Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Developing Assessment

Culture in Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

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The latest National Core Curriculum for Basic Education was published in 2014, and was gradually taken into use from August, 2016 onwards. After not more than four years later, The Finnish National Board of Education published a reformed chapter on assessment. A local reform process was carried out and schools were to compose their own reformed curriculum chapters on assessment. The study was carried out in Kannelmäki Comprehensive School in Helsinki. It is the biggest comprehensive school in Helsinki with around 1,100 pupils in grades 1-9 and around 120 members of staff, located in four school buildings. The school in its current form is a result of two school mergers that have partly facilitated the need for developing a more cohesive assessment culture. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify some of the development objects for the future.

The data for this study was collected in a workshop for the staff. It was compulsory for the staff to participate in the workshop, which was assisted by Helvi, a virtual platform developed by the city office of Helsinki. With the assistance of Helvi, the workshop participants discussed the topic assessment in smaller groups. Each group compiled a team table that was used to find out teachers' perceptions of the most important development objects of assessment culture. Qualitative content analysis was used as the method to analyze the data.

The entries in the data were coded, divided into sub-categories, and further into main categories: The Leadership Level, The Teacher Community Level, The Individual Teacher Level and Modifying or Adding Resources. The first three were formed according to the location of where decisions about assessment culture are made. The fourth included technical and human resources, and did not fit the other categories.

The results showed that it is important that the school leadership provide the staff enough time to discuss assessment. This is supported also by the literature in the field. Staff members highlighted the importance of mutual agreements about the criteria for assessment, too.

As a result of this study, a good basis for further developing of assessment culture was created, as all the levels the organization were proved important.

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Key words: assessment, assessment culture, basic education

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1 INTRODUCTION

The current National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (POPS2014) in Finland was gradually introduced from August 2016 onwards. The principles for student assessment included fair and ethical assessment (POPS2014, 49). However, in just four years the curriculum chapter on assessment was rewritten and came into affect in August 2018. The purpose of the reform is to increase pupils' equality through clearly communicated principles, systematic assessment practices, student participation and cooperation with guardians. The reform was a result of an evaluation process on the implementation of the latest core curriculum. The process started in 2018 and included a vast amount of answers from pupils, teachers and guardians. All groups hoped for clearer principles for assessment. In addition, 70 local curricula were examined, the result being that there exist great differences between additions made to the core curriculum and manifold practices on school level. This in turn has not supported the equality of pupils. (Vitikka n.d..)

As a result of the reform process, the whole nation is now to follow the same principles, independent of the municipality where the pupil attends basic education. In addition to general principles, further guidelines were provided. These include the beginning of mandatory numeric assessment from grade four onwards, documentation of formative assessment, and adding national criteria for the formulation of final grades 5, 7 and 9, in addition to the existing criteria for grade 8. (Arviointi Peruskouluissa Yhdenmukaistuu 2020, 4.)

In 2019, Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) published a report of assessment practices in basic and upper secondary education. As a result, the authors made suggestions on how to enhance student assessment in schools. They included three topics: assessment practices, assessment literacy and assessment culture. Making their recommendations based on the evaluation results, they followed the following criteria: enhancing the learning process, equality and fairness of assessment and the co-operative nature of assessment development.

(Atjonen, Laivamaa, Levonen, Orell, Saari, Sulonen, Tamm, Kamppi, Rumpu, Hietala & Immonen 2019, 240-241.)

In their suggestion for assessment practices, the authors stated that students should be assessed in a variety of ways, formative assessment should be further developed, and that students should be more involved in planning assessment. Teachers and principals should together enhance students' and guardians' understanding of assessment as well as work together on clear goals and criteria for learning. Also emphasis should be placed on formulating common principles for assessing student behavior and working skills. The authors of the report discussed the possibility for student to improve their grades. (Atjonen et al. 2019, 241.)

What comes to assessment literacy, suggestions included that teachers should receive more opportunities for further training in this area, and also that teachers should, in turn, enhance students' self- and peer-assessment skills. (Atjonen et al. 2019-241.)

Thirdly, the authors made suggestions about assessment culture. They emphasized that it is the education provider's (that is, the municipality) to ensure that the local curriculum includes the appropriate entries for the teachers to comprehend them and to achieve fairness and equality in their assessment work. They also highlighted the importance of cooperation on school level, including constant discussion on assessment between school leadership and teachers, as well as with students and guardians. It is also important that the education providers offer school leaders opportunities to improve their pedagogical leadership in order to facilitate cooperation. The final suggestion was made about the importance of school leadership's positive attitude towards teachers' expertize and encouragement for trying new methods of assessment. (Atjonen et al. 2019, 242-243.)

The launch for this thesis can be found above. The national reform process included the composition of a new chapter on assessment on the school level as well. In this process, the case organization Kannelmäki Comprehensive School has followed the timeline set by the Education Department of the City of Helsinki.

In two workshops, school representatives were provided with the reform framework, on the basis of which the curriculum text for the case organization was formulated. The data for this study was collected in another workshop, which was obligatory for the entire teaching staff. The reform process on national, local and school levels proved that there is need on further development work in the case organization. The author's personal interest for the topic arose in 2017, in a three-day workshop, including discussions and reflections with a colleague, as well as other teachers participating in the same workshop. Prior to this, the author, nor the colleague, had not received any form of further training for assessment since entering working life.

The author's role in this work is twofold. In addition to being the author, she has worked in the case organization for more than fifteen years as a subject teacher. During these years, she has participated in the school management team consisting of the principals, and teacher colleagues.

1.1 Purpose for Thesis and Research Question

In the following chapter, the case organization will be presented in more detail. The purpose for this study is to underline the importance of a solid assessment culture. This thesis can be considered as an introduction, or a basis for the work that will be done in the future in relation to the topic of developing assessment culture. In addition to the national reform process and the implications it has on the school level, there are other reasons for which the topic is important. The school is constantly growing. Each year, there are more pupils as well as staff members. In the past, there have been two mergers of schools which have concentrated more on the administrative and organizational structures, leaving cultural changes less attended. This has led to a situation where shared assessment principles and practices are needed, as stated in the curriculum text (Oppilaan oppimisen ja osaamisen arviointi perusopetuksessa 2020, 3).

From the purpose of this study, arose the research question:

What are the main objects for developing assessment culture?

To answer this question, a case study was done in Kannelmäki Comprehensive School in Helsinki. Document analysis was used as a method to gain information on the focus points for the development work to be done in the future. The thesis process lasted from January to May, 2021.

1.2 Case Kannelmäki Comprehensive School, Helsinki

In its city strategy for the four-year period of 2017-2021, the city of Helsinki aspires of becoming the world's most impactful place for learning. The strategy includes developing digital learning environments as well as an innovative place for life-long learning. Early childhood education and educational services for immigrants are in the focus, too. (Helsinki City Strategy n.d.)

PICTURE 1. The World's Impactful Place for Learning

There were 54,000 pupils studying in comprehensive schools in Helsinki in 2019. Out of a total of 128 establishments, 101 are city-run (Helsinki Facts and Figures 2020, 14). The largest of them is Kannelmäki Comprehensive School. It was founded in 2006, as Kannelmäki Primary School and South-Kaarela Lower Secondary School were joined together. Another merger of schools took place in

2016, as Pelimanni Primary School was merged with the existing Kannelmäki Comprehensive School. The school is situated in four school buildings around Kaarela, which is a suburb in the north-west Helsinki with approximately 27,000 inhabitants.

There are around 1,100 pupils studying in grades 1-9. The classes are divided into four school buildings according mainly to their age. One building is for grades 1-2, another for 1-3, the third for 1-4, and the fourth building is for grades 5-9. In grades 1-6, the pupils are mainly taught by class teachers, and in grades 7-9 solely by subject teachers. The school follows the national curriculum and offers three additional programs. From August 2021 onwards, all first-graders will start their studies in an English-enriched program which means that during the 21-hour week10-25 per cent of the time the language of instruction is English. Another program offers drama in grades 7-9. To this program, there is a selection process. In grades 8-9, some pupils are elected to participate in a program called Teppo. Pupils attending this program may have difficulties in managing their schoolwork and are offered working-life practice periods.

There are around 120 members of staff, including teachers of various areas and, for example teaching assistants. The school is one of the five large comprehensive schools in Helsinki that have a similar model of leadership, a head principal and two vice-principals. The head principal is in charge of the finances, network operations, premises and public relations. The vice principals have their own specific responsibilities, such as assessment or special education. Both vice principals manage human resources.

All teachers have, in addition to their teaching, three hours of work per week which is directed towards cooperation with the homes, other stakeholders and partners, and among staff. Half of this time is set in the weekly timetable of each teacher. During this scheduled time, teachers meet in different compilations. First, there are meetings where the subject matter concerns all. These include, for example, the first days of the school year when the working guidelines (for example, city strategies, new policies and programs) are introduced. Second, the teachers work in *pedagogical teams*. This meeting is organized for teachers who teach the same subject or grade level, to work on the current issues closely related to their

every-day work. At times, these groups are also used when, for example, there is a need for a smaller group discussion on a common matter, which is not necessarily possible when there are over hundred people attending the same meeting. The third is the *theme teams*. These teams work on their own themes: *assessment and multidisciplinary learning modules*, *culture and communication*, *participation* (for example, student union), *security and environments.* The themes make their own agendas for the school year, on which they work fairly freely. Fourthly, teachers may work in flexible teams to complete some work assigned to them, for example, some program, festivals or theme days. Figure 1 illustrates the leadership model and the organization of the set weekly collaborative working time.
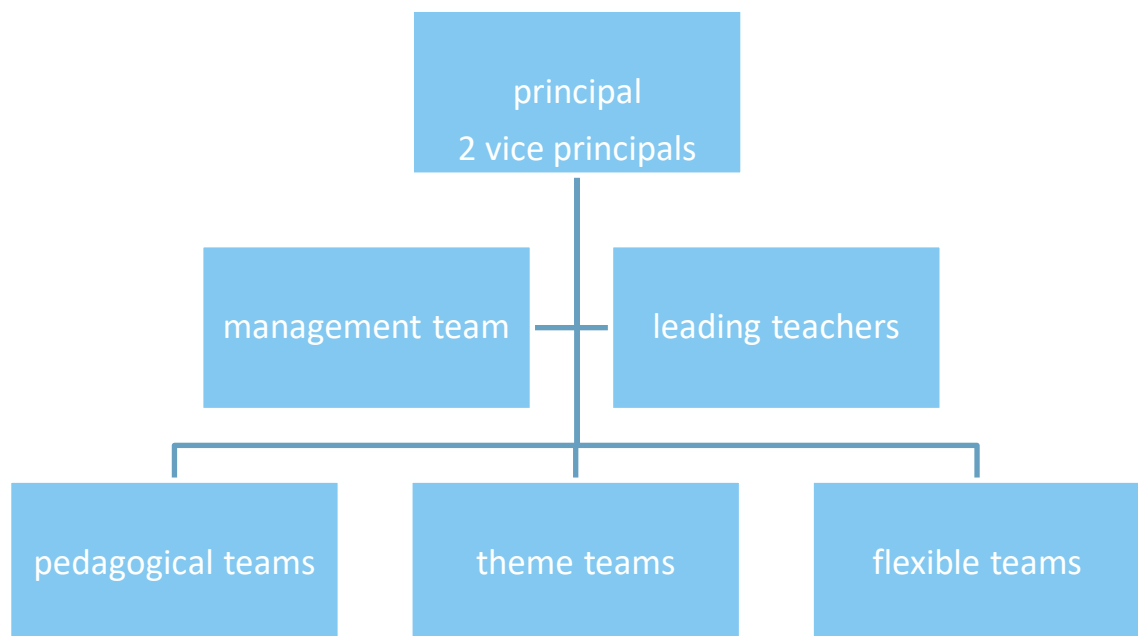

FIGURE 1. The leadership model and the organization of collaborative working time.

2 ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT CULTURE

Teachers sometimes see assessment as an exhausting task to accomplish (Vitikka n.d.) Some statements may even see teaching and assessing as two exclusive phenomena, independent from each other (Shepard 2000, 5.) Sometimes, teachers would rather concentrate on learning and teaching instead of assessing. However, the two should not be considered separate functions but understood as two fundamental aspects of a teacher's work, inseparable (Ouakrim-Soivio 2015, 7, 14) and can be used as a part of classroom-work to improve learning (Shepard 2000, 4). Assessment is in fact the most important tool the teacher has to influence the learners' learning and studying. Through assessment, the teacher also constantly communicates with the pupils during the study period, guiding and helping them in their learning process (Luostarinen 2019, 15).

In this chapter, the concept of assessment, along with its function in education are discussed. The discussion then moves to brief accounts on the history of assessment in Finnish basic education, and, also on the factors that regulate it. Next, an explanation of the framework offered by the National Core Curriculum is offered.

2.1 Assessment and its purposes

The word *assessment* is sometimes used meaning the same as the word *evaluation*. In English, the latter often refers to evaluation on the systemic level, for example, the education system, or curriculum implementation process. The former is used when a reference is made to the learner and their performance (Atjonen 2007, 20.) A similar distinction exists in Finnish: 'arvostelu' for 'evaluation' and 'arviointi' for 'assessment'. In Finnish, both words refer to giving value (in Finnish: 'arvo') to something. The two words in both languages encompass the two different purposes of the activity. They could also be placed on a timeline where 'arvostelu'('evaluation') is placed in the 1980s-1990s when the object was the pupil and their performance. At the other end of the line, from 1990s onwards,

the focus shifted towards the learning process, for which more appropriate term is 'arviointi' ('assessment'). (Ouakrim-Soivio 2015, 10-11.)

Assessment has evolved according to the function and the approach prevalent at certain points in time. In the beginning of the 20th century, according to the social efficiency movement, science was to solve all challenges of modern societies. The scientific approach led to testing with which certain individuals were discarded, since they were not considered to obtain the capacity to learn. The discarded were then offered a differentiated curriculum content 'according to their capabilities' (Shepard 2000, 4-5.) The term 'evaluate' would probably describe the beginnings the best. Later, the approach has evolved to recognize the nature of learning as an active process, taking place in a social context, 'assessment' being more adequate term. The discarding function of assessment has been abolished from the classroom instruction, which should be a support system encompassing the idea that everybody can develop their cognitive abilities, and learn. However, Shepard (2000, 4) claims that the shift in the understanding of the function of assessment and the nature of learning as a process does not mean that the same has taken place when it comes to assessment. Assessment practices align more with the old paradigm. (Shepard 2000, 4, 6-7.) Following the old paradigm and grading of the final product, bypasses the learner as an active and important, capable of assessing their own actions (Jakku-Sihvonen & Heinonen, 2001, 79.)

In basic education, it is the central goal of assessment to give feedback to the learner on their achievement, whether the goals have been achieved or not. (Ouakrim-Sovio 2015, 14-15). In the following paragraphs, the two functions included in the National Core Curriculum, the summative and the formative, are presented.

Summative assessment has been referred to as the assessment *of* learning. This form of assessment provides the pupil, the guardian and the teacher information on how well the pupil has achieved the goals at a given time. The curriculum states that the pupil must be assessed summatively at least once a year. This means that in grades one to eight, the pupil receives a report where the assessment is given either numerically or verbally. However, the teachers have to make

sure that they document all demonstrations of the pupils' knowledge and skills that have an effect on their grade. According to Ouakrim-Sovio (2015, 15) summative assessment serves an important social function, as it states the current level of a student's knowledge and skills, whether or not they have reached an adequate level in order to proceed in their studies or participate in working life.

The other form of assessment is formative assessment, the assessment *for* learning. Its meaning is to provide the pupil guidance towards the goals, as well as information on their strengths and weaknesses. Formative assessment can take place between the pupil and the teacher, but also between the pupil and their peers, or the pupil can perform self-assessment. Peer and self-assessment should both be a part of all subjects. The teacher is not obliged make any documents about formative assessment. (Oppilaan oppimisen ja osaamisen…2020, 2.)

In either case, whether the assessment is formative or summative, the teachers should clearly communicate to the pupils as well as their guardians, what the goals for learning are and the principles according to which the pupils will be assessed, and how well the pupil is progressing with their studies. (Oppilaan oppimisen ja osaamisen… 2020, 2-3.)

2.2 Assessment in Finnish Basic Education

2.2.1 History of Assessment

Since the comprehensive school reform in 1968, there has been three main orientations in assessing students in Finnish basic education. First of these was the era of relative assessment. During this period, standardized testing was used in reading, mathematics and foreign languages to find out the level of a group of students in compared with other groups nationwide. Standardized testing was also considered as a tool for teachers to receive information on their students' progress and to develop their work. (Oukrim-Sovio 2015, 21.) This approach was based on comparing students, and groups of students with each other. Relative

assessment was abolished in basic education in 1985, but in the matriculation examination, where the population is large, it is still used. (Oukrim-Sovio 2015, 17.)

Teachers in Finland have always enjoyed freedom in their pedagogy, including assessment. Even during the period of relative assessment, teachers were encouraged to create their own tests including multiple types of tasks to ensure the validity of the test. They were allowed to emphasize the areas in the test that had been emphasized during instruction as well. (Ouakrim-Sovio 2015, 21.)

The next approach was a hybrid formed by ideas from the absolute, the relative and the individual assessment models. The students were not to be assessed in relation to others in any subject. The grades were to imply the student's success with respect to the learning goals. (Ouakrim-Soivio 2015, 23.)

As in the Core Curriculum of Basic Education from 1994, the recommendations about assessment were loose, local solutions and decisions formed the basis for school-level assessment and a lot of interpretations were made. The situation led to the reformation of student assessment in 1999, and the forming of national criteria for the numerical final grade eight. The aim was to support the teachers as well as increase the comparability of grades and the equality among students when they pursue further studies. The criteria became binding in the 2004 core curriculum. (Ouakrim-Sovio 2015, 23-26.)

2.2.2 The Regulators of Assessment in Basic Education

Though Finnish teachers can apply various pedagogical methods both in instruction and assessment, there naturally are regulations that bind all teachers in basic education. The effect of these regulations from the teachers' point of view could be illustrated with the following figure. (Modified from Ouakrim-Sovio 2015, 28.)

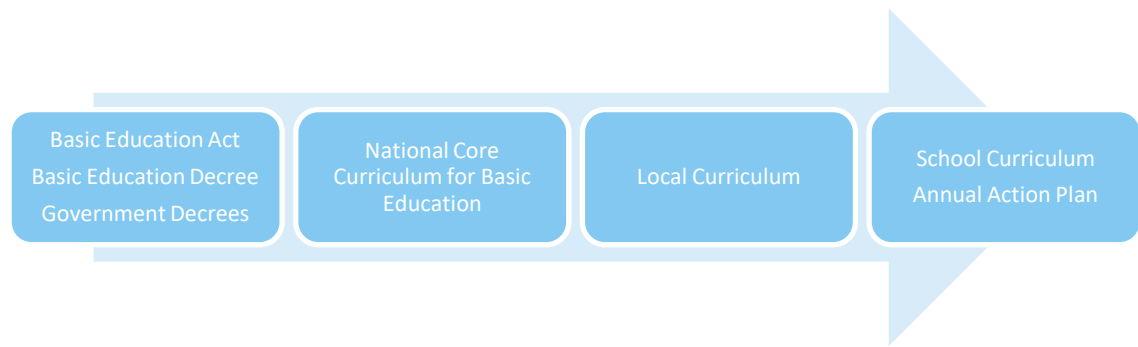| Basic Education Act Basic Education Decree Government Decrees | National Core Curriculum for Basic Education | Local Curriculum | School Curriculum Annual Action Plan |

FIGURE 2: The regulators of Assessment in Basic Education

The overall principles for all assessment are steered by the Basic Education Act, the Basic Education Decree and the Government Decree. The Finnish National Board of Education in turn issues the National Core Curriculum whose purpose is to ensure a nation-wide implementation of comprehensive basic education. The municipalities, who are the main basic education providers in Finland, have to prepare their own curricula according to the local perspective. The education provider's obligation is to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the local curricula, and follow all changes that are made in the national core curriculum, such as the latest ones about assessment. (POPS2014 9, 11.) In the latest curriculum process of assessment reform in Helsinki, the individual schools were required to make their own entries on, for example, the schedule for meetings with the guardians. Annually, the schools also have to prepare an action plan in which they elaborate on how the curriculum is applied that year. In addition to these, schools may add further plans on specific areas such as assessment according to their own needs.

2.2.3 Assessment of Learning, Knowledge and Skills in the National Core Curriculum (2020)

The norms and regulations in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) lay the foundation for schoolwork. Multiple curriculum reforms have led to the multiplicity of overlapping entries, often resulting in varying interpretations. In addition, teachers do their assessment work on the basis of their own experiences, in some cases with insufficient knowledge about assessment and its principles. This should not be the case, as all pupils graduating basic education should have equal possibilities for further education. (Ouakrim-Soivio 2015, 6-7.)

The current National Core Curriculum for Basic Education had not been applied for longer than four years, before another layer, the reformed chapter on student assessment was added in 2020. The reform launched also a reform process on the local and school level, as the municipalities and schools were obliged to make their own additions to the document according to the instructions from the National Agency for Education. The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the guidelines included in the newly added chapter in the National Core Curriculum.

In Finnish basic education, assessment serves two purposes in relation to the pupil. Together they fulfill the purpose of encouraging as well as giving realistic information. First, it is supposed to guide and support the pupil to reach the objectives for learning, as well as develop the pupils' capabilities in assessing themselves and their peers. Second, it defines the level of the pupils' skills and knowledge at a certain point in time in relation to the objectives set for learning.

To the teacher, assessment provides with valuable information on the pupils' needs, and thus is a tool of self-assessment. Assessment is essential for the teacher for being able to set new goals for learning and teaching. It also helps develop teaching and guide learning. (Ouakrim-Sovio 2015, 15; Oppilaan oppimise ja osaamisen…2020, 2.)

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education lists three assessment objects. First, progress in learning and achievement level. Second, working skills and third, behavior. The first two are parts of assessment of learning and skills, where the pupil is assessed in proportion to the earlier achievements and the objectives set in the curriculum. The pupil should be able to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a versatile way. Working skills are assessed as a part of all subjects, and the skills are developed when the pupils work independently, or with others, plan their work, use different methods to support their learning, and assess themselves. The last object is behavior. It is assessed separately according to the goals set in the school curriculum. Sometimes, in everyday school life, all of these can get mixed, and the learner may be left with uncertainty what was

actually assessed (Luostarinen, 2019, 49; Oppilaan oppimisen ja osaamisen…2020, 6.)

The teachers in all schools following the National Core Curriculum, should follow six principles when assessing pupils. These principles are introduced in the following table. (Oppilaan oppimisen ja osaamisen…2020, 2-7.)

TABLE 1. Principles of assessment according to the national curriculum (Oppilaan oppimisen ja osaamisen…2020)

Assessment…	
is equal	- equal treatment - common goals and criteria - all pupils have the right to know
requires transparency, cooperation and participation	- communication - recognizes strengths and weaknesses - guardians awareness
is systematic and coherent	- assessment is an entity - common principles - a pupil's performance is not compared with the others' - cooperation between teachers
is versatile	- teachers select appropriate methods - different ways of learning
is based on the goals and criteria set in the curriculum	personal study programs
is in alignment with the pupils' age and capabilities	- special needs - Finnish as a 2nd language pupils

2.3 Assessment Culture

Assessment culture is more than just a collection of assessment methods. Naturally, they are a part of assessment culture, as culture could be described as "something fuzzy, something that we cannot really grasp". It steers the way people behave inside the culture. (Luukka 2019, 22.) Culture exists everywhere in the organization (Schein 2006, 2). Assessment culture is a part of the operational culture of a school, whose function is to support all activities aimed at the versatile, personal growth of the pupils (POPS2014, 27). The quality of education is defined by the degree in which it does so (Atjonen 2005, 143). It could thus be stated that a good assessment culture should support that growth. The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014) states that:

"The clearest manifestations of school culture are found in the community's practices. In basic education, all practices are geared to supporting the goals set for the educational work." (POPS 2014, 27).

These goals include educating pupils to become culturally sensitive, active and responsible citizens, who possess adequate knowledge and skills and respect the democratic values of Finnish society, such as equity and equality. (POPS2014, 20.)

A further statement is then made about the importance of school culture: " The school culture plays a key role in implementing comprehensive education." It further notes it is an entity that has developed through history, and it can be further developed and changed. This entity consists of various elements such as pedagogy, leadership, interpretations of norms and goals, as well as everyday practices. School culture can be implicit or explicit and it has an effect on the quality of the students' experiences. Everyday practices are the clearest manifestations of underlying values, attitudes and conceptions. In the school environment all practices should always support the educational goals set for basic education and follow the guiding principles, such as equality, diversity, safety and interaction. In the school context, it is important to recognize and change those features of culture that are not according to the principles and can be changed. (POPS 2014, 27.)

The above definition and manifestations of school culture follow the theory for organizational culture by Edgar Schein, who is well-renowned researcher in the field. His model has been adopted by many who research organizational culture. The main statement that Schein makes about culture of an organization is that it exists everywhere in the organization, which makes it also difficult to define. Culture belongs to a group, here organization, and it grows and develops through time as the members of the organization learn the practices, values and norms of the organization. (Schein, 2016, 5.) Luukka (2019) further describes that culture is nothing static, but rather ever-changing, through the communication of individuals, history, situations and chance. It always depends on the context and time. (Luukka 2019, 91, 94.)

Schein has developed a model of organizational culture. The model has been illustrated in various ways. In figure 3 the three levels of culture, an attempt is made to show the intertwining and overlapping of the layers, and to emphasize the overall-ness of the layers inside a culture. It depicts also both the dynamic and the stable nature of culture, as the three parts form and develop through time. According to Schein, culture consists of artifacts, espoused values and beliefs, and underlying basic assumptions. The three parts vary in the degree of how observable they are. (Schein & Schein 2017, 2, 18.)
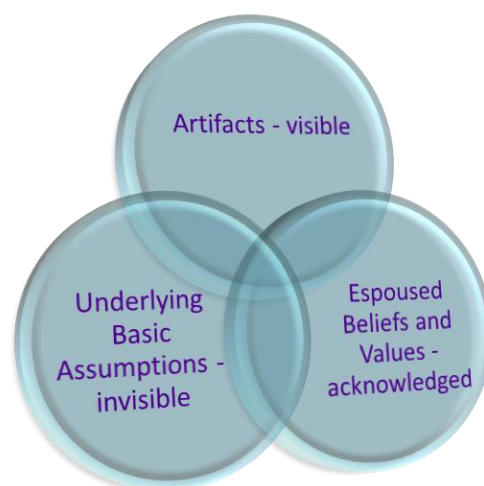

FIGURE 3.The structure of culture according to Schein & Schein (2017)

The visible and tangible manifestations of culture are artifacts. Artefacts are man-made. They are buildings, brochures, manners, routines and processes. The climate of the work place is also considered an artifact. Members of the group cannot necessarily explain, from where the artifacts derive from and what is their meaning for the organization, although it can become clear after spending enough time in the organization. Schein warns not to make any suggestions about the culture of the organization merely just having a look at the artifacts as the suggestions are powerfully influenced by the suggestion-maker's own experiences and background. The second layer consists of espoused beliefs and values. An example of this could be a mission statement, or the language used in a given situation. These can easily remain only superficial, if a value such as student-centeredness is not realized in actions. Espoused beliefs and values may become basic assumptions, if in a time of trouble, a course of action proves to be a success, and is repeated many times. The underlying basic assumptions form the third, invisible, manifestation of culture, which Schein calls the DNA of the organization. (Schein, 2016, 17, 20-21.)

The importance of assessment culture to the learners cannot be denied. Used as an effective pedagogical tool, assessment has an effect on the learners' behavior and consequently, on learning and its quality. Following the idea of Schein's model of organizational culture, also assessment culture encompasses artifacts, beliefs, assumptions and values, whether they are recognized or not. Individual teachers have acquired them during their own school and study years, working in different organizations with different people and materials. (Nieminen, 2019, 110-111.)

A teacher cannot, despite the autonomy, define assessment culture according to their own wishes or opinions. Factors such as the law and the curriculum have to be taken into account when teachers plan their instruction and assessment procedures. (Nieminen 2019, 111.) Also, there should exist a consensus among staff about, for example, what is everyone's role regarding assessment and what practices exist in relation to it. This requires collaboration and discussion among the principals and the staff of how well the assessment practices serve both the assessed and the assessor. (Ouakrim-Soivio 2015, 91.)

As stated before, assessment culture is not just about the set of methods, it is also about values and beliefs that in the classroom-setting are realized in practices chosen by the teacher. The National Core Curriculum (2014) and the reformed chapter on Assessment of Learning, Skills and Knowledge (2020), as well as literature on the topic provide several characteristics for good assessment culture.

Values connected with good assessment culture include ethicalness, objectivity and fairness. From the learners' point of view good assessment culture is learner-centered, encouraging, promotes learning, motivating, individual, relevant, anticipatory, communicative, diverse, instructive and improving. It is based on humanistic and positive idea that everyone is able to learn, if they are supported and motivated. It should be interactive and be coherent with the conception of learning as well as the underlying values. As culture in general, also assessment culture is not carved in stone and should evolve alongside with the context. In order for assessment to be affective, there should also exist an atmosphere of trust. Attention should always be paid to the learners' age, the context, as well as the process and the products. (Jakku-Sihvonen 2001; Atjonen 2005; POPS2014, Ouakrim-Soivio 2015; Oppilaan osaamisen ja oppimisen…2020; Ouakrim-Soivio, 2015.)

2.4   Developing Assessment Culture

The objective of this study is to find out important objects for developing assessment culture in Kannelmäki Comprehensive School in Helsinki. Developing assessment culture in this case serves two main purposes. Firstly, it aims at enhancing equality and fairness of assessment that is required by the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education. Secondly, it aims at clarifying and facilitating teachers' assessment work in the future. What it does not aim at is making a statement whether the assessment culture is good or bad. Also, the author would like to replace the word 'change' for 'development', since there was no data collected to make statements about the need for change. The author uses the verb 'develop' in a neutral sense, not making any judgements.

Assessment culture, as any form of organizational culture, should be led, otherwise it will 'just happen' (Luukka 2019, 34). The value base should be clear and structures should be built to support practices, so that the strategy can be realized (Luukka 2019, 39). As there are no specific measures defined in the National Core Curriculum, and as culture is always context-based, it is up to the individual school to build the supporting structures for good assessment culture according to the specific needs, and teachers themselves are allowed to choose the appropriate methods of assessment (Nieminen 2019, 112, 124).

Although teachers enjoy high amount of autonomy in their work, it is important to do everything possible to assure that the methods used in the classroom align with the conception of learning and the goal of basic education. If they do not do so, the situation is problematic, and the assessment culture does not support learning as it should do. (Nieminen, 2019, 115.)

Organizational culture, in this case assessment culture as a part of school culture, is everybody's business. Every decision that is made in the classroom is shaping assessment culture. Leadership's role is to provide structures to help the operational practices align with the strategy and values. (Luukka, 2019, 50.) Nieminen (2019) lists three types of assessment culture. They are presented in the following table. As always, cultures can have features of several types, but it is important to reflect which is the dominant one. (Nieminen, 2019, 123-124.)

TABLE 2. Three types of assessment culture (Nieminen 2019, 123-124.)

Determining factor	Characteristics	Learner's p.o.v.
Fear	• reduces academic freedom • innovation not allowed • rejection from colleagues • no open discussion about methods • teachers not included in decision making	tests
Obedience	• following rules and guidelines important • can reduce academic freedom	• good practices, if staff included in decision making
Promotes learning	• data used for development • room for critical thinking	• data used for supporting learners • versatile methods • learner-centered

It could be stated that the first type of assessment culture is not something to reach for, as it surely does not create any support for achieving the goals of versatile personal development of the learner. It does not take into consideration the teacher's ability of critically choosing the best methods in their subject to enable the learners achieve the objectives for learning either.

School leaders can approach the matter in many ways. They can, for example, utilize various change management plans. Whichever change model or plan the leaders choose to use, when developing culture, in this case assessment culture, one important aspect is emphasized by Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1998). They have created four principles for successful change in organizations and emphasize the importance of individuals in the organization. First, people have to be included as they support only what they create themselves. Participation induces more commitment. People have the need to be creative and come up with their own ideas of what they consider meaningful and useful. Second, people cannot be directed, but rather invited to think and work together. Third, it is important to

bring people together, in order for them to share ideas and understanding. Differences in thinking and different sources of expertize are useful for the function of the organization. Lastly, the organization may sometimes lose focus. This is when it should seek for information from the clients. In the case of basic education, this means the learners. Along these principles, Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers claim that necessary standards and measures will arise. They in turn, when taken seriously, will guide and create togetherness. (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998.)

Wheatley and Kellner-Roger's idea is useful when developing assessment culture since it pays high respect to the expertize of teachers, emphasizing collaboration among staff members. Nieminen (2019) emphasizes the collaboration of staff members in compiling different features of assessment culture. Further, he considers important that teachers are supported in their work. (Nieminen, 2019, 123, 125.)

3 METHODOLOGY

(Ojasalo, Moilanen, Ritalahti, 2014, 51-52) consider choosing the approach as the first step of development work. Even though the approach guides the author in choosing the method to some degree, it does not totally district the selection of methods. Thus, almost all methods can be applied in almost any kind of development work. Ojasalo et al. offer the author great freedom in selecting the methods that best suit the process as long as the author justifies the choices made.

The aim was to concentrate on one particular feature of organizational culture, namely assessment culture, and how it can be developed. As this study was conducted in an organization of professional interest to the author, and its purpose is also to make proposals for development work in the future for this particular organization, this study can be seen as a qualitative case study. The author hoped to gain insight for further development work in the case organization. The author wanted to use methods that would intertwine with the work that was already in process in the organization and would be the least time-consuming and evasive for the employees of the case organization. For these reasons, document analysis was the most appropriate method. The documents analyzed included the team tables produced in the Helvi workshop.

In the following chapter, first qualitative research will be shortly discussed, after which the method of document analysis as a form of content analysis will be explained in more detail.

3.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative research is mostly seen dichotomous to quantitative research. Through quantitative research, generalizations can be made about the research topic by asking specific questions from a larger group of people. But when there is no specific theory or information about a phenomenon, qualitative approach is more appropriate. With qualitative research, no generalizations can be made.

The results are applicable only for the research objects. The main aim of qualitative research is to describe, explain and understand the phenomenon. This is done with words, not with numbers as in quantitative research. There are no strict rules for the order of the data analysis process in qualitative research. The process could rather be seen as a living organism that receives its shape along the cyclic process where the researcher looks at the data over and over again, only during the process finding the answer to the question of sufficient amount of data. The cyclic nature allows the researcher look deeper into processes and meanings since there are no strict rules for interpretations. (Kananen 2014, 16-19.)

Although the two approaches are many times explained as if they were in opposition to each other, they should not be seen different in value. Both can occupy an important position within a research process. Either of them could be used to produce preliminary information on the basis of which the research can be further carried out by using the other approach. (Kananen, 2014, 19.)

The main method used in this work was document analysis that is one form of content analysis. Ojasalo et al. (2014, 136) name document analysis as one of the typical research methods in qualitative research where a phenomenon is researched through various methods to gain an understanding of a phenomenon.

In document analysis, either a printed or an electronic document is analyzed in a systematic way. The purpose of the method is to gain a fuller understanding of a phenomenon by organizing and interpreting information contained by, for example, advertisements, agendas or registers. Seminar programs and various forms can be used as data for document analysis, too. Themes and examples from the data help in formulating a larger view of the research subject such as an organization. (Bowen, 2009.)

This method was chosen as it was the least time- and effort-consuming. First, the author took into consideration her own tight schedule. Second, the method also benefitted the staff members, as working-time of the teachers used for school development and other non-teaching-related tasks is only three hours a week, it seemed sensible to work in this way. Thirdly, it also seemed wise to make use of the material that was to be produced in a workshop assigned to the staff by the

education department. The cost-effective and unobtrusive nature of document analysis are advantages of the method. A researcher can also benefit from other features of document analysis, such as stability and exactness. (Bowen, 2009.)

Document analysis can be carried out in two different ways. By using content analysis the content can be verbally described, aiming at detecting and understanding meanings in the document. By content specification, the content is analyzed in a numeric manner. (Ojasalo et al. 2014, 137.) Content analysis entails an iterative structure where the researcher examines the data several times, identifying common nominators and differences. Through this examination of content analysis, the researcher should be able to conceptualize the findings in a clear manner, still preserving the information. (Tuomi ja Sarajärvi, 2018, s. 117).

According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018), there are three types of content analysis. The analysis can be either data- or theory-oriented, or theory-directed. In this study, the starting point was the first approach since there is no existing framework theory according to which the data could be analyzed. In data-based analysis, the objective is to find common features in a number of answers in order to find relevant information for future decision making, for example. Prior to the analysis procedure, the data should be prepared, for example, by correcting the spelling, and building a filing system. (Ojasalo et al. 2014, 139.) Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 107) describe the data-based analysis as being inductive and the theory-based deductive.

Bowen (2009) lists five purposes that documents can serve in a research project. First, documents can establish a context for the research. Second, documents can steer the way for further study. Thirdly, they can provide additional information. The fourth purpose for documents in research is to provide tracks for previous change and progress. Last, documents can verify findings surfaced in other data (Bowen, 2009). In this study, documents provide the context for the development of assessment culture.

3.2   Data Collection

In this study, qualitative content analysis was applied to 11 *team tables*, which are minutes submitted in a workshop facilitated by a robot, Helvi. In the workshop, the teachers discussed the theme assessment. In their tables 11 groups wrote down the main points of their discussion on the given questions.

Helvi (Helsinki Virtual) is a virtual instructor which was created in the Helsinki City Office for the city personnel. It was developed in the city organization to serve as a helpful tool for managers, teams and individuals in organizing their thoughts, coming up with ideas and discussing new policies (Info. Mikä on Helvi? n.d.). Originally, it was developed to meet the needs of people who needed substitutive work in a situation when they cannot physically come to work, but are still able to work or engage in professional development. Such situations may arise, for example, due to a broken leg or a covid-quarantine. Subsequently, more themes have been covered with Helvi, either in teams or independently. People have, for example, developed their own practices of distance work. The main idea of the Helvi discussions is to form a common understanding of a given theme. By developing Helvi for various themes, it has become possible for working communities to form a shared understanding for themselves. Helsinki city employs around 48 000 people, so it was considered useless to distribute managers with generic slideshows. Rather, it was thought to be more useful that each community or branch could form their own understanding of a given theme. In addition, Helvi also offers the possibility to discuss even problematic subjects in a constructive and positive way, always aiming at concrete steps that can be taken in the workplace to improve the situation. (Virtuaalinen keskustelunohjaaja Helvi auttaa käsittelemään vaikeita asioita. 2020.)

The Helvi workshop for group discussion always consists of the same parts. First, the team agrees on the principles for good conversation. Second, Helvi explains the reason for the discussion, why the theme is discussed. Third, the group is presented by general information on the theme, and fourth, how this theme presents itself to an individual employee. The fifth step for the group is to discuss and create a short list of things that should be improved, or that concern them

the most, in their context relating the theme. Next, the group comes up with concrete ideas of what they could do in the work place, so the situation would improve. After the discussion, the group writes down their thoughts after which the Helvi robot creates a team table with the results of the discussion. The team table works as a guideline for the future. (Virtuaalinen työnohjaaja Helvi- podcast.)

The Helvi workshop *Assessment culture in basic education* was held in February, 2021. As a part of the assessment reform process in basic education in Helsinki, the education department KASKO requires teaching staff to participate in this workshop. In addition to the workshop on assessment culture, the KASKO Helvi includes workshops for upper secondary schools in the following themes: well-being of upper secondary organizations, student counselling in upper secondary schools and assessment in upper secondary education.

In the Helvi workshop carried out in the case organization, Kannelmäki Comprehensive School, the participating teaching staff was divided into small groups of 4-7 people. The groups were formed based on the grade level of the pupil. Class teachers participated in the group according to the grade level of their own class. Those subject teachers who supervise a group in grade levels 7-9 were appointed a group according to the grade level of the pupils they supervise. Those subject teachers who did not have their own group, participated in a group whose pupils they mostly teach. The same principle was applied to special education teachers. Altogether 11 groups produced a team table at the end of the workshop. A team table could be described as a memo in which the group together wrote down their ideas.

The team tables included the following assignments:

1. List three objectives of development for assessment culture in your school.
2. List concrete steps that you could take together to devlop assessment culture in your school.

The data provided altogether 66 answers that were combined, as the answers to the second question provided only a small number of additional content.

3.3 Data Analysis

Before reaching the results, there are several steps included in the content analysis process. According to Cresswell and Cresswell (2018), the process of qualitative content analysis consists of a sequence of steps, moving from general to specific. First step to take is preparing the data for the analysis after which the researchers who obtain a voluminous amount of data need to winnow it down.

The next step, coding, affects greatly the actual result of the analysis, although the quality of the content must remain as good as the information provided in the original answer. There are as many ways to code as there are people doing qualitative content analysis. Each researcher's coding system is a unique creation. The researcher's own expectations are bound to have an effect on the process by forming a filter through which the coding is done. By coding the researcher forms a grid with which the data can be looked at to find some connecting structures, themes or regularities. The reason for coding is to find the essential information that can provide answers to the research questions. (Kananen, 2014, 103-107.)

Coding entails the process of finding a label for the original expression that condenses the expression still containing the essential information. The coding can be done in three different ways. The researcher can either develop a totally new set of codes, use an already existing set of codes, or mix these two in order to filter the essence of the data to be further analyzed. The codes form a code network. After labelling the original expressions with codes, the codes in the network are further organized in categories with other codes that contain similar information or an element. These sub-categories are named according to the content. The analysis continues through combining the categories, and finally a category is formed that connects all the categories in it. (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018, Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 114-115).

In this study, the data was first examined in a relatively superficial manner, and themed for the purpose of presenting the main themes in a teacher meeting shortly after the data collection workshop. The team tables were obtained from Microsoft Teams platform into a file that can be accessed by the whole teaching

staff. The themes presented in the teacher meeting included *Time*, *Information* and *Collaboration*. However, this procedure was very generalizing, meant to summarize the discussion in order to return to the discussion carried out earlier in the Helvi-workshop. Winnowing down of the data was not needed as there was no excessive amount of content and all of it could be used in the analysis. For the same reason, it was possible to conduct the coding by hand, not using any software in the process.

The actual process of coding in this study followed the repetitious nature of the process. The author had a set of pre-existing preliminary codes Time, Information and Collaboration mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, these were not sufficient for diluting all the information relevant to this study. Thus, the data had to be more accurately coded. The preliminary codes, as well as the final ones both emerged from the data, which is typical for coding done in social sciences (Cresswell, 2018).

The author followed the inductive way of analysis, where all the codes emerge from the data. The total number of codes was 24. The meaning of one entry, a single word 'subjectivity' remained unclear, not providing any further information, and for this reason was left out of the further analysis. The codes were divided into 7 sub-categories, and further into 4 main categories.

4   RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from the Helvi workshop team tables that were written by eleven groups of teachers in Kannelmäki Comprehensive School in Helsinki. In the workshop the teachers were given background information in the form of videos, where the Head of Basic Education explains the background and guidelines for the local assessment reform process. After the introductory part, the teachers had time for discussion and as a result made notes on two points: First, they were asked to list three objectives for developing assessment culture. Second, they were asked to list concrete steps that could be taken together to create more harmonized assessment culture.

The steps of content analysis method led to the formation of three levels of development objectives. These were the leadership level, the teacher community level, and last, the individual teacher level. The levels indicate the instance in which a decision about the procedure is made, and also where the authority and the ownership of the matter lies due to, for example, finances. Naturally, some overlapping may exist, but due to the relatively limited amount of data, it was necessary to make clear decisions about the levels. The author's own judgement of the current situation in the case organization naturally had some effect on the coding and categories made. The judgement is based on relatively long employment relationship as a teacher and experiencing the importance of the matter as well as her own inadequacies in it. This is a well-known feature of any content analysis, where the researcher examines the data with presuppositions and expectations of what possibly could be found in the data (Kananen, 2014, 103).

4.1   The Leadership level – The Meeting Room

This sub-chapter presents the findings that are related to leadership. The author of this paper looks at leadership from the shared leadership perspective. In many coffee-table discussions leadership is considered to be solely in the possession of the head principal. In the case organization, the head principal is responsible

for resources. Otherwise, the two vice-principals, the management team, and ultimately the individual teacher has a part of leadership. For the purposes of this paper, however, leadership consists of the principal, the two vice-principals and the management team. Although the teacher members do not have an official status in the system, they together with the two vice principals have an important role in the school development.

4.1.1 Enabling Collaboration

This category consists of the sub-categories of time, people and participation. Entries in the first category were somehow connected with the concept of time. This category is included in the leadership level because time resources are closely linked with finances which the principal has total control over. In order time to be appointed to the development of assessment culture, plans should be made about the yearly usage of the so called collaborative time. This is done in collaboration by the principals and the teacher members of the management team. Here, it is necessary to shortly discuss the system of how the teachers' working time in basic education is formed. Depending on the work, the teacher has to teach a certain amount of lessons in order to receive full pay. The amount of lessons depends on whether the teacher is a class teacher, a subject teacher or a special education teacher. Subject teachers' teaching obligation varies according to the subject. Teachers can also have been appointed to work a certain amount of lessons that can stay below the amount of the teaching obligation. In addition to classroom work with the pupils, teachers' working time contains three hours of collaborative time. The division of collaborative time is illustrated by the following picture.
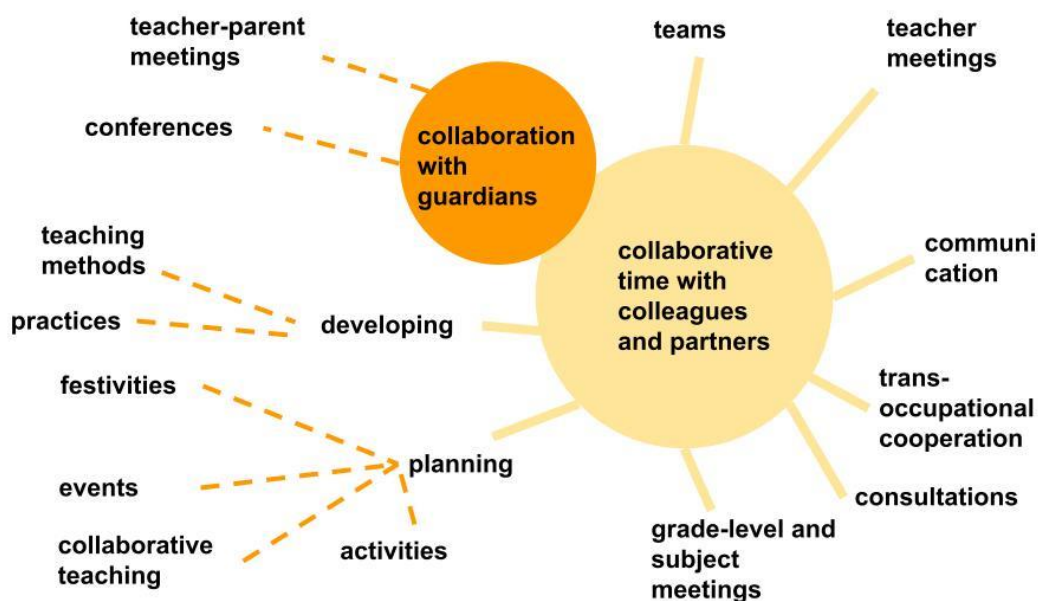
FIGURE 4. The division of collaborative hours. (Modified from oaj.fi n.d.)

As mentioned, teachers' working time includes three hours of collaborative work per week, total of 120 hours per year. In many occasions, the time has been considered insufficient. For this reason, the principal has appointed more working time for teams. In this case, a group of teachers works together on a topic mentioned in the picture above.

As the list of work is substantial and the weekly working time entails only limited amount of time, it is important that collaboration is planned well. This shows also in the teachers' suggestions for development objectives concerning assessment culture. In the yearly planning, there should be time appointed to assessment work. Pupil assessment is not part of collaborative time, but working together on the topic is. In their suggestions, teachers mentioned also that there should be enough time. Thirdly, the time should be appointed at the "right" point in time. It was mentioned that the principles of the school's assessment culture should be discussed in the beginning of the school year. It was considered unbeneficial to work on the topic just before the pupils' grades are due. Time for assessment work should be appointed throughout the study year. The fourth topic related to time was how to coordinate different timetables together. In addition to the assessment calendar, there are calendars for student welfare team, who coordinate for example the decisions about special education needs, as well as a calendar for cooperation with preschools in the area.

The topic people has to do with the participation in collaborative time. The organizational model of the case organization has been described earlier. The model is fairly strict, people mostly work either in their theme teams or pedagogical teams. Some more flexible and not so long-term teams, or rather groups, can be formed. For example, at the time of purchases, a team is called to coordinate the process on the school level. In their suggestions, teachers mentioned two specific points of improvement to the matter. First, was to include meetings in the calendar where teachers would work collaboratively crossing boundaries of grade level and subject areas. The suggestion aims at organizing discussions about assessment across grade level and subject area boundaries for the whole staff. At this point, such boundary-crossing collaboration takes place only in the theme team structure, as one team's topic is Assessment and Multidisciplinary Learning Modules. Another suggestion for improvement was made about special education teachers' participation in the pedagogical teams. At the moment, special education teachers have their own pedagogical team. Lastly, a note was made about the participation of those teachers who work by themselves as the only teacher of a certain subject. They should also be offered the possibility of discussing assessment in their own frame of reference.

Collaborative time is varying degree used for communication with the guardians. For this purpose, some suggestions were made about inclusion of the guardians in the assessment work by organizing questionnaires and producing informative material about assessment.

4.1.2 Communication

This chapter on communication discusses an issue related to communication from the leadership point of view. Teachers suggested an initiation system that could be created to promote the school's assessment culture and ensuring the awareness of related issues shared by the new teachers. A system that could be helpful is to name each new teacher a mentor who would ensure that the colleague is aware of and follows the mutual agreements made by the teacher community.

4.2   The Teacher Community level – The Lounge

Categories that entail the common participation of the teacher community are discussed in this chapter. They include materials and agreements. This category depends greatly on the former. In order for the teachers to be able to make mutual agreements and shared material assessment, the organization of time and people should be sensible.

4.2.1   Materials

In their answers, teachers mentioned two pieces of shared material for assessment. They both are results of the assessment reform. In the new school curriculum text, teachers are obliged to have at least one meeting per study year, where both the pupil and their guardians are present to discuss their goals, achievements, as well as strengths and if there are some special needs. The discussion is planned to consist of certain common features for the whole school. This is why teachers consider it important to have material that they can use in the discussion.

In the local curriculum text, schools were required to make their entries also concerning the assessment of behavior. Each school has previously had to formulate their own set of school rules. The school rules function as the basis for the learning goals for behavior. The grading should be done according to the goals. The goals refer to the school rules and pupils' behavior is assessed according to their grade level. The shared material would consist of criteria for different grade levels and would be used when teachers do the assessment and discuss the pupils' behavior with the guardians.

4.2.2   Agreements

For the assessment to be equal as the National Core Curriculum requires, reaching mutual agreements will ensure equal treatment of pupils. One of the groups

suggested the renewing of the current school rules. However, this probably will be passed since the curriculum text has recently been written and changing the school rules would mean changing the curriculum as well, which would be a lengthy process. The school rules were written at the time of the introduction of the current core curriculum. They were formed in a collaborative process including the pupils as well. Further suggestions were made about shared practices and shared sets of criteria. Joined discussions should be organized to agree on the required level of passing. Also a set of criteria for the assessment of behavior should be created. Some entries were made about the objectives of assessment. It was considered necessary to clarify the influence of behavior to the grading of subjects. In the curriculum, behavior is an independent object of assessment and should not be assessed within individual subjects. Another concern related to the objectives was the overlap of objectives in behavior and communication skills, which are a part of the subject Mother Tongue and Literature. All of the suggestions in this category are in great degree connected with the development of assessment culture in the school, but more importantly, with the basic requirement of equality.

4.3   The Individual Teacher level – The Classroom

Last, this sub-chapter presents the findings that are closely related to teachers on an individual level. The categories include assessing, the individual needs of pupils and the pupils' awareness of the principles of assessment. They all are suggestions about what the individual teacher eventually does in the classroom.

4.3.1   Assessing

As teachers enjoy a great amount of autonomy in their work, it is essentially up to the teacher how he/she assesses his/her pupils, as long as the principles set by the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education are followed. These principles were discussed earlier in this paper. In the Helvi team tables, the teachers made some suggestions for developing assessment culture. One of them could have been included in the leadership level as well, because the entry was about

time. However, the suggestion is more related to the individual teacher as assessing pupils is part of the teacher basic working time, not the collaborative time. In Finland a lesson lasts 60 minutes of which 45 minutes is appointed to classroom work with the pupils. Rest of the time is not free time for the teacher, but is counted as working time during which the teacher is able to, for example, do assessment work, or keep contact with the parents.

Further notes were mainly made about the methods the teacher uses in collecting demonstrations and assessing his/her students. On both occasions, the emphasis was on the versatility of the both aspects of assessment. First, it was stated that teachers should offer their pupils versatile ways for demonstrating their knowledge and skills. This means that reaching learning objectives should not be measured by a written test taken individually at the end of a unit or course. Other remarks were made mainly about the methods of assessment. The versatility of assessment methods, and more precisely, the use of peer and self-evaluation should be increased.

4.3.2 Individual needs of the pupils

Another category that is realized in in the classroom level is the way teachers take into consideration the individual needs of their pupils. There were three points that should be further discussed and developed. First, some pupils have learning difficulties and are entitled to support of some degree, depending on their status. They may have individual learning paths that have to be taken into account in assessment, too. This may mean, for example, that the pupil can make a portfolio, or take an oral test instead of a written one. He/she may be entitled to more simple or smaller tasks, or reduced content. More and more pupils need support in their studies even though they would not have a diagnosis of a learning disability, or an official decision about support. Pupils may experience difficulties in a certain subject content and need support only for a short period of time. This, in turn, has an effect on assessment as well. Thirdly, naturally related to the earlier notes to some degree is the level of how teachers take into account the different skill and knowledge level when assessing.

4.3.3 Pupils' awareness of the principles of assessment

The proposals that belong to this category are connected with the pupils' awareness of the principles of assessment. To develop assessment culture, pupils' awareness of it should be improved, for example, by making posters visible in the classrooms that illustrate the learning objectives and principles of assessment. Another suggestion was made also about how the learning objectives of the first school years could be discussed in classes on monthly basis, concentrating on one subject at the time, so that the pupils have time to understand the principles, objectives and the criteria.

4.4 Adding or Modifying resources

This small category entails the suggestions made about adding people, published materials and technical platforms. First, there is a need for adding people to situation where pupils are in the danger of failing a subject. Pupils are offered possibilities to improve their demonstrations to demonstrate the required level to pass. This practice increases the work of subject teachers, thus resources appointed to this situation would be needed. Second, there is a need to purchase materials that would allow those pupils to advance in their studies who do not have any learning difficulties and have good studying skills, maybe even progress on their own. Thus, teachers could offer those pupils additional help who experience difficulties. Thirdly, teachers made suggestions about adding or improving usage of digital platforms. One of them is the Wilma-platform that is used for teacher-guardian communication, register attendance and, for example, test results. There are some functions that are not in use at the moment. This should be done in the administrative level. The Wilma-platform or another one could also be used for documentation and self-assessment.

4.5 Summary of the Results

After analyzing the eleven team tables that were composed in a workshop by teachers of the case organization, the entries were divided under three main categories according to the location of decision-making. These locations were The Meeting room, The Lounge and The Classroom. Topics falling under the category The Meeting Room, the decision is made by the principals and/or the management team. These included topics Enabling Collaboration and Communication. The second category, The Lounge, covers topics that teachers should discuss together. These are Materials and Agreements. Third, under the category The Classroom come issues that the teacher ultimately is responsible for in the classroom setting with the pupils. These include Assessing, The individual needs of the pupils and The pupils' awareness of the principles of assessment. The last category was named: Adding or modifying resources.

5   CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to look for development objects for good assessment culture in the case organization.

Accordingly, the following research question emerged:

What are the main objects for developing assessment culture?

The case study research method was thought as the most appropriate approach for the current study. The research was formed around document analysis on eleven team tables from a Helvi-workshop. The workshop was compulsory for all teachers in the case organization, Kannelmäki Comprehensive School, Helsinki.

In the following chapters, the main research findings will be discussed under the categories The Meeting Room, The Lounge and the Classroom, and lastly the category of Adding or modifying resources.

5.1   The Leadership level – The Meeting Room

This category consisted of categories Enabling Collaboration and Communication. The decisions about topics related to the categories are partly or totally planned and decided by the head principal, the two vice-principals and the four teacher members of the executive team.

The first category of Enabling Collaboration contained three subcategories: Time, People and Participation. The findings show that time is considered valuable when developing assessment culture. There should be enough time and its use should be coordinated, so that the time is in accordance with what takes place during the school year. Shared discussions timed at the beginning of the study year seem more appropriate than discussions taking place just before grading. It was also considered important that people can work with flexible and appropriate

groups. Teachers also noted that parent participation should be included in the assessment work, for example, by organizing a questionnaire.

Nieminen (2019, 125) states that is important to align assessment practices with the perception of learning and values of basic education. In order to do so, teachers will need professional support in developing the assessment culture of their school. This will require investments in the form of appointed time. The National Core Curriculum states: "[…] community develops in dialogue. The community is strengthened by working together and through participation." (POPS2014, 28). It is the responsibility of the school's leadership to oversee that teachers have the possibility to learn and participate. Also Ouakrim-Soivio (2015, 91) emphasizes the importance of the principals' and the teachers' mutual analysis of the conceptions of learning and assessment, and how they are realized in practice. In order for the principals to be able to lead the development of assessment culture in their schools successfully, they need tools for pedagogical leadership. Various principal networks could be of use in this matter (Atjonen et al. 2019, 244).

Cooperation with guardians is included in the forms of collaboration in the National Core Curriculum, which also states that it is a central part of the school's operational culture (POPS 2014, 37) and should be organized. School-parent cooperation has been recognized as an important matter, for example by Lindström in her thesis. Her informants could not think of a matter where school and parents could not work together. The responsibility of the child's welfare interests both parties. (Lindström, 2006, 53.) In this study, the entries in the data considered specifically assessment. A suggestion of a questionnaire for parents was made, not clarifying, however, the specific content. Nevertheless, the suggestion could easily be incorporated in future development work.

Another category that arose from the data was Communication. More specifically, orientation and mentoring. Orientation process is important when communicating the values and practices of the organization, and should be done well. Principal Liisa Saarniniemi considers the orientation process as a way to wish a new teacher welcome to the school. After a good orientation the teacher will feel equal

among teachers, and in front of students as well, since the school culture is familiar. Poor orientation may even result in difficulties of retaining teachers. (Uutta opettajaa ei saa jättää yksin. 2019).

5.2 The Teacher Community level – The Lounge

The next group of categories covered topics that require the collaboration of entire staff. First, materials to be used in teacher-parent meetings will be prepared in fall term, 2021. The work on the forms for the assessment of behavior is also to be completed in the coming term.

Second, the teachers addressed the matter of Agreements. This includes the agreements made about the criteria for the assessment of both learning as well as behavior. At the end of the study year all pupils receive grades from all of the subject they have studied, and additionally, a separate grade for behavior.

Agreed criteria is one of the central points of developing assessment culture. It is important for the student as well as for the teacher. Ouakrim-Soivio (2015, 96) stated that a clear set of criteria provides the staff a tool with which they can approach the pupil's schoolwork with the guardians. It also enhances fairness, as the pupil's performance is compared only with the criteria. They provide a good tool also for the pupil to examine their own performance, if they are clear and well-communicated. (Ouakrim-Soivio 2015, 93.)

5.3 The Individual Teacher Level – The Classroom

The results revealed the importance the learners' awareness of the principles of assessment, and formative assessment, its forms and their importance for learner performance. Formative assessment can be seen to starting with the clear communication about learning goals, participation of learners here is considered crucial. By being able to participate in the discussion about learning goals, the learner becomes more aware of what the goals are, and also, what is the gap between the goals and the learner's own level of knowledge and skills. With the

help of the teacher and peers, the learner is more able to see what actions he/she needs to take in order to achieve those goals. Such goal-oriented approach as a starting point for formative, *for* learning, type of assessment, increases positive feelings towards learning and assessment. If the learner is well aware of the goals and criteria, he/she more easily sees the importance of his/her learning, instead of comparing him/herself with peers and trying to become better than them, focusing on good grades with as little effort as possible. Learners with goal-orientation, see the part of their own effort, and ask for assistance more often than their performance-oriented peers. Making the learners aware of the learning goals and assessment principals through participation is the first step in the classroom that the teacher can take to enhance learning, which is the ultimate function of assessment. (Black and Wiliam, 1998, 20-22.) Some suggestions were made about preparing visual aide in the classroom about the goals for learning and behavior. Teachers had realized also the importance of clearly communicated goals as a basis for schoolwork. As a preparation for this, teachers have started to compile together material to be discussed together with the pupils as well as parents. This work has been done in groups of teachers who teach the same grade level to ensure uniform criteria for the whole age group.

Findings of this study included also entries about actual assessment methods. Examples were peer- and self-assessment, which do not affect the overall grade the pupil receives in all subjects. They still are skills that are to be practiced. Jakku-Heinonen and Silvonen (2001, 83-84) see self-evaluation as a means for the pupil to concentrate on their own learning. Thus, it provides a good tool for the learner, as well as the teacher, to gain an insight of the pupil's understanding of their learning and what gaps they still possibly have in their skills and knowledge in comparison to the goals. Atjonen (2005) defends peer-evaluation by saying that the pupils need feedback also from their peers, instead of only from the teacher. It is motivating and forward-looking. Both of these methods provide the pupils gain more power and take ownership of their own learning They also can offer both the teacher and the pupils some important development points (Atjonen, 2005, 145, 148, 150).

5.4 Adding or Modifying Resources

The findings of this category indicate that there is a need for further developing also the use of technical tools and platforms. The three platforms officially in use are Wilma, o365 and Google Classroom. Wilma-platform is used for keeping records on pupils' attendance and providing the pupils and guardians information on, for example, coming events. In o365 and Google Classroom, teachers share materials and assignments with their students. Especially Google Classroom is used as a portfolio tool as well. Pupils' special needs and difficulties in keeping up with their studies has led to delays and fails in performance. It is difficult to organize extra opportunities for some pupils when teacher should be proceeding with the program. Thus, there should be some resources added for these occasions for the pupils to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in order to pass.

5.5 Validity, recommendations for further study and development

The researcher wishes to address two main limitations of this study. First, the case study approach was focused on one school in a specific context and therefore any generalizations to other school contexts should be considered carefully. The limited size of data cannot be considered as a sole basis for decision-making.

Next, in qualitative research, the researcher's position as in this case - a teacher and a member of the school management team - should be recognized as it may have affected the interpretation of the results to some extent. However, the position of the researcher in the case organization should not be considered as an influence on the formation of the data since the workshop was a part of a process conducted in the city level. Although the current study is based on a small amount of data and in a specific context, the researcher made an attempt to interpret the results to accurately represent the perceptions in the team tables.

Further research on assessment culture in the case organization will be required to determine what are its features that support learning, and whether there are features that do not do so. The research should consider all stakeholder points of view: the leadership, the teachers and other staff members, the pupils, as well

as parents. Such a study should be well-planned, including discussions of the ways the gathered data should be used, and what kind of measures should, and could be taken afterwards.

Finally, the author wishes to emphasize the importance of appropriate planning of teachers' working time to ensure appropriate opportunities for collaboration among staff members to ensure good assessment culture for the learners' benefit.

Although the data in this study was not massive, as it consisted of eleven team tables composed during group discussions in a workshop, the author considers the thesis process as a valuable learning experience. She is also sure that the case organization will benefit from her experience, as it has demonstrated, how important it is to collect information for the basis of decision-making.

Another gain from the experience was of personal and professional nature. Since graduation, the author has participated in only one training concentrated solely on assessment. Additional small one-day training workshops have mainly been about different teaching methods. Through this work, the author has enjoyed the possibility to engage herself in reading and familiarizing herself more with the research topic, and ultimately the core of her work, assessment.

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