendix 2. Feedback from the Commissioning Organization

Kindergarten r.y.
Tallbergin Puistotie 10A
00200 Helsinki

Helsinki, den 25.04.2022

Rückmeldung zur Thesis und zum Kulturhandbuch unserer Organisation „Kindergarten ry" für

Stephanie Sammek, Studierende an der Universität „Haaga Helia".

Frau Sammek hat durchgehend den Ablauf ihrer Arbeit professionell erklärt. Man hat mit der Thesis das Gefühl man erarbeitet die Kapitel mit ihr zusammen. Kapitel für Kapitel wird erklärt, wo die Studierende sich gedanklich bei ihrer Forschung für ihre Arbeit aufhält. Die Schreiberin nimmt den Leser mit, bezieht ihn ein und gibt wichtige Hinweise für den Ablauf und der Forschung für das Ziel des Kulturhandbuches. Kleine wichtige wissenschaftliche Knowhows am Rande der eigentlichen Arbeit.

Signifikante Informationen und eine wertvolle Zusammenfassung bietet das Kulturhandbuch von Stephanie Sammek für unseren „Kindergarten ry". In Zukunft kann sich der Kindergarten entwickeln, wachsen und einen Ort schaffen, wo jeder involviert ist, sich wohl fühlt. Sicherheit und Zufriedenheit für Kinder, Eltern und Mitarbeiter sind die 2 Hauptziele des Kindergartens.

Das Handbuch gibt mir als Leitung vom Kindergarten ein besseres Verständnis für die Kooperation zwischen Team und Vorstand. Ziele und Werte des Kindergartens sind nun dokumentiert. Dadurch habe ich meine eigenen Ziele für die Entwicklung des Teams und des Kindergartens angepasst. Das Kulturhandbuch fungiert für mich als Werkzeug im Leadership und Empowerment. Ich kann meine Kollegen besser unterstützen und einen sicheren, transparenten Prozess bieten, der für mehr Stabilität sorgt und somit das Arbeitsklima positiv unterstützt. Das Ergebnis der Arbeit fördert eine bessere Kommunikation und den Wunsch nach individuellem Feedback innerhalb der Organisation. Mit dieser Grundlage kann ich genauer erklären, wie wir als Team intern Sachen angehen. Das tolle an dieser Arbeit ist, dass das Buch vielfältig einsetzbar ist: bei der Leitung, den Vorstand, im bestehenden Team und für jedes neue Mitglied. Das Kulturhandbuch gibt eine sehr gute Übersicht über unsere Organisationskultur.

Das Kulturhandbuch lässt mich unsere Werte des Kindergartens zu erkennen und zu benennen. Mein Ziel ist es den Intro-Text unsere Webseite mit unseren Werten zu aufzuwerten und für jeden sichtbar zu machen. Werte sind die Grundlagen einer Konzeption. Für mich war es ein wunderschönes Resultat. Zu sehen das wir alle, dass das Team und der Vorstand die gleichen Ideen, Vorstellungen der Kommunikation bei Konflikten, Feedback geben, Teamarbeit und Zukunftspläne für den Kindergarten haben.

Das Kulturhandbuch hat auch den Vorstand beeinflusst und Ihren Part im Kindergarten reflektieren lassen. in Zukunft möchte der Vorstand intern für das Team mehr präsent sein und extern mit anderen Einrichtungen agieren.

Die Resultate kann ich gleich im Frühling 2022 benutzen, denn ab dann suchen wir nach 1 bis 2 neuen Mitarbeitern. Ich werde unsere Grundwerte mit den Bewerbern teilen können sowie wie das unsere Organisation miteinander kommuniziert und zusammenarbeitet. Ich kann mit diesem Wissen die neue Kraft mit all ihrer Herausforderungen am neuen Arbeitsplatz besser integrieren.

Ein detailliertes Feedback zur wissenschaftlichen Erarbeitung von Stephanie Sammek findet man im Anhang.

Die Kindergartenleitung, der Vorstand und das gesamte Team bedanken sich bei Stephanie Sammek für ihre Mühe, der Kooperation und für das Kulturhandbuch.

Wir wünschen Ihnen für ihre private und berufliche Zukunft weiterhin viel Erfolg.

_____

Datum und Unterschrift der Kindergartenleitung

ANHANG

Rückmeldungen zu der wissenschaftlichen Erarbeitung

Das Wissen über individuelle Entscheidungskriterien und Motivationsstrukturen sind für mich als Leitung des Betriebes von hohem Interesse damit ich ein gutes und gesundes Arbeitsklima schaffen für das Team schaffen kann und ein besseres Verständnis für meine Mitarbeiter aufbaue. Frau Sammek hat realistische Forschungsmethoden angewandt und darauf hingewiesen das Meinungen einer Gruppe nicht unbedingt die Wahrheit in der Organisation sein muss.

Die Studierende hat sich sehr viele Gedanken gemacht, wie sie die Mitarbeiter interviewt. Sie hat eine Methode gefunden, wo sich alle Befragten sehr wohl gefühlt haben. Zuallererst duften die Befragten ihre Zeit auswählen, wann sie interviewt werden. Am Anfang des Interviews hat Frau Sammek den Unterschied zwischen nationaler und Organisationskultur erklärt. Mit dem Hintergrundwissen hat sie das Interview angefangen und ließ die Befragten über ihren pädagogischen Lebenslauf erzählen. So fühlten sich die Mitarbeiter richtig wohl und wichtig in ihrer Rolle. Frau Sammek konnte ihre Fragen den Mitarbeiter stellen, ohne das Ziel ihres Handbuches aus den Augen zu verlieren und gab den Befragten ein positives Gefühl einen Beitrag geleistet zu haben.

Frau Sammek war sehr flexibel mit ihren Zeiten und hatte eine gute Kooperation bei den Interviews mit dem Vorstand und der Leitung.

Teamarbeit und Kommunikation sind wichtige Teile in unserer Arbeit im Kindergarten. Die Evaluierung hilft mir meine Mitarbeiter besser zu verstehen. Ich habe meine Ziele als Leitung angepasst und werde auch in Zukunft auf andere wichtige Sachen wie zum Beispiel „Empowerment der individuellen Mitarbeiter" ins Auge fassen.

Die Resultate der Forschung helfen mir meine Ziele zu fokussieren und diese mit dem Team zu erreichen. Eine offene respektvolle Kommunikation ist der Schlüssel. Feedback ist wichtig, um zu wachsen. Eine kritische Reflexion sollte jemanden ermutigen sich zu entwickeln und nicht jemanden zu beleidigen. Das Timing und die Wahl der Worte sollten gut gewählt sein, um das Beste hervorzubringen.

Man findet unteranderen auch einen Dreischritte-Plan, der bei internen Problemen helfen soll. Es gibt eine Übersicht was Schritt für Schritt passiert, sollten wir ein Problem innerhalb der Organisation haben. Dies bietet allen eine Sicherheit.

Appendix 3. Culture handbook: Kindergarten ry

KINDERGARTEN **RY**

LEITFADEN FÜR DIE
UNTERNEHMENSKULTUR
IN UNSEREM
KINDERGARTEN

Liebe*r Leser*innen,

Der Deutsche Kindergarten wurde im Jahr 1893 in Helsinki, als erster seiner Art, gegründet, und ist seitdem her eine der ersten Anlaufstellen für Deutschsprachige Familien in der Metropolregion Helsinki.

Wir wollen nicht nur ein großartiger Kindergarten sein, sondern auch einen besonderen Arbeitsplatz erschaffen. Ein Arbeitsplatz, der unsere eigenen Mitarbeiter erfüllt sowie sie ermutigt, sie selbst zu sein und großartige Ideen zu haben.

Mit der neuen Leitung im Jahre 2020 machten wir uns daran, neuen Wind in den Kindergarten zu bringen und mehr auf die Bedürfnisse unserer Mitarbeiter einzugehen. Im Zuge dessen, erstellten wir dieses Unternehmenskultur Handbuch.

Dieses Handbuch bietet eine Zusammenfassung unserer Leitprinzipien und Tipps, wie wir gemeinsam als Team wachsen sowie effizient miteinander agieren können, und dabei immer den Kindergarten und das Wohle Aller in Betracht ziehen.

Wir glauben, dass diese Prinzipien den Onboarding-Prozess für neue Mitglieder erleichtern und uns allen helfen werden, mit unserer Vision konsistent zu bleiben, während der Kindergarten gedeiht.

Wir hoffen, dass Dir das Lesen dieses Leitfadens genauso viel Spaß macht, wie uns das Schreiben bereitet hat.

Euer,

Kindergarten ry.

INHALT

MISSION UND VISION

UNSERE MISSION

Die Mission des Kindergartens ist in ihrer Essenz die Bewahrung der deutschen Sprache und Kultur sowie die alters- und entwicklungsgerechte Forderung und Förderung der Kinder.

Umgesetzt wird dies, indem wir den Kindern Werte vermitteln, sie unterstützen sich zu sozial kompetenten Persönlichkeiten zu entwickeln und ihnen die Techniken vermitteln, die für gesellschaftliches Handeln erforderlich sind.

Der Kindergarten ist als Ort gedacht, an dem sich alle Beteiligten wohlfühlen, egal ob Groß oder Klein. Das weiterführende schulende Ziel des Kindergartens ist es, die Kinder auf den Eintritt in die Deutsche Schule Helsinki (DSH) vorzubereiten.

UNSERE VISION

Die Vision des Kindergartens ist eine mögliche Erweiterung. Konkret geht es uns dabei nicht unbedingt darum, die einzelnen Gruppen zu vergrößern, sondern eher um die Aufnahme weiterer Altersgruppen. Die geschieht hoffentlich in entsprechenden größeren Räumlichkeiten.

Zusätzlich erstreben wir die Gestaltung verschiedenster externer Angebote, die den Kindergarten als Treffpunkt deutscher Kultur etablieren.

Unser pädagogischer Ansatz, auch wenn traditionell gehalten, wird sich an die ändernden Zeiten stetig anpassen und mit ihnen weiterentwickeln.

UNSERE WERTE

KINDER, OFFENHEIT, NATUR UND DEUTSCH - diese vier Werte sind die Leitwerte des Kindergartens. Das bedeutet, dass wir diese als Teil der Organisation nach innen und außen vertreten. Dieselben Leitwerte dienen als Entscheidungsgrundlage, Handlungsorientierung und Verhaltensstandards für alle Mitarbeiter sowie für die Kindergartenleitung.

KINDER

Das Kind ist das höchste Gut der Eltern, das sie uns, dem Kindergarten, anvertrauen. Eine enge Zusammenarbeit mit den Eltern sichert das Kindeswohl und erleichtert unsere pädagogischen Bemühungen.

Das Lernumfeld, die Entwicklung und das Wohlergehen des Kindes haben für uns höchste Priorität. Daher stellen wir sicher, dass sich Kinder in einer integrativen, einladenden und unterstützenden Umgebung befinden, wenn sie den Kindergarten besuchen.

NATUR

Die Natur ist allgegenwärtig, wir wollen sie respektvoll behandeln und bewahren. Umwelt- und Klimaschutz sollte in allen unseren Unternehmen und Aktionen beachtet und gefördert werden.

Die Natur bietet den Kindern viele Möglichkeiten zum Spielen und Entdecken Zeit in der Natur zu verbringen ist für die kognitive Entwicklung unerlässlich. Zusätzlich bietet uns die Natur massenhaft Material zum Basteln, Werken und Bauen.

OFFENHEIT

Jeder, ob Kind oder Erwachsener, wird bei uns so akzeptiert, wie sie/er ist. Nur wer sein wahres Ich sein kann, fühlt sie sich wohl, eigene Ideen und Gedanken zu teilen.

Auch in einem scheinbar funktionierenden System werden wir neue Ideen und Meinungen stets anhören und berücksichtigen. Es ist normal und wichtig, Fragen zu stellen oder Unterstützung zu suchen. Wir helfen uns gegenseitig.

DEUTSCH

Die deutsche Sprache ist Teil unserer Identität. Wir achten auf die Pflege und Weitergabe deutscher Traditionen und Kultur. Die eigene Kultur zu verstehen und sich in ihr wohlzufühlen, ist eine Grundlage für die Begegnung mit anderen Kulturen.

Als deutsche Institution im Ausland möchten wir die Wertschätzung verschiedener Sprachen und Kulturen fördern. Das erlaubt den Kindern, ihre Weltanschauung zu erweitern und ein interkulturelles Bewusstsein zu entwickeln.

ZUSAMMENARBEIT

TEAMARBEIT

Das Wichtigste und gleichzeitig Herausforderndste bei der Arbeit im Team ist, stets *professionell und objektiv* zu bleiben. Dies ist besonders schwierig, da wir in unserem Beruf häufig auf die Emotionen anderer, d. h. Kinder und Eltern, eingehen müssen.

Allerdings schätzen wir es, wenn wir uns gegenseitig *über unsere aktuellen Projekte Bescheid geben und Hilfestellung bei deren Umsetzung anbieten.* Dadurch können wir in diesen und anderen Initiativen pädagogische Techniken und Entwicklungsempfehlungen austauschen, was zusätzlich eine gegenseitige Wertschätzung und Unterstützung fördert.

Im Grunde wünschen wir uns voneinander einen Kollegen, der unaufgefordert weiß, wann seine Hilfe gebraucht wird, der intellektuell komplementär und ermutigend ist sowie fürsorglich ist und immer ein offenes Ohr hat. Niemand ist natürlich so perfekt, aber wir geben unser Bestes, uns *gegenseitig stets zu unterstützen und respektieren*.

FÜR NEUE TEAMMITGLIEDER

Die schwierigste Herausforderung für neue Teammitglieder ist die Integration in eine kleine, eingespielte Gemeinschaft mit bereits bestehenden Strukturen. Darüber hinaus erfordern die Unterschiede in der pädagogischen Kultur zwischen einem deutschen Kindergarten und dem finnischen System Anpassungen durch das neue Teammitglied.

Da wir ein kleines Team sind, bleibt leider nicht viel Zeit für eine Eingewöhnung. *Wir stehen jedoch jedem, wenn möglich, mit Rat und Tat zur Seite um das Einarbeiten zu Erleichtern*.

KOMMUNIKATION

Der wichtigste Aspekt für unsere erfolgreiche Zusammenarbeit, unabhängig vom Thema oder der Art und Weise ist eine *offene Kommunikation.* Es gilt für die Kommunikation in alle Richtungen und ist der Maßstab für respektvollen Umgang mit allen Beteiligten.

FEEDBACK

Feedback in jeglicher Form und Richtung ist immer willkommen. Dabei achten wir darauf, dass es zum Nachdenken anregt und die Objektivität gewahrt bleibt - gerade bei negativem Feedback, wo auf das richtige Timing und die richtige Formulierung geachtet werden muss.

Das Stellen von Fragen ist eine beliebte Art des *reflektiven Feedbacks*, da es dem Feedback-Empfänger ermöglicht, sein Theorem oder seinen Gedankengang auszuarbeiten, mögliche Missverständnisse oder Unklarheiten zu beseitigen und schließlich seine eigenen Handlungen zu bewerten.
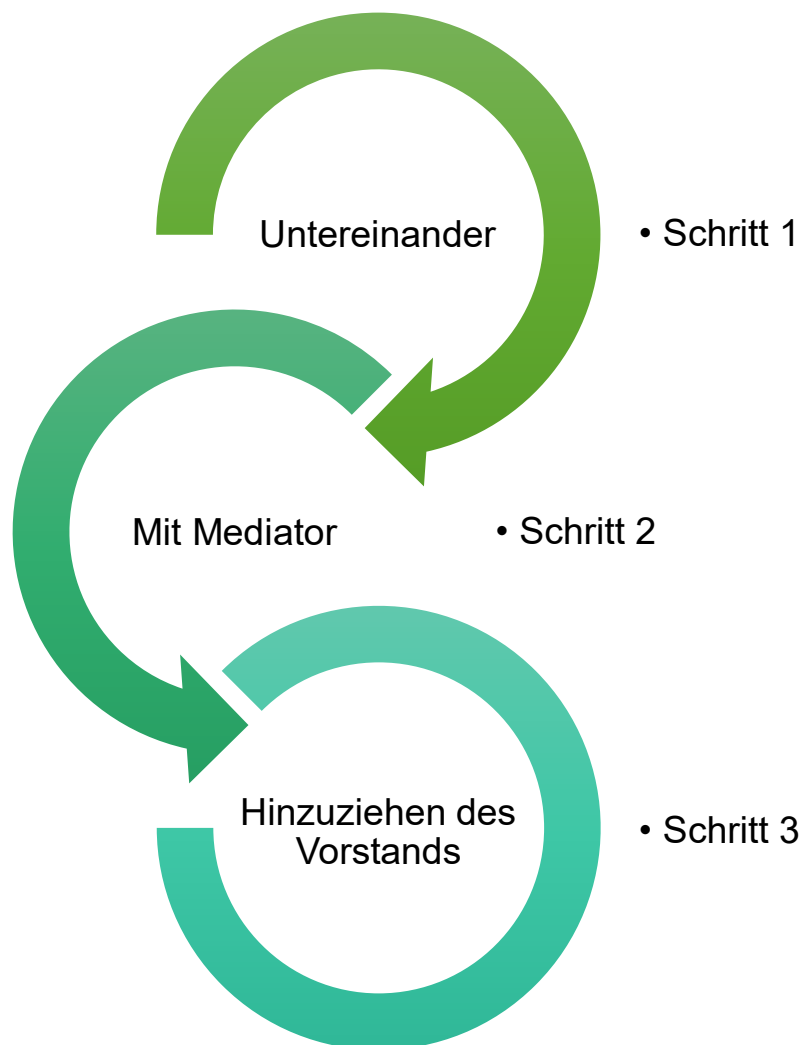
Wir geben Feedback so, dass jedes Teammitglied erkennt, dass das Ziel darin besteht, das *Wohlbefinden der Kinder*, sowie die Leistung des Teams, zu steigern und nicht, Schuld zuzuweisen oder einen Einzelnen als inkompetent erscheinen zu lassen.

Positives Feedback gibt ein *Erfolgsgefühl*, während negatives Feedback *Verbesserungsvorschläge* geben sollte, und letztendlich geben beide Formen von Feedback die Chance, zu *reflektieren und zu wachsen*.

PROBLEMBEHANDLUNG

Auch wir sind nicht perfekt und wir wissen, dass es auch mal zu Meinungsverschiedenheiten untereinander kommen kann. Dafür haben wir einen 3-Schritte Ansatz zur Konfliktlösung erstellt.

Dieser Ansatz bietet einen Standard, der sicherstellt, dass Konflikte so effizient wie möglich gelöst werden und somit das volle Potenzial der Beteiligten wiederhergestellt wird. Wir verstehen, dass es viele verschiedene Arten von Konflikten gibt, daher sollte diese vor Anwendung dieser Methode evaluiert werden.

Untereinander • Schritt 1

Mit Mediator • Schritt 2

Hinzuziehen des Vorstands • Schritt 3

SCHRITT 1

Zuerst versuchen die beteiligten Parteien den Konflikt in einer *offenen Diskussion untereinander* zu lösen.

Vor diesem Gespräch sollte eine *emotionale, ggf. auch zeitliche Distanz* zum Thema geschaffen werden, denn nur so kann auch Sachlichkeit gewährt werden.

Um einen Dialog zu schaffen ist es wichtig die Situation selbstreflektiert zu betrachten und eine durchdachte, vorwurfsfreie Darstellung der eigenen Sicht der Sachlage zu geben. Es kann hilfreich sein, sich in die Gegenseite hineinzuversetzen und Verständnis für deren Sicht aufzubringen.

SCHRITT 2

Sollte der Konflikt in Schritt 1 nicht gelöst werden, so wird die *Kindergartenleitung als Mediator* hinzugezogen.

Unter bestimmten Umständen, wenn z.B. die Leitung in den Konflikt involviert ist, kann auch eine unabhängige Partei hinzugezogen werden

Mediation ist ein strukturierter, interaktiver Prozess, bei dem ein Vermittler die Streitparteien bei der Lösung von Konflikten durch unterstützt. Alle Beteiligten werden ermutigt, sich *aktiv an dem Prozess zu beteiligen*.

Der Prozess läuft wie folgt ab:

- → einleitende Bemerkungen durch den Mediator
- → Beschreibung des Problems durch die Parteien
- → Erfragung von Zusatzinformationen durch den Mediator
- → Identifizierung der Probleme und gemeinsamer Ziele
- → Verhandlungen und Generieren von Optionen
- → Erzielen einer Einigung.

SCHRITT 3

In unlösbaren Konfliktsituationen entscheidet der Vorstand über endgültige Maßnahmen. Hierbei sollte bedacht werden, dass die Hauptaufgabe des Vorstands die Unterstützung des Managers ist.

Dieser Schritt stellt die letzte Instanz dar, und daher sollte, mit aller Möglichkeit, versucht werden, Probleme Kindergarten-intern zu lösen.