UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

FACULTY OF BUSINESS STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

Ksenia Sharapova

**MANAGING COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS: CAPACITY AND
CONSTRAINTS**

A case study of Finnish and Russian schools

Master's Thesis in
Management

VAASA 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURES

TABLES

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA
Faculty of Business Studies
Author: Ksenia Sharapova
Topic of the Thesis: Managing Cooperation between Schools: Capacity and Constraints. A case study of Finnish and Russian schools
Name of the Supervisor: Niina Koivunen, Associate Professor, PhD
Degree: Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration
Department: Management
Master's Programme: International Business
Year of Entering the University: 2011
Year of Completing the Thesis: 2014   **Pages:** 146

ABSTRACT
The present research studies inter-organisational cooperation in the educational sector from the managerial perspective. Generally cooperation between organisations is receiving much attention nowadays offering an opportunity of sharing experiences, breaking the vertical structures of organisations and engaging into horizontal endeavours and trying on new roles for improving work practices, acquiring new knowledge and increasing professionalism.

This research concentrates on the educational sector as one of the most active sectors that emphasises the importance of cooperative activities. Often in the academic literature cooperation between organisations is described as having just positive influences. This research is to discover both capacities and challenges that organisations face in the process of cooperation, revealing features of interschool cooperation, tools of managing interschool cooperation and accompanying challenges constitute the problematic content of the research question.

Theoretical background is formed out of the material on educational leadership, researches in the sphere of inter-organisational cooperation, the concept of poles of cooperation, interschool cooperation and forms of interschool cooperation.

This research is a case study of the project on cooperation "Allegretto" that has been implemented between schools of Kouvola and St. Petersburg since 2011. Primary data were gathered from personal interviews with teachers and principals and representatives of municipal administration in Finland, email interviews with teachers from Russia and documentation on the project.

Concept of poles of cooperation helps to create a framework for managing interschool cooperation that includes elements describing the capacity of interschool cooperation and challenges of interschool cooperation. The strategic dimensions describe the strategic capacities of schools, engaged in cooperation, while the issues presented as poles are not totally conflicting, but they contain contrasting essences that demand special attention from the management of cooperation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research is to discuss the problem of the inter-organisational cooperation in the educational sector. This chapter will introduce the research subject, explain the research question and discuss the research problems. It will explain the interest of the researcher in the studied area and the importance of the researched phenomenon in the contemporary managerial practices.

1.1. Background of the Study

Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley (2009) write about the so-called "Fourth Way" for schools. They enumerate the components of the successful formula of education that is explained by the demands the modern world is posing for the people. Among the main aspects of the Fourth Way are creativity and innovation, integration of actors, recognising the needs of the new generations, developing empathic and aware citizens of the world, removing the borders of the change implementation and cooperation between schools. In this research I would like to concentrate upon the latter issue.

In the recent studies it was discussed that organisations started to build cooperative relationships with others even between different sectors and countries. The companies that engage in these relationships believe in numerous benefits. Inter-firm cooperation is regarded as a strategic move that is aimed at competing opportunities in the markets of today. (Nguen 2011, Ding, Dekker and Groot 2010, Walker and Stohl 2012) These researches demonstrate popularity of inter-organisational cooperation in different fields. Due to my personal interest in the educational sector I decided to consider cooperation between educational institutions.

Cooperation between schools is an interesting phenomenon to be studied. It has different forms, it can be practiced at different levels: individual and organisational, it can be analysed from many perspectives: psychological perspective, effectiveness measurement perspective, leadership perspective, etc.

I have to admit that it was rather difficult to search for the appropriate literature on the main concept of the research - interschool cooperation - and to identify what other studies concentrate on. What I found was mainly literature on the school networking; exactly this concept has been popular in the academic literature of the last decade, both concerning firms and schools. (Wade 1995, de Lima 2008)

However, I consider cooperation to be a much more suitable and deeper term to describe the actual activities of organisations undertaken to achieve mutual goals. I might admit that sometimes authors use the terms networking and cooperation as interchangeable (Walker and Stohl 2012), though I would like to make a difference between the terms, because if one can analyse networks through connectedness, centralisations and density, these dimensions will not say anything about the quality of cooperation and for cooperation activities other determining dimensions must be found.

1.2. Research Question

Nowadays educational management is considered to be one of the main prerequisites of schools performance. It is well understood that not everything depends on the teachers' efficiency in a classroom. The teachers' role should be accompanied by the right skills of the school managers. (Bush 2008, p. xi) As Bush (2008), p. xi) justly mentions, more and more it is being discussed that having experience and knowledge in the teaching profession is not enough to become a successful and well-qualified educational leader. School leaders are to have special preparation and they are to be developed. Also in Finland the interest and understanding the importance of researching this sphere is growing. The first Master's degree programme in Educational Leadership was launched in the university of Jyväskylä in 2007 (University of Jyväskylä n.d.). It means that importance of educational management as a field of study is increasing.

In addition to the shifts in understanding where potential for school development lies, our time is very dynamic in its character. Macro-changes in the environment, in the distribution of power between countries, in the scheme of economic growth over the

world, in people, in lifestyles lead to changes in organising businesses and leading organisations. Educational organisations cannot be left behind.

In that context, the work by Thrupp and Willmott (2003) was very important in order to make a link towards the key concept: inter-organisational cooperation in the educational sphere. Their work contains multiple articles that discuss changes in the management paradigms that made interschool cooperation become an important strategic undertaking. For the same purpose I turned to other sources that did not discuss educational sphere rather they discussed processes that relate to the sphere of multinational companies. However, as far as the same processes can be found in the educational sector, it allows drawing parallels and referencing the literature of this type as well. A very important source in this connection is Jamali's "Changing management paradigms: implications for educational institutions" (2005) because this work expresses the concern about teamwork, participation and learning. Integration, collaboration are the key factors of the management, thus it explains the importance of the chosen research topic and justifies the research project.

When talking about the Fourth Way proposed by Hargreaves and Shirley in 2009 one cannot unilaterally say that schools are going to follow that. According to several authors it is possible (Sahlberg 2011) and even desirable (Harris 2011), especially when talking about cooperation. Those who advocate for the cooperation in the educational sphere think that targeted and planned cooperation destroys isolation of schools as institutions and teachers as institutional actors. According to them cooperation discovers potential. (de Lima 2008)

Ding, Dekker and Groot (2010) declare that cooperation between organisations is a hybrid governance structure, because it should take into account the horizontal markets and vertical hierarchies of organisations. Those hybrid structures are difficult to manage because the participating organisations have different routines, cultures and principles of work. That is why from the management perspective it is highly important to design the relevant control practices, to align the partners' systems and to jointly coordinate.

As it was mentioned earlier cooperative practices are usually described through positive connotations as a voluntary strategic undertaking by organisations aiming at achieving better results. Still, being a complex phenomenon the school cooperation cannot be characterised through one-track approach. What is important is to see whether school cooperation contains both capacities and constraints.

I will research peculiarities of managing school cooperation in the context of the Finnish school system. The research will cover such questions as why schools cooperate, what kind of objectives they follow, who are the main actors in the cooperation between schools and who manage them. The main research objective is to find out what are the capacities of educational organisation in cooperation and if there are any challenges in managing cooperation between educational organisations, if one can find a single formula for implementing cooperation.

The process of cooperation between schools consists of several elements, and it is a complex and long-lasting movement. That is why it demands careful management. In order to understand the peculiarities of the certain case, one might consider peculiarities of educational management, principles of cooperation between schools in general, possible forms of cooperation. Implementation of the cooperation is possible only when all the actors have the right attitude towards it and contribute to the process in the best way. So, this means that the research is to find out what capacities and challenges might be traced in organising school cooperation taking into account the nature of school as an educational institute.

The sub-problems of the research question can be defined as follows:

1. What features does management of cooperation between schools have?

2. How cooperation is managed? What are the tools and who are the driving forces of the process?

3. What challenges may be traced in the process of managing interschool cooperation?

It means, that first of all, the research will make an attempt to have a closer look at the cooperation between schools in the context of one particular case study. The theory of educational organisation management has outlined several features and will be interesting how this influences school cooperation. It will be interesting to discover problematic areas as well as the ones that open up opportunities for school cooperation.

This type of research is designed to give an idea to the practitioners about issues to consider while implementing educational cooperation. There would be made an attempt to create a model of managing school cooperation, made out of challenges and capacities.

1.3. Structure of the Research

After introduction part that presents the research area, topic, objective of the research, including the research question and sub-problems that narrow down the research question, the research is structured in the traditional way having theoretical and practical parts. Theoretical part contains chapter 2. In this chapter based on the earlier introduced research question the main concepts are defined and are explained.

The first section of chapter 2 discusses features of educational management and leadership in general. The second section concentrates on the concept of cooperation and introduces the concept of poles of cooperation that will be used later on for creating the framework of cooperation between educational organisations, in addition cooperation between educational organizations is discussed here in particular, including motives for cooperation and its forms. The third section starts creation of framework for inter-school cooperation based on the theory of poles of cooperation.

The practical part of the research addresses the case study of cooperation between

schools of Kouvola and school №200 of St. Petersburg. Chapter 3 discusses research design: it starts with the choice of case study as a research strategy and justification of the choice. Processes of data collection and data analysis are described as well and it is explained how content analysis as a research technique for discovering similarities and differences in the answers of the interviewees and other texts that formed primary data for the research was applied and the quality of research is evaluated.

Chapter 4 is the most prominent chapter because it presents the essential findings to the research question, using quotations from the primary sources. In Chapter 5 findings are validated through the use of secondary data and the background studies of Finnish and Russian school systems, the framework of inter-organisational cooperation is created in order to include strategic capacities and the possible constraints that are presented in the form of poles of cooperation and conclusions about scientific contribution of the research and limitations of the research are made.

2. EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT, INTER-SCHOOL COOPERATION AND FORMS OF COOPERATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

This chapter can be considered as a theoretical basis for the research. The chapter discusses characteristics of educational management and leadership in general, because that will have a direct influence on management of cooperation between schools. It explains the concept of cooperation and introduces the theory of poles of cooperation. Further on inter-school cooperation and its forms are discussed in particular based on other researches in the sphere. As a conclusion, a framework of inter-school cooperation is initially created, for further refinement during the actual research.

2.1. Educational Leadership and Management

The presented research problem allows distinguishing several conceptual areas within it. Educational management and leadership is the first basic element that is important to take into attention and this sphere has been deeply researched by different authors from different perspectives.

Here it is worthy to note that actually in the academic literature there are differences in understanding the concepts of educational management. Some scholars understand it as implementing the confirmed policy, others pay attention to the right use of resources in order to achieve certain outcomes, or as a complex of internal life of institutions and their external relations with environment, i.e. government, communities, etc. (Bush 2008, 1-2). This probably also opens up the diversity of approaches towards studying and researching practices of managing schools. But on can see that all of the approaches have something that might be hold as important elements of one general definition.

Bush (2008, 1) states that educational management is a field that studies operations of the educational organisations, the process of decision-making and goal setting in the educational context. For him the most important issue for an educational organisation is to be built around aims of education process, thus for a school manager the most

important issue is to see to achieving these goals. Thus, the tripod of the aims, strategy and operations will be the platform for successful management as it is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Tripod of Successful School Management (based on Bush 2008, 1)

Of course, school managers should bear in mind that an educational institution cannot exist without its context: the community and the government. So, each institution should decide upon its aims in correspondence with the prescriptions of other forces. Still, without the initiatives of single managers and teachers there cannot be any changes, innovativeness and development toward better performance. That is another point for school managers to think over is how to combine both aspects that are vital in school operations.

Publications that write about changes in the approaches towards management in general point to the following shifts: due to the drastic economic, social and technological changes organisations have to restructure their systems and practices of management. The classical strict managerial system that was based on hierarchies creates problems and inhibits development and competitiveness. Managers of today should become team developers, coaches and trainers and give their employees opportunities to discover their skills and talents, to show off their enthusiasm, innovativeness and creativity. (Jamali 2004)

What is important for this particular research are the remarks by Jamali (2004) that management of the 21st century is to be based on the abilities to face and cope with

dynamics, on developing cooperation with different players, on widening networks, on creating partnerships and alliances.

All mentioned above is possible to apply to the sphere of the educational management with the notice that government and communities' prescriptions are very strong and should be taken into account against the background of huge shifts toward new managerialism. This term describes management practices of educational organisation of today and is the main topic of the literature review by Thrupp and Willmott under the title "Educational management in managerialist times" published in 2003.

For example, Thrupp and Willmott (2003) reference Exworthy and Halford (1999) that show how earlier management of the public sector was characterised by such features as red-tape, inflexibility, strict control and focus on minimising costs, while managers of educational institutions of today pay attention to other directions: innovativeness, supporting creativity and sharing power. Flynn 1999 (in Thrupp 2003) mentions that the features of commercial organisation may be well transferred to the educational sector, for the latter is following similar aims: making progress, improving school, implementing changes by achieving better productivity, i.e. higher performance expressed in better results of students, more skilful and knowledgeable workers, fostering innovation, i.e. new teaching methods, developing cooperation between schools, distance learning models, appraisal techniques, etc., by generating commitment of the workforce, by managers' freedom, i.e. not only implementing prescribed norms and systems, but having visions for the future, more flexibility and empowerment.

In the educational management one might discover three discourses (Ball 1994 in Thrupp and Willmot 2003). I find this research very interesting and in spite of the date when it was fulfilled I would say that it is essential. First of all, educational management is about plans for school development and their implementation. This is the essence of the manager's profession and it contains rational and technical managerial practices, it has nothing to do with vision, values or policy-making. The second discourse is about financial decisions in an educational organisation, i.e. planning budgets, doing balancing and seeing what educational opportunities can be

afforded financially. As one can see, those two discourses are the part of the traditional view on the school management. The third discourse adds to the old concept the feature that makes people talk about the "new managerialism". It includes market orientation of any school organisation, attempts at differentiation and surviving competition, creating images and brands. This all creates a new function for the manager of an educational organisation: being an entrepreneur. This statement includes permanent school development, making the school desirable for pupils and pupils' parents, improving the results, encouraging teachers and pupils, being flexible and hard-working.

What is important for understanding the concept of educational management of today is to see that it is not only a technical activity that can be implemented by a professional in the educational sphere, but managerialism in educational sphere is to define a system of beliefs, values and to behave in education the same way as in business. (Clarke et al. 2000 in Thrupp and Willmott 2003, 22-25) In addition to that, based on other researches it is possible to talk about the forth discourse that is targeted nowadays: it is leadership that is based on building relationships with teachers, parents and communities (Bryck & Schneider 2002, Riehl 2000 in Ishimaru 2013)

2.2. Concept of Cooperation

After studying the literature on the educational management in the recent years one can notice that mostly researchers speak about networking. The terms of cooperation and collaboration are mentioned but are not studied in the extent interschool networks are. For this report I would choose the approach towards networks as a broad general concept that means a system, or linkages between nodes, while cooperation would mean working together for common goals, taking true actions, assisting, i.e. concrete activities that take place in reality.

In business literature moves towards more cooperative forms of organisational activities started already in the middle of the twentieth century when workplace programmes turned to teamwork as a way to innovate and to improve organisational efficiency, to

get access to missing resources, to cope with risks, to be more competitive in the markets (de Lima 2008; Ding, Dekker and Groot 2010). Similarly, in education moves towards inter-school cooperation have become a part of general policy. Many educational organisations became involved into new organisational forms regarding cooperation as a new strategy for changes. (de Lima 2008)

Cooperation is a complex concept. This can be understood and studied on different levels: it can be cooperation between individuals, between groups, between organisations, between countries, etc. It has different forms and modes.

Still, before transferring to the peculiarities of school practices one has to understand the key issues that concern the concept of cooperation. As European Council and European Commission (2000) justly mention, cooperation is difficult to implement in practice. Managing and organising cooperation is a challenging task. It involves many problematic areas that usually appear at the level of human relations and at the level of tasks fulfilment. Figure 2 depicts the so-called poles of Cooperation that cause the main impediments for smooth work in cooperation.
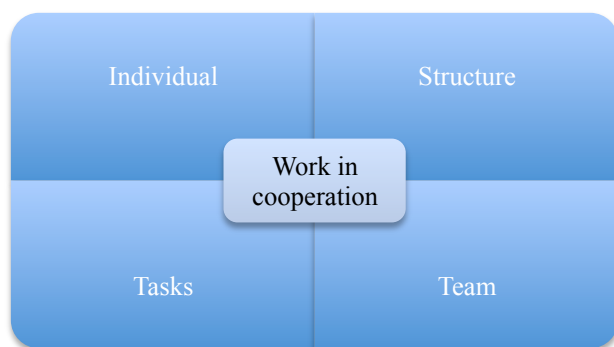
Figure 2. Poles of cooperation (modified from Drs. A.P.R. Van Veen from Oomkes 1994 in European Commission 2000)

The relational problems start with the basic individual needs that influence their work in team. Each individual wants to be part of the team, he/she wants to have influence on the team and wants to experience affection. Character of cooperation - its length, its profundity, its quality – influence on the way these needs are manifested in working

together. The more the cooperation is important, the more the individuals will try to achieve their needs. Those who want more influence on the team will start to compete, those who lack influence and feel outsiders will try to draw attention to their persona. (European Commission 2000)

Team pole challenges will concern the general atmosphere in the team by cooperation: lack of unity, heterogeneity of viewpoints, lack of contact, different understanding of objective and task processes, bad leadership, etc. (European Commission 2000)

Challenges concerning implementation of tasks, first of all start with objectives. The way they are formulated, their importance, they clarity and precision influence cooperation. Clear and well-defined objectives open possibilities for clear measurement of the progress of cooperative processes. (European Commission 2000)

To implement the tasks in cooperation individuals need structure as well: rules, ways of implementation, approaches and strategies, division of roles, power and control are important elements of the pole "Structure". Each individual should be equally aware of those and accept them. (European Commission 2000)

This explains that the main goal of cooperation management will be balancing between all these four forces and their interrelationship. Still, when cooperation is organised between different organisations there will be even more aspects to be taken account: that is the organisation, its culture and values, its goals and strategies. In addition to that if cooperation is done between educational institutions, then it is to be implemented within the framework of the governmental norms and communities' programmes. That is why, the given formula of cooperation will be modified after discussing reasons and forms of cooperation.

2.3. Reasons for Interschool Cooperation

It is interesting to understand why organisations and in the case of this particular study educational organisations start to cooperate. According to Nguen (2011) cooperation

may be explained through three levels: organisation, environment and the mediator. The research of Nguen (2011) was done for the companies but the results are suitable for other sectors as well.

Under organisational set one may understand trust between organisations and the possible positive effect received from the cooperation, i.e. value of cooperation for the participants. What might be the results of cooperation is analysed and understood. The organisations have some expectations on that: they can make profit, learn something new and take other advantages. (Nguen 2011)

According to Nguen (2011) environmental set means mainly governmental prescriptions. Inter-school cooperation is possible to foster through governmental regulations. For example according to Busher (1996) the educational reform in the UK in 1988 that introduced Local Management of Schools increased schools autonomy and introduced marketing forces in the educational sphere at the same time. As a result schools started to cooperate, in order to decrease the market forces effect in education, to reduce costs, to implement the national curriculum and to cope with the situation when the local authorities did not have the main role. (Nguen 2011)

The mediator in this particular research means cooperation intention, the element taken from the Theory of Reasoned Action. This model explains that prior to any behaviour there is an intention to perform that particular action. Cooperative intention will simply mean the desire and readiness to engage into cooperation with others to achieve particular goals. What is important is to distinguish cooperative intention from the goals. Goals will be a part of the cooperative intention that contains preliminary knowledge and necessary information as well, and then transfers impetus towards cooperative behaviour.

I would make a reservation here, that trust and positive effect of the cooperation would be a part of mediator. More suitable influencers of the organisational level will be organisational structure, organisational culture, organisational readiness to cooperation and possibilities of cooperation in terms of company vision, strategy and resources.

2.4. Forms of Educational Cooperation

Cooperation between schools can take different forms and vary in its scope. Teachers can form small groups of colleagues to plan their lessons together or they can be engaged into bigger projects that would include thousands of teachers as for example. Schools can be involved into small arrangements of a couple of schools in the same municipal community or can become a part of international projects. Cooperation can take place between schools of the same level or it can involve institutions of comprehensive and higher education, educational authorities and communities.

There is no uniform classification of the cooperation types in the literature. One of the approaches presented by Hodgkinson (1996) can be taken as a basis. The researcher distinguishes three types of inter-school cooperation according to their targets. The first one is cooperation related to curriculum or staff development. As it is justly mentioned this is the most frequent form used in practice and it is mainly based on the teachers sharing their expertise.

Another type of cooperation is used to address administrative needs of schools. There are cases when schools share costs and timetables by having the same staff, for example support teachers that teach in all the cooperative schools. In the UK there were cases when cooperating schools created budget management group that involved school principals and secretaries or when several schools were situated in the same campus the principals were to cooperatively decide on the questions of organising and funding premises supervision and staff. (Hodgkinson 1996)

The third type of school cooperation is about policy making. The principals can meet for policy consultation. This type of cooperation is closely connected to the educational sector specifics, i.e. its dependence upon the municipal, district and state policies. By this cooperation the head teachers can influence general practices: they can put pressure, they can lobby, debate and fight for changes.

In terms of cooperation it is interesting to see what kind of managerial methods are used to organise cooperation. According to de Lima (2008) cooperation can take the form of alliances, clusters, trusts, development groups, partnerships, families, etc. As it is justly mentioned often the terms are intertwined and can be used interchangeably. That is why, after studying several materials, there were found some forms that seem to be the most interesting.

2.4.1. Team-teaching

Team-teaching is not a new phenomenon and is rather widely used as a cooperative tool. (Corbo 2010, Goetz 2000, Johnson and Madejski n.d., Leavitt 2006) It involves two or more teachers teaching different courses in developing a cross-disciplinary intervention that forms a basis for a new single learning module. The peculiarity of the module is that it allows studying scientific phenomena from various perspectives. According to those who have experienced team-teaching the process requires mutual accountability and responsibility. Trust and good working relationships are a must. But the achieved results are worthy of that. As far as it might be a new experience it involves excitement, as an opportunity to get away from usual routines and to refocus and re-energise working potential. (Corbo 2010)

Team-teaching is possible to carry out within one institution and between different educational establishments. For this research, the second type of team-teaching is relevant. It can be realised through different techniques that will have their own peculiarities. For example, teachers can meet in order to share ideas and experiences and function independently, or they can create a common resource centre that will include lesson plans, text books, exercises and use them independently in their individual practices, or teachers can share planning, but instruct their own field of specialisation under the same course as it was described by Corbo (2010)

From the school managers perspective there are several issues to think over when implementing this type of cooperation. Mostly, in the literature it is discussed that team-teaching cases were undertaken voluntarily. It means that administration cannot force

teachers to collaborate, though it could encourage them, motivate and give direction for instigating the idea of team-teaching. (Goetz 2000, Corbo 2010, Johnson and Madejski n.d)

Another challenge of the administrative character will be to make the smooth timetable so that team meetings would be organised in time before the lessons or sessions, where teachers could use newly got resources. Generally to find free time for the meetings can be difficult: flexibility that is to be a platform for any mode of team-teaching is not usually available in the educational organisation due to the peculiarities of the educational management that were discussed. It is vital because some researchers report failures of team-teaching projects because of the bad scheduling. (Goetz 2000, Johnson and Madejski n.d.)

The most important issue for the team-teaching management will be finding the right participants. It goes without saying that differences in the approaches and teachers' philosophies might be a challenge to overcome in the process. On one hand similarities might make the process of cooperation easier, still differences might make the experience and the results more diverse. That is why it is advisable that the participants can choose one another. (Goetz 2000) Rather often there can be found the following complaints of the partners: lack of devotion from one of the partners, no support and suspicious attitude from other colleagues that were not participating in the team-teaching projects.

A very important issue to consider before starting team teaching projects is planning. Team teaching projects should be in line with the educational programmes, relationships between teachers should be developed beforehand, the time framework, targets, the material to be dealt with, organisation of the classroom activities, etc. And then later on the process should be followed up, problems should be analysed and ways of solving these problems should be thought over. (Cabo 2010, Goetz 2000, Johnson and Madejski n.d.)

After having a look on the usual problems in team-teaching one can understand how challenging and sensitive this form of cooperation is, because mainly it involves two individuals that are to enter new relationships and to organise common professional projects.

2.4.2. Communities of practice

Bouchamma and Michaud (2010) studied a community of practice in the educational context that was organised in the province of New Brunswick in Canada with an aim to improve processes of teacher evaluation and supervision.

Analysing the community of practice the researchers explain that learning is the central process that is possible through interactions between participants and through their common practices. Within the communities of practice experiences are shared and common knowledge is constructed in cooperation that in the end allows participants being more effective in their work duties. (Bouchamma & Michaud 2010)

Communities of practice are suitable for the educational sphere. As it was mentioned earlier authorities and the governmental prescriptions influence schools and their management. School reforms are introduced on a regular basis and with the dynamics of the contemporary world schools should be ready to answer these changes quickly. Development activities are possible through creation of communities of practice because they make it possible to find solutions in a cooperative way and thus be more efficient in the complex situations, they also open doors to creativity and discovering new approaches. (Bouchamma & Michaud 2010)

In the school practices communities of practice may be used at different levels including teachers and school principals. Communities of practice are important from the strategic point of view and are used to achieve different targets: either to develop the staff professionally, to acquire new knowledge, to improve relations between the staff and improve quality of teaching. (Bouchamma & Michaud 2010)

Bouchamma & Michaud's research (2010) studied the community of practice of teacher supervisors to help them in their new task of teacher evaluators. Community of practice session took place during two years and the researchers interviewed the participants twice during this period. Among the participants there were primary school principals, vice-principals and high school department heads. After the interviews the researchers found out the following benefits of this cooperation management tool. First of all, informal character of the meetings and everyone's opportunity to train others was beneficial to incite participation. The discussions were not only about positive experiences, but about challenges and difficult situations as well: this allowed learning even more, because the members of the community discussed possible solutions for numerous problems. As far as the topic of the Community of Practice was teacher supervision participants realised the importance of supervising and its complexity, they did understand how much effort and time they should devote to that. (Bouchamma & Michaud 2010)

There might be some doubts that everything stops after the community of practice stops to exist and the members would never remember the content they learnt and discussed with their peers. Still, in this particular case the knowledge got and shared in the Community of Practice was retained, it was taken into the future. It was found out that community of Practice helps to overcome the feeling of isolation; the person is not alone in his/her workplace with his/her expertise any more and more self-confidence is acquired in the process. It goes without saying that in the Community of Practice the atmosphere of listening and trust, the activities of sharing allow comparing. Comparing with others rather than what the person does brings better results, new ideas, more thorough analysis. (Bouchamma & Michaud 2010)

2.4.3. Collaborations

This type of cooperation is not mentioned in the literature about educational institutions; still I would like to transfer theories of collaborations between MNEs to the educational organisations. According to Walker and Stohl (2012) economic changes make companies work together, i.e. form collaborations across different sectors and countries.

The researchers give an example of collaboration between engineering firms and discuss peculiarities of communication process. Beside that they explain the concept of collaboration and how it can be utilised by the management.

The phenomenon discussed by Walker and Stohl (2012) may be well transferred to the sphere of schools. They justly mention that in the world of today boundaries between organisations are becoming vague because of the need to quickly adapt to the changes and dynamics. School systems are changing together with the world and are following the same rules. These dynamics make organisations develop relationships with others in order to have more confidence, get new knowledge, acquire resources and work on mutual benefits.

According to the researchers Walker and Stohl (2010) interorganisational collaborations can be defined as creating and supporting through negotiations the structure that is born across organisational boundaries for a certain period of time. The structure involves representatives of the organisations with different abilities, among which resources, expertise and knowledge first of all that remain their autonomies and bear their individual goals while working toward innovative results equally important for the participants. It means that the main features of collaboration are their temporary character, complexity and dynamics, volatility of the relations and no hierarchy.

It means that collaborations seem to be similar to communities of practice. For me it was difficult to distinguish collaborations and communities of practice based on the researches by Bouchamma and Michaud (2010) and Walker and Stohl (2010). Still, collaborations can be regarded as much wider phenomena, including joint ventures, participatory federations, etc. Walker and Stohl (2010) find special interest in the temporary groups because they are focused on the task-related production and their management should see these specifics in comparison with the long-term, ongoing teams. In addition to that, I understand that in collaborations work in cooperation is more intense and has more evident, outstanding results than in communities of practices.

Walker and Stohl (2010) analysed collaborative groups of the type discussed earlier and paid attention to the following issues. First of all, their research proved the so-called volatility of the relations in the collaborations: it means that within collaborations there happened changes constantly: participants made and broke connections with others continuously. Reciprocity is an important characteristic of the relations within the collaborative group. This might explain the changes in the connections, i.e. they are restructured within collaborations depending on the task and resource linkages. The participants communicate with those whom they need for a certain task fulfilment.

In addition to that collaborations might be non-hierarchical because initially created decentralised collaborative structures are based on the horizontal responsibilities. Exactly those features as non-hierarchical and volatile connections allow collaborations being flexible and respond to the uncertain environment across the organisational boundaries. Researchers noticed that relationships in the collaborations develop based on task and specialisation, not on personalities and shared experiences because in the temporary collaborations participants implement tasks, i.e. depersonalised roles and through that trust becomes depersonalised. (Walker and Stohl 2010)

Walker and Stohl (2010) develop ideas into hints for management in terms of organising the collaborations. What is important is to think about factors that influence whether the collaboration succeeds or fails. Will the routine forms of interaction be helpful or cause failure? Are instability and dynamism crucial for the success? As far as collaborations are created for achieving innovative solutions then probably tools of their management might be innovative as well. It goes without saying, that collaborations need to be responsively analysed, if they are used then the process of the development in the collaborations must be followed up and ways of measurement investigated and introduced into practice.

As far as Bouchama and Michaud (2010) that studied communities of practice emphasised mostly positive effects of this type of cooperation, I included Walker and Stohl's (2010) point of view on collaborations that revealed the challenging sides of the cooperative process.

2.4.4. Online platforms and projects

Information technologies are breaking barriers and formalities in the current social structures. They are a must have for any professional nowadays and they are widespread all around the world making communication outside the classroom and the school walls possible. (Mateo, del Rey and Hernández 2010)

With the available World Wide Web tools can be easily used to support and organise cooperative work in the educational sphere. Klöckner (2002), for example, discusses the Internet platform that creates a shared workspace for those who cooperate. They use the term "workspace" in relation to the real life personal workspace where the person keeps all the necessary documents and materials. In case of shared workspace, cooperative members all have access to this and can save own documents and access others' materials, communicate through online conversations.

Advantages of WWW platform are evident: collaborative information sharing is plausible, the system requires only internet connection and can be used by nearly any operating system and the system is easy to use. Members can upload information from their computers and can control access towards their materials: either they will allow visibility for everyone or they will limit the circle of those who can see the photos, videos, text documents, spread sheets, links, etc. The particular platform worked out at Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Information Technology, known under the name Basic Support for Cooperative Work was used by 400 educational institutes by 2002. (Klöckner 2002)

Another well-known tool is e-Learning and this is the most frequent tool that relates IT and education. Mostly this tool is used for education purposes in developed countries. Still, Mateo, del Rey and Hernández (2010) analyse methodology of using e-Learning as part of the university development cooperation in the Third World educational institutions. The idea is that e-Learning is a good tool for developing countries to overcome different obstacles to education. For example, shortage of teachers or lack of

training of the available faculty members can be solved through e-Learning projects. I will present the benefits of the university cooperation through e-Learning in Table 1.

Table 1. Benefits of university cooperation through e-Learning (based on Mateo, del Rey & Hernández 2010)

Universities in developed countries	Universities in developing countries
Increased student motivation	Improved teaching materials
Better quality of student training	Expansion of knowledge
Student are involved into development of society	Transferring knowledge to the third groups

The researchers turned to the concrete case of cooperation between the Universidad Poitécnica de Madrid and the University of Ngozi in Burundi. For that project the Technology for Development and Cooperation cooperation group that included qualified specialists in higher education and research on development was created in order to monitor, coordinate and manage the project. The cooperation group created Moodle platform (learning for cooperation and development platform) that was adapted for developing countries. Figure 4 describes functions of the main actors in the cooperation.

Figure 3. Cooperation through e-Learning (based on Mateo, del Rey & Hernández 2010)

What is important in this type of projects is to lessen interaction between the Professor from the developed country university and the local students in order to support and increase the proficiency of the local Professor.

After the cooperation between the Spanish university and the one from Burundi there was noticed an increase in the education efficiency rate, the amount of students that dropped courses was decreased and the targets that were set in the beginning: competency development of students from different perspectives, such as professional, social, technological, cultural and linguistic, was achieved, motivation was increased and technology transfer was implemented. (Mateo, del Rey & Hernández 2010)

2.4.5. Partnerships

Partnership as a form of cooperation in the educational sector is becoming more popular because of the belief that working together organisations can achieve better results (Butcher et al. 2011). Partnerships are suitable for the educational context: schools are individual and responsible organisations that are to provide better results in terms of

student learning outcomes, better school performance during the national assessment exams while it is expected that schools are to demonstrate more active community engagement.

Butcher et al. (2011) in their research outline two major forms of partnerships: transactional and transformational. The first type describes partnerships that do not generate changes in the institutions: a school may need new expertise, ways of development, some review of teaching practices and they access another school to find those. Interaction happens but stays at the level of exchange. It means that both parties engaging in the partnership are following their individual goals that are achieved through interchange of the considerations.

Another type of partnerships that Butcher et al. (2011) talk about is called transformational. This partnership is built by schools that have the common goals and through their cooperative work they develop and change. At that point I would like to make a remark that any partnership being a form of cooperation is built on the mutual interests between the parties. As I understand it, partnerships are mainly long-term, participants share capacities and resources and parties are being modified in the partnership activities. I would regard that classification into transactional and transformational partnerships rather critically, because I would find the features the researchers prescribe to the transformational partnerships to be characteristic for partnerships as a form of cooperation in general.

In their research Butcher et al. (2011) study the partnership of the Australian Catholic University and the Parramatta Catholic Education Office. For the period of 15 years the partnership was developing different initiatives. The cooperative projects of the schools included joint graduate and postgraduate courses, joint staff meetings joint efforts in overseas capacity development, a refugee support programme and joint research undertakings. For example, they organised a teaching-learning consortium, a programme within which undergraduate teacher education students were placed in the Parramatta Catholic schools for a semester in order to implement projects, observe and reflect. This measure was beneficial for both parties because university students could

gain important experiences while the Parramatta Catholic school teachers received help while managing their classes.

Another project within the framework of cooperation was called University Pathways programme that was about creating a link between schools and the university in order to make a university degree more attractive for the high school students. This programme gave an opportunity to complete two courses from the university level that would be accredited in their high school study programmes and they have two completed academic units in case of entering the university after high school. Establishing this programme the organisations managed to provide continuity in education. (Butcher et al. 2011)

The discussed projects that were fulfilled in the long run were possible in the well-established continuous relationships. Based on the case study of the Australian Catholic University and the Parramatta Catholic Education system Butcher et al. (2011) figured out the key characteristics of such partnerships. The first one is existence of the shared purposes and the mutual benefits should be understood at all the levels of the partnership: organisational and individual, overall partnership process and single projects. Another principle of the partnership management is joint planning and collaborative leading and this means that each partner influences not only his own organisation but the other as well and this will be expressed not only in discussing together the main issues but in active influences on the results from both sides.

As it was mentioned earlier speaking about other forms of cooperation: trust is one of the main prerequisites of the successful partnership. Butcher et al. (2011) mention that as well and notice that from the managerial perspective it is important to make sure that members can work with one another and informal meetings together with the formal ones might be one of the tools to develop atmosphere of trust.

Butcher et al. (2011) name appropriateness of the resources as one of the partnership principles. In my opinion the question of resources is one of the central parts of partnership management. Resources in terms of the school cooperation mean both

financial and human resources for implementation of the initiatives under the umbrella of a partnership. Each single project in the framework of the partnership cannot be implemented if resources are not sufficient and equally ensured by the partners. Equality will be a very important issue, because if the resources are not allocated equally then honesty, trust and mutual benefits will suffer.

Last but not least is readiness to change. Each project undertaken within the partnership is planned with an aim of development, growth and creation of new knowledge. Those are possible when participants of the projects learn something new and develop professionally and willingness to learn in on the individual level is the key determinant for the development of each partner and the partnership organisation on the whole. (Butcher et al. 2011)

It goes without saying there are other forms of interschool cooperation as well. For example in the UK of 1980s-1990s there were numerous families or clusters of schools. The term family is used because the cooperation of this type includes a secondary school and a primary school as its feeder. Those families of schools may be established to support and improve pupil transfer, to develop records of achievement and to develop curriculum and stuff. The terms reflect the essence of such cooperation: allocation of power is not equal. Usually secondary schools dominate the primary schools and have bigger budgets that allow them to subsidise inter-school cooperation. (Busher 1996) The terminology and typology may depend on the researcher as well.

2.5. Poles of Cooperation between Schools

After discussion of all the forms that I included into the work, it is evident that managing school cooperation is very challenging. In all the researches it was particularly mentioned what issues might be held in mind while managing the intershool cooperation. In spite of the fact different forms of cooperation are implemented in order to make school functioning more efficient and achieve better results there are always

impediments that hamper implementation and long-term positive effects of school cooperation.

My intention now will be to continue ideas about poles of cooperation (Van Veen from Oomkes 1994 in European Commission 2000), to add up issues to the discussed theory and specify that for the educational sector. As it was mentioned earlier cooperation has the following poles: individual and team that have challenges concerning the dimension relations, objectives and structure that have challenges concerning the dimension of tasks. Following the same logic and based on the analysis of the discussed researches I would outline the following poles.

A very important issue in cooperation is motivation. Poles related to that issue would be environment on one hand and collaborative intent. Under environment I will understand educational system, authorities, community, educational laws and norms. When cooperation is undertaken between educational institutions, it is to be implemented within the framework of the governmental norms and community programmes that might either help or hinder cooperation. Another pole related to motivation will be collaborative intent. The term was taken from Nguen (2011) that researched reasons of inter-organisational cooperation. Into this term, I will include the expected benefit from cooperation, trust between the cooperative partners both on the individual and organisational level, voluntary actions towards cooperation. Why can those issues be regarded as poles? It is not always so that the environment has the same motives and intents for cooperation as the doers within the organisation. At the same time, if schools independently decide to cooperate, there is no guarantee that those tries will succeed without the environmental conditions.

Another dimension of cooperation will be sharing, as it was mentioned by researches, discussing different types of interschool-cooperation (Bouchama and Michaud 2010, Klöckner 2002, Hodkinson 1996). Poles that concern this dimension will be organisation and non-hierarchy. What I mean under organisation is the structure of the educational organisation, its culture, strategy and administration, including scheduling and time allocation. Non-hierarchy that was mentioned by Walker and Stohl (2010) in

their discussion of collaboration is another pole in this dimension, because this idea can be justly transferred to other types of interschool cooperation. Sharing runs more smoothly if the traditional hierarchical structure is broken. If partners that have the same position in their own organisations start to cooperate, no one would agree to be a subordinate of the other. Participants of cooperation start to fulfil horizontal responsibilities where hierarchical structures make no sense. Definitely, those poles do contrast each other, because organisation means certain traditional and sometimes bureaucratic leadership structures, while non-hierarchy principle is breaks them.

Another dimension of cooperation in educational sphere will be continuity that was touched upon by Bouchama and Michaud (2010) in their discussion of communities of practice and Butcher et al. (2011) describing development of partnerships. Even if the projects are seldom and do not target development of deep relations and formation of mergers, still continuity can be traced in terms of the results got from cooperation and the developed relationships between participants. The two poles suitable for these dimensions will be: timeframe and resources. Timeframe means the planned schedule for the cooperation: temporal or long-time. Resources are crucial for any cooperation including both financial and human resources. The question to bear in mind will be if the resources volume and their suitability are checked and taken into consideration for implementation of cooperative practices (Butcher et al. 2011). Those poles contrast in case when finance or availability of participants conflict with the time planned for implementation and continuity might be achieved only when harmony is reached between the planned timeframe and the resources.

Efficiency is another dimension for cooperation between schools and that covers the actual results achieved or missed in cooperation. On one pole I will place a joint action. Participation, mutual responsibility, implementing actual work-together operations and not only discussing them is meant here, importance of every single person in the process (Mateo, del Rey and Hernández 2010; Corbo 2010; Butcher et al. 2011). On another pole there will be quality of cooperation. Under this term I will include creativity, new solutions, development of new practices, comparison and crossing over differences, readiness to changes and something new (Bouchama and Michaud 2010;

Mateo, del Rey and Hernández 2010; Butcher et al. 2011). Those issues are placed as poles, because joint-action is focused upon the processes and quality reflects the results.

Individual	Structure	Environment	Cooperation	Organisation	Resources	Joint Action
Relations	Tasks	Motivation		Sharing	Continuity	Efficiency
Team	Objectives	Collaborative Intent		Non-hierarchy	Timeframe	Quality

Figure 4. Poles and dimensions of cooperation in the educational sector

Figure 4 depicts the ideas discussed above. This representation of interschool cooperation gives a broader view upon the phenomenon. This figure reflects first of all dimensions of cooperation that characterise cooperation between schools as a positive undertaking, as a capacity for development, because those dimensions were determined from the sources discussing interschool cooperation from the beneficial perspective. Poles of cooperation underpin the deeper levels of the problematic areas and point to plausible constraints that interschool cooperation might cause. This framework will be used to identify the processes in real-life in the context of one case study: interschool cooperation between a Russian school, school 200 of St.Petersburg and three schools of Kouvola region: Kirkonkylä school, Valkeala junior high school and Valkeala upper secondary school.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter explains issues concerning methodology of the research, including the choice of the research strategy and justification of the choice, describes data collection process and the main sources of the data, reveals how data analysis was implemented using content analysis as a technique and evaluates quality of the research.

3.1. Case Study as a Qualitative Research Strategy

For this research case study research strategy was chosen. First of all, the strategy belongs to the qualitative methods that is why it is necessary to discuss characteristics of qualitative methods in general. After that peculiarities of the case study strategy will be explained.

The qualitative research allows access to real-world data, to empirical information; it provides "pluralisation of life" (Flick 2009, 12) with its attention to diversity, individualisation, to something local, temporal, situational; it gives an opportunity to investigate, to try to understand and get meaningful features of the complex real-life events. (Gummesson 2000, 14; Flick 2009, 12; Yin 2003, 2)

According to Flick (2009, 15) the object of the study makes researchers choose qualitative methods. Significantly objects are not represented through single variables but are studied in their whole, including contexts of the phenomena and situational shades. Openness towards the research objects is a characteristic feature of the qualitative methods. (Flick 2009, 15)

Because of the features discussed earlier and the goal of the qualitative research that is not to check existing theories but to develop and discover new theories, validity of the research is understood differently than in the quantitative studies. As Flick (2009, 15) justly mentions validity of qualitative studies is understood through reference to the objects of the research: whether findings are embedded in the empirical set, whether

theories are appropriately chosen, whether data are relevant and whether proceedings are reflexive.

Another feature of the qualitative research is the variety of perspectives, i.e. how different actors understand the studied phenomenon. The qualitative research allows revealing the subjective meanings of the research object, research participants' knowledge about the object and their practices with that. (Flick 2009, 16) This variety of viewpoints allows the development of the new theories that qualitative methods usually result in. (Flick 2009 p. 17 ; Ghauri and GrØnhaug 2010, p.106)

The qualitative methods presuppose researcher's reflective analysis of the data. The researcher's communication with the object and his/her interpretation of the data becomes an integral part of the knowledge and the research process. (Flick 2009, 16) The subjectivity of those who are studied and the researcher causes criticism about qualitative methods, but at the same time this gives the richness and deeper spectrum of the data.

In general the logic behind qualitative methods runs as follows: subjective perspectives constitute a starting moment. After that follows a course of interactions and then the researcher makes conclusions and with that creates new theoretical structures. That explains why researchers face numerous challenges and why a lot depends on the researcher's skills and experiences. Abilities of abstract thinking, avoiding bias, developing theoretical preunderstadning and social sensitivity are a few skills to be applied by implementing qualitative research. (Flick 2009, 16-17; Ghauri and GrØnhaug 2010, 105)

Case study research in particular is a very popular qualitative method in business studies. Yin (2003, 14) defines case study as a research strategy of a full value, because it includes design, data collection techniques and data analysis peculiarities of its own. Case study research that will discuss the certain management situation will include gathering information through in-depth semi-structured personal interviews as well as documents of the organisations in question. What is important is to get enough

information in order to explain and to analyse the processes of the studied situation and in the end to draw integrative interpretation (Selltiz et al. 1976 in Ghauri and GrØnhaug 2010, 109). According to Yin (2003, 13) case study research is suitable when contextual conditions influence the phenomenon of the study. This is exactly the case of interschool cooperation when there are certain contexts of the schools participating in cooperation, the communities and the state school systems.

Results of case study research may be general in their character, discussing a single case or a number of cases and coming to conclusions that might be applicable at the level of wider field of knowledge; or the results may be specific, discovering peculiarities of a case that incites special interest. (Gummesson 2000, 84; Yin 2003, 16)

The choice of the case study depends much on the researcher's approach towards the research question, on the researcher's objectives: what he/she wants to receive as a result of the study. In my opinion one case study may perform different functions. For example, before explanations are done, there should precede some descriptions.

Those characteristics explain suitability of case study for the research questions of the given work. There is no need in statistical methods and other quantification procedures. What is interesting is to see the details of the concrete case of interschool cooperation between schools of Kouvola (Kirkonkylä basic school, Valkeala junior high school and Valkeala upper secondary school) and school 200 of St. Petersburg, find out its circumstances, analyse practices and processes that are part of the inter-organisational cooperation in the educational context.

3.2. Data Collection

The idea about the research appeared in 2012 first of all due to the personal interest of the researcher in school management questions. After getting acquainted with numerous articles that discuss up-to-date issues in educational management it was decided to concentrate upon the school cooperation management. While formulating the main

research question the researcher was pondering about the concrete case study. Initially there was an attempt done to contact a school from Hämeenlinna that had a wide experience in school cooperation projects and allegedly could be interested in the suggested research. But there was no answer received. Another attempt concerned a higher education level. Due to the upcoming reform of Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland it could be vital to see how cooperation between universities of applied sciences is carried out, especially under conditions that universities of applied sciences start to form alliances in order not to be closed. However, the contacted research directors in the Universities of Applied Sciences explained that they have nothing to be analysed according to the research question.

A couple of month later there was an attempt done to contact Kirkonkylä School that is the primary school in Valkeala school campus. Being involved into Allegretto project, i.e. the project of cooperation between schools of Kouvola and a school of St. Petersburg, that was a new potential case for the research. Kristiina Strömmer, the principal of Kirkonlkylä School immediately gave her agreement advising at the same time to ask for permission from Veikko Niemi, head of education and well-being services of Kouvola. The permission for the research was received. Moreover Veikko Niemi gave further contacts of administration representatives and school principals that might participate in the research. From that point data collection process for the particular case of school cooperation in the city of Kouvola started.

Yin (2003, 83-108) writes about using different sources of evidence in the process of gathering information about the case. What is important is to apply the correct methods of analysis with every source, because each source should be chosen with a special purpose and each source should bring its own special information that adds up to the whole data set of the case study. Another challenge in collecting data from different sources is converging the results in the final form that make their use sensible.

Data for this case study was gathered from different sources as well. Different sources of data collation process are shown in Figure 5.
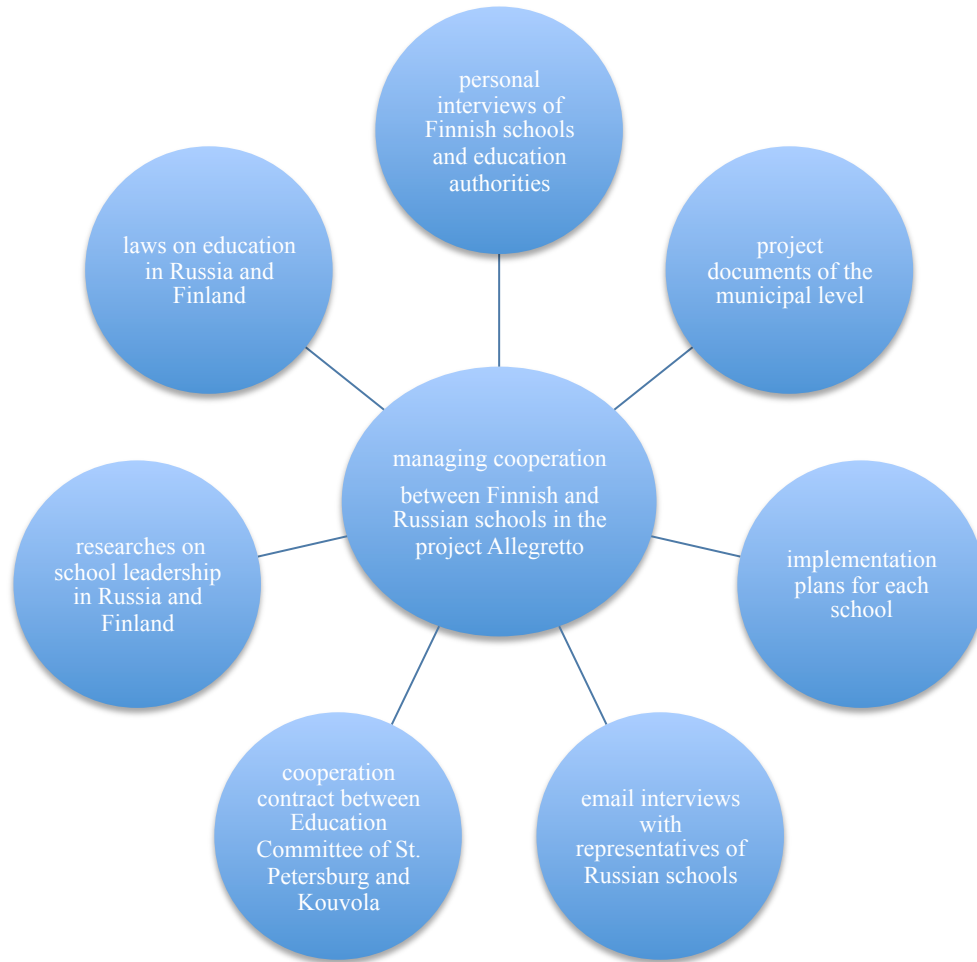
Figure 5. Sources of evidence in data collection process (modified from Yin 2003, 100)

This figure depicts the variety of data sources that were used in the research. The case study concentrates on the phenomena of managing school cooperation on the example of the Allegretto project that has been implemented between Finnish and Russian schools. In the project there is Kirkonkylä School, Upper School of Valkeala, Upper Secondary School of Valkeala and Upper Secondary School of Kouvola Common School, and School of Inkeroinen from Finnish side and School number 200 of St. Petersburg.

3.2.1. Personal interviews

The main source of evidence for this particular research on school cooperation was personal interviews. After getting acquainted with the project Allegretto and the schools that participate the researcher planned to interview personally representatives of both schools in Russia and in Finland. Still, due to the shortage of time and numerous responsibilities of the Russian teachers personal interviews were held just on the Finnish side.

Taking into account educational system and its management, where a big role is played by the municipal authorities it was decided to contact experts from the municipal administration of Kouvola besides school principals and schoolteachers. On the whole there were held 9 personal interviews and 13 persons were interviewed. The length of the interviews was from 25 minutes to 60 minutes depending on the time availability of the interviewee, his/her role and level of participation in the cooperation project, his/her awareness of the issues happening within the project and the number of interviewees. Table 2 contains information about the interviews, its length and participants.

Table 2. Personal interviews

N	Participants	Position	Date	Length	Notes
1	Kim Strömmer	Head of services	13.05.2013	41 min	
2	Kristiina Strömmer	Principal of Kirkonkylä School	15.05.2013	47 min	The group interview, because of the different roles in management of the project participants differentiated who could answer what questions, based on the responsibilities
	Anna Voipio	Class teacher, Russian language teacher			
3	Timo Tiainen	Head of services	16.05.2013	30 min	Small role and little information on the project
4	Eeva Raaska	Teacher of Arts	17.05.2013	50 min	
	Anu Sundvall	English and Russian languages teacher			

	Eira Kantokari	Domestic science teacher			
5	Pauli Pölönen	Principal of Valkeala middle school	17.05.2013	45 min	
6	Keijo Hulkkonen	Principal of Valkeala upper secondary school	29.05.2013	40 min	
	Marja Lindqvist	Russian language teacher			
7	Veikko Niemi	Head of education and youth services of Kouvola	21.05.2013	64 min	The key informant, coordinator of the project in Kouvola
8	Katja Berbacka	Head of teaching	22.05.2013	30 min	The respondent is not within the project for a long time
9	Marjatta Lehto	English teacher	29.05.2013	35 min	
	Maria Petrasova	Student assistant			

Before the interview started there was a small talk between interviewees and the researcher. The researcher gave some time in order to have a look at the list of questions prepared for the interview in order to orientate the interviewees and let them have some ideas of what the talk would be about.

For convenience the interviewees had the list of questions in front of them, still interviews were semi-structured. Though the researcher followed the same list of questions, it was necessary to do several changes in each particular interview, due to specifics of the respondents' positions, their awareness of the cooperation project and its implementation, their role in the project. Not all of the respondents had enough information to comment upon each particular topic. Respondents got different understanding of some questions: that is why researcher's task was to have some additional explanations or questions to pose. Some of the questions were omitted from the list as they got answered while replying to other inquiries and the order of the questions were changed depending on the general flow of each interview. After initial interviews a couple of questions were re-modified in order to make answers more informative and valuable.

Every interview contained about 25 basic questions, some of them more concrete in their character others more open and allowing interviewees ponder over the issues and tell the stories. The questions were made in order to cover wide issues in cooperation: division of roles, communication, motivation of participants, forms of cooperation, positive and negative sides, analysis of own work and experiences, planning and actual implementation of cooperation, directions of cooperation, analysis of results, future plans concerning the same cooperation project or other, correspondence of the project to the general strategy of the city.

All of the interviews were recorded and based on the answers there was done a case study database that became the basis for the analysis later on and that became the source of quotations for the research findings.

Definitely there were differences in the amount of information each respondent wanted to share. It depended upon the role of the respondent in the project, the respondent's interest in the interview and the cooperation project Allegretto in general, the timetable given to the interview. For example, one of the respondents immediately in the beginning of the interview said that the time was restricted because in 30 minutes there was planned another meeting, but according to the respondent there was not so much to say and comment.

Still, on the whole, the researcher was satisfied with the amount of information received for analysis and interviews' contents. The respondents were relaxed and eager to tell. Something was more difficult to answer, but then pondering started and respondents came to the conclusions on the questions never asked and thought over before. The smooth contact was easy to settle and friendly atmosphere was present at all of the interviews.

The interviews were held with the right people and real experts in the school cooperation. They were exactly the ones actively participating and being aware of the project and its development. The interviewees spoke out freely, emotionally and honestly, pointing out positive and negative experiences they faced.

3.2.2. Email interviews

After contacting Veikko Niemi, the head of education and well being services in Kouvola and receiving information from him about the participants in the project "Allegretto", the researcher contacted school №200 from St. Petersburg. The answer was received quickly showing interest in the suggested research.

The contact person from the school became Sizova Natalia Vladimirovna, the coordinator of the project. The researcher suggested choosing the more suitable form of the interviews: personal or email ones. It was decided by the staff members that a more suitable form for the respondents would be the email interviews. The actual research took place in the end of May 2013, the end of school year, when lots of tests and official work takes place. This can be probably one of the reasons why email interviews were preferred. Thus, the researcher sent the questions to the coordinator and then received all the answers through Sizova Natalia, who also became one of the respondents. In Table 3 we can see a list of respondents to the email interviews.

Table 3. Email interviews

№	Interviewee	Position	Notes
1	Alieva Julia	Finnish language teacher	Participated in the project by organising open lessons and games-quizzes
2	Simonina Maria	Finnish language teacher	
3	Gavrileichenko Elena	Finnish language teacher	
4	Sizova Natalia	Vice-principal	Coordinator of the project in school 200
5	Isaeva Liubov	Finnish language teacher	
6	Treskunova Elena	Finnish language teacher	

All of the respondents except Sizova Natalia are Finnish language teachers. This is understandable, because the school was interested in the project exactly on the ground that Finnish language is taught here and on the ground that there will be an opportunity

of profound Finnish language learning through the project. Still, if to compare the list of participants in the personal interviews that took place in the Finnish schools there is more diversity in the participating teaching staff, i.e. there are teachers of Arts, geography, English, etc. The researcher expected that the Russian school would provide the same range of respondents. As a result, allegedly the teachers from the same sphere might have similar experiences and opinions that narrow data analysis to a more unilateral content.

Another weakness of the email interviews is that answers are more limited, more abrupt. In the personal interviews the respondents were expressing ideas that naturally came during conversation, one thought was interrupted by another and this flow in the end resulted in a broad range of data. Email interviews were terse. Definitely they contain the data necessary for the research but they did not open up those deeper and concealed levels that were possible to discover during personal interviews.

One more feature of the email interviews is that the respondents are more precise about their answers controlling the information they give. They think more about what might sound well. That is why this limits the data for analysis that could be much more diverse and richer in content if the interviews were carried out personally.

What the researcher appreciated in the personal interviews was the emotional background of the interviews. The respondents were drawn by the subject and wanted to share something that was really important and that was noticed through the intensity of feelings connected to the topic. Email interviews lack those data and look insufficient in comparison with the personal interviews. Still, the data were collected from the real people and real participants of the project and constituted the basic part of texts for analysis.

3.2.3. Documents

Another source of data that were used in the analysis were documents relating to the project "Allegretto". They were kindly provided by Veikko Niemi, the head of

education and well being services of Kouvola. The list of the documents used is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Documentation on the project "Allegretto"

Name	Date	Notes
The idea of the project on increasing cooperation of Kouvola schools with Russia	10.01.2012	Explanation of municipal targets and strategies, importance of developing cooperation with Russia in the sphere of education
Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan		The project and the curriculum, creation of operation model of cooperation with Russia: one of the points of interest in the personal interviews, participants, schedule, estimation of results
Agreement between the Education Committee (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation) and the European Committee of Kouvola (Finland) on cooperation in education	12.9.2012	In Finnish and in English languages, general rights and responsibilities of the parts, programme activities for the years 2012-2013
Allegretto operational plan of Valkeala upper secondary school and Kouvola co-educational upper secondary school for 2013		Concrete and terse, schedule of the possible activities in 2013
Project plan of Valkeala middle school	24.4.2012/ updated 14.1.2013	Aims, implementation through activities, schedule, budget allocations
Studying activities in learning groups of different subjects according to curriculum in Valkeala middle school		The subjects influenced by the project English language, Russian language, Finnish language, Geography, Biology, Textile Work, Domestic Science, Physics, Chemistry and Maths, Arts, Music and Religion. What is introduced and how in relation to the project?
Allegretto/Kouvola goes to Russia: operational plan/Kirkonkylä school	25.4.2912/ updated 11.1.2013	Activities and Expenses
Emails between Veikko Niemi, the head of Kouvola education and well-being services and Kristiina Strömmer, the principal of Kirkonkylä school	3.4.2013/4. 4.2013	An example of communication between a principal and the coordinator of the project

The enumerated documentation on the project "Allegretto" includes administrative documents, correspondence and operational plans. Those data are valuable because of their accurateness. They contain the exact names, dates and details of the case in question. In addition they exist by themselves, not as a result of a study, not as answers to the questions. Vice versa, the researcher initially got acquainted with the documents before panning the in-depth interviews. They gave the idea about the project and its main targets, its main participants and implemented activities. Those documents helped to make the questions for the interviews and the most interested points were included directly into the body of the questions, especially concerning the range of the strategic plans and targets and their fulfilment in reality.

The documentation helps to receive data not only based on the current happenings and memories as in case of the interviews, but it includes the information on the processes that took place earlier, in the very beginning of the project, at the stage of planning. Because of the stability and availability of the documents it has been always possible to revise the data that contain in the documents. The researcher planned interviews and used the documents as a starting point and then later on the documents were used as the data for analysis and for making conclusions out of the texts.

During the data analysis documents were a good platform for confirming and comparing the issues received from other personal interviews and email interviews, as they have a more prominent status of being independent from the researcher's perspective.

3.2.4. Data collection from textbooks, research papers and articles

As far as context is important while carrying out the case study and also because of the specifics of the educational sector management the researcher decided to study the main features of school leadership and management in both countries. Those features help to understand some basic conditions in the process of managing school cooperation and they revealed important issues that could explain the received results. In the process of gathering data on school leadership and management research papers, textbooks,

monographs and articles were found. In 2007 Hargreaves, Halász and Pont that made a case study report for OECD on improving school leadership titled "School leadership for systemic improvement in Finland" where they discussed Finnish school leadership features in detail. Another research paper was written by Taipale in 2012 that included international survey on educational leadership. Being published for Finnish board of education the report largely covered the situation with educational leadership and management. Those sources were easy to find and immediately were chosen containing information relevant for the present research.

With characteristics of the Russian educational management it was more difficult. The majority of sources available are mainly textbooks and lectures that are created on the basis of laws on education. Definitely they give certain data about division of management functions between different levels and players in the educational sector. But they do not contain more vivid information that could give more details about the real life of schools including concrete cases as for example those works about the Finnish school leadership discussed earlier. Work by Shamova in 2002 was a step forward when it converged the information based on laws and at the same time it touched upon the possible challenges that might be faced by school managers due to changes.

After a more prominent search the researcher managed to find interesting monograph on the modernisation of Russian education by Beliakov where changes and challenges and many operational questions of management are addressed at a new proficient level. In addition to that a few academic articles written by school leaders and researchers were found relevant. Among them a work by Zhuravleva that deals with relevant questions of organising innovative activity in the modern school, an article by Jastrembovich and Zhuravleva that introduces technological approach towards management of innovative activity, a paper by Putinzeva that discusses a model of school management based on forms of state and public management and an article by Alekseeva and Rekichinskaya that describe innovative management used in an upper secondary school. The characteristic feature of those sources is that all of them discuss concrete cases based on experiences of schools connecting them to the general changes that the Russian

educational system is undergoing. This is exactly the information that is needed in order to understand the narrower topic of school cooperation management.

In order to see why cooperation between schools is important, how it is organised and what its capacities are on one hand and what kind of constraints the cooperation management might face in case of both countries Finland and Russia on the other hand, contextual knowledge of school leadership and management in Finland and Russia was collected from textbooks, research papers and academic articles and reports. Table 5 contains those sources of evidence.

Table 5. Secondary sources

Title	Author	Year of publica tion	Strength	Weaknesses
International survey on educational leadership: a survey on school leader's work and continuing education	Taipale, Atso	2012	-Prominent attention to Finnish school leadership -The most important features discussed in comparison with other school systems	-No concrete examples from schools -Just positive features discussed
School leadership for systemic improvement in Finland: A case study report for the OECD activity, Improving school leadership	Hargreaves, A., Halász, G. and Pont, B.	2007	-Qualitative research that addresses the school leadership in Finland very profoundly -Real examples from interviews, quotations -Both positive issues and problematic areas are addressed	-Schools in the central regions of Finland and Tampere region are taken for the research: they have a number of specifics in their activities different from schools in smaller communities
Modernisation of Russian education: improvement of management	Beliakov, S.	2009	-Addresses problematic areas because of transformations in Russian education -Converges data received from legal documents and transfers them to	-Big emphasis on economic and financial sides that are not of the first importance for the research of school cooperation management -too clumsy

			practical issues	formulas that are not relevant in practice
Relevant questions of innovative activity management in the modern educational institution	Zhuravleva, N.	2008	-Discusses changes in the modern school management -Works out a new management technology	-Emphasis on innovativeness in schools -Concrete for one school
Development of public management forms as a management model of publicly active school	Putinzeva, I.	2008	-Importance of strategic management in schools is discussed -Concrete and tested management model	-Specific for one school
Management innovations in upper secondary school	Alekseeva, T. and Rekichinskaya, E.	2008	-New directions in Russian education: humanities and democratisation -Problems and barriers for changes	-Specific school
System of financing education: analysis of efficiency (conference report)	Kliachko, T.L et al.	2003	-Questions of efficiency discussed -Convergence of legal basis and future practical tendencies	- Too much attention to the laws on education
Management of educational systems	Shamova et al.	2002	-Division of the management roles between different actors	-A textbook
Management of innovative activity in secondary comprehensive school № 33 named after the hero of Russian Federotion Nemitkin M.U.: technology approach	Jastrembovich, T.I and Zhuravleva, N.N.	2008	-general changes in the education system -necessary changes for schools -challenges to implement changes -role of the management	-Specific case of one school

All of the sources concern basic comprehensive education in both countries. Management of universities and professional schools differ and require a separate specific approach. The researcher decided to thoroughly study the contextual prerequisites, having an example of a case study research "Contextual impact on

educational management and leadership: a case of Chinese education" by Kam-Cheung Wong, published in 2006. Allegedly the studied school leadership and management characteristics in Finland and in Russia might influence the school cooperation management in particular: the way it starts, the participants are chosen, the forms and structures it has, who manages it, etc. Those context characteristics will be used in the research as a validation tool as well.

3.3. Data Analysis

For data analysis of the given research on school cooperation the researcher used content analysis that is very typical for the qualitative studies of the type. Content analysis was used inside of the case study research for analysing the textual content of the primary data. It is important to see what content analysis means and how it is implemented to find the answers to the research questions while analysing the data.

3.3.1. Essence of content analysis

Content analysis as a research technique in this case can be well explained. According to Krippendorff (2004, 18) content analysis aims at making conclusions from the texts and connects those texts to their contexts. In case of the present research the given texts for analysis will be interview database made by researcher based on the recorded interviews, texts of project plans, implementation plans of the participating schools in the project and contracts on carrying out the project "Allegretto" signed by representative of the municipal authorities in Kouvola and St. Petersburg and the school number 200 of St. Petersburg.

Krippendorff (2004, 22-29) discusses several features of texts in content analysis. This is interesting to pay attention to those characteristics, as they will explain the features of the data used in the given research as well.

All texts for analysis have reader dependent qualities. This means that text exists for readers and they are created for readers, all texts have messages that bear some meaning. Those meanings make data that will be a ground for further researcher's pondering and conceptualising. (Krippendorff 2004, 22) The texts mentioned in the previous paragraph made the ground for thinking over the research problems and answering the research question of the present research. Both primary and secondary sources included the necessary message on school cooperation management and were analysed in order to discover possibilities and difficulties in interschool cooperation. The researcher having in mind the idea of the research and the research questions gathered the suitable data for the analysis in order to receive results that matter and make sense.

Another feature is that texts will have several meanings. There can be different bases used for the analysis. One can see important one side, while another can investigate another meaning. That will explain the interest of the researcher to concentrate on some particular bodies of texts. Krippendorf (2004, 23) writes that the analysed texts and their meanings are understood differently. There is no need that data analysed through content analysis will be seen from the same perspective. This is the sense of content analysis that there may evoke different interpretations from the same textual material. And it goes without saying that a lot depends on the researcher and the researcher's perspective. The same texts might have been interpreted in a different way by a researcher who might be interested in knowledge sharing in the process of cooperation between schools.

A very important feature that also explains the essence of content analysis is that the uncovered contents are much more than merely texts. Texts are just physical body of far wider phenomena. Those phenomena may be about experiences, feelings, conceptions, behaviours or hidden causes. Definitely those causes and meanings will be valid in certain contexts, discourses or purposes. It means that particular text is created in particular situation and the conclusions will refer for this situation only. Messages are analysed relative to particular problems. Contextual background is very important as an initial determination in content analysis. At this point when a researcher determines a

concrete context for analysis amount of possible interpretations decreases. Contexts build up a world in which texts start to make sense and help researchers answer researcher questions and solve research problems. Through content analysis it is possible to receive inferences from texts to the determined contexts. Content analysis allows to narrow possible findings, possible information concerning something unobserved, for example intentions, plans, mental status, conditions to specific contexts for content analysis is usually performed as answering a specific research question. (Krippendorf 2004, 23-24)

In the present research the context of one particular project on cooperation between schools was used, the project "Allegretto". The context was determined before the data collection process. It includes the peculiarities of the certain municipalities, in this case Kouvola and St. Petersburg, the peculiarities of schools participating in the project, the specifics of the time when this project takes place. That is why the main findings were done for the specific context and it might be seen carefully what can be transferred and generalised to the other worlds.

3.3.2. Elements of content analysis

Krippendorff (2004, 29-43) introduces the conceptual framework of content analysis that is presented as a system of connected elements. It allows having a general understanding of content analysis as a research technique and helps researchers to generate research designs and structure data analysis into consistent process.

Figure 6 is a visualisation of the components of the data analysis in the particular research. As a basis the researcher used Krippendorff's framework but modified it to make it suitable for the peculiarities of the research on managing school cooperation and the particular case of the project "Allegretto".

Other contexts   **Context of the Research**
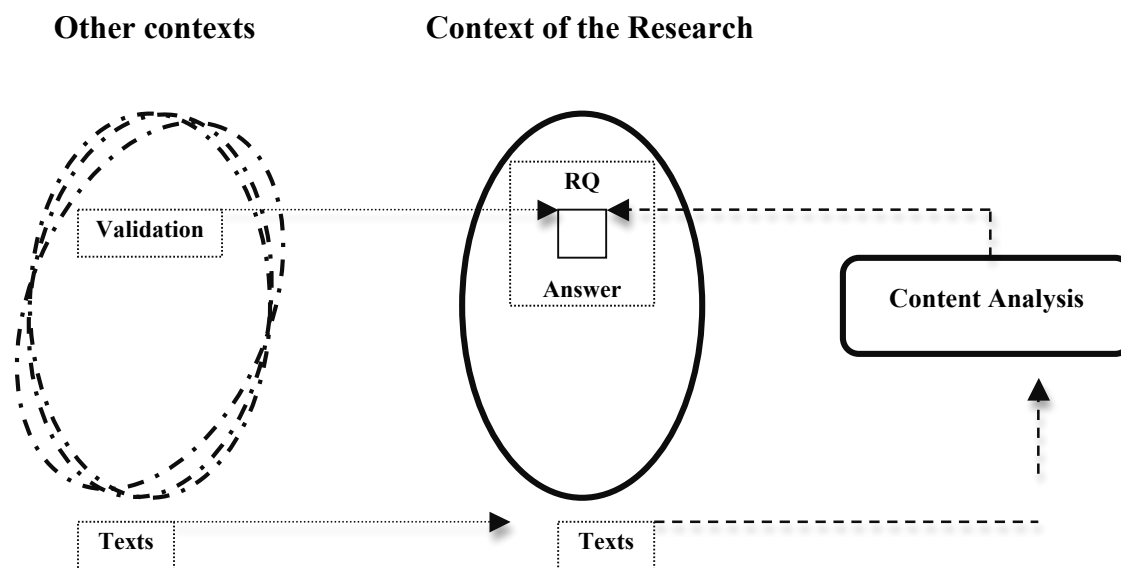
Figure 6. The Flow of the Data Analysis (modified from Krippendorff 2004, 30)

The first component of the data analysis performed in this research is the Research Question. This research question will be answered drawing the conclusions from the texts. The technique of content analysis is about searching for answers from the texts to the research question. (Krippendorff 2004, 31-33) Because the data were collected through in-depth interviews starting with the research question was compulsory. The produced relevant texts then were read for a certain purpose.

The next component of content analysis, and definitely the basic one, is data presented in the form of texts (Krippendorff 2004, 30). As it was mentioned in the very beginning of the chapter in case of the present research the texts will include transcript of interviews records, documents concerning the project "Allegretto" approved at the municipal level and operational plans of the schools participating in the project.

But as it was discussed earlier texts receive meanings and significance just when referring to the context. Contexts do not exist by themselves; contexts are created. Through this texts receive conceptual environment and with this become significant. As it is shown in Figure 6 context connects the text and the research question to the answers uncovered trough content analysis, so it is vital to make the context be explicit. The explicit context makes the results clear and understandable, bearing scientific

contribution and what is of the foremost importance reliable and valid (Krippendorff 2004, 33-34). In this research the context is determined in advance by studying a single case of school cooperation presented in the project "Allegretto".

The researcher studying the texts carefully brings the context into operation by applying analytical tools. Those analytical tools connect the texts to the research question and help to find out the answers. They are one of the elements of content analysis as well. Using analytical tools the researcher models the context, i.e. analytical tools ensure that analysis is done in correspondence to the context, not against it. This is the key idea. Analysis of the text is to be done taking into account the context. (Krippendorff 2004, 34-35) For example, the same research texts of the present work could be analysed in other contexts that are shown in Figure 6 in the form of dotted ovals. This could be a context of pedagogical leadership or a context of communication management. In different contexts analytical tools would work differently, they would lead to different answers. In the centre of the present research is the context of the project "Allegretto" that includes school cooperation management perspective with emphasis on strategic capacities and operational constraints.

Krippendorff (2004, 44-77) discusses different kinds of analytical tools. The first type of tools used in this research is *extrapolations* (Krippendorff 2004, 47). This is a mathematical term that Krippendorff uses in his classifications. Still it is applied in other studies as well and generally it means making a conclusion from one source and applying it for another category. In the case of the research conclusions were done from each text or opinion separately and later were transferred and accumulated in order to give the answers about the context on the whole. Within the group of those analytical tools trends and differences were found the most suitable ones. Following the formula "if somebody mentions something, then it is …" the researcher made a list of categories that refer to the research question. Out of those categories there were found common ones, i.e. trends, and different ones, i.e. differences. The key questions for the researcher to answer during analysis were

- How to define the category?

- What is its importance?
- Is it related to other categories?
- Why this category came to the foreground?
- Are those categories continuous or changing?
- Who mentioned this category and under what conditions?
- How knowledgeable the text producer is of the category?
- How is this category connected to the research question?

Those questions were answered trough finding out the frequency of mentioning this or that category, the priority of categories in the texts, emotional content for each category, i.e. something negative or positive, person who mentioned this category, connections between different categories revealed by the text producers.

In addition to the analytical tools discussed earlier due to the nature of educational management and the big role of the authorities the researcher used institutional processes in the analysis (Krippendorf 2004, 68-77). That is why there will be a few institutional explanations that constitute a part of the context and make a bridge towards the research question. Institutional processes were helpful first of all during the analysis of the documents that coordinate the project "Allegretto". Institutional realities are fundamental in those texts. Further on institutional structures were reflected in the texts produced by representatives of the municipal authorities as those interviewers manifest institutional rules in their work.

Through establishing trends, differences and institutional processes the researcher drove to another component of the analysis: the researcher made conclusions and by that answered the research question. According to Krippendorff (2004, 36) generally for content analysis abductive conclusions are more typical. The present research was no exception. The analysis flowed from the particular texts to answers to the research questions, in other words from peculiarities of one type to peculiarities of another type. The movement was carried out from the texts on the project "Allegretto" to the peculiarities of managing school cooperation that can be further on brought to other

contexts that brings to the foreground one more element of the content analysis: validation.

Validation should be actually present at all levels of the flow and all components of content analysis should have it as a background, starting with the research question and finalising with results. The analysis should not be mere abstraction; it should have some reality some backing that is independent from the researcher. (Krippendorff 2004, 39-40) Validation of the content analysis is a critical issue. The question of validity and reliability of the present research will be discussed in a separate chapter later on.

3.3.3. Qualitative content analysis

It is important to discuss some features of qualitative content analysis that were characteristic for the present research. According to Krippendorff (2004, 83-87) the process of data analysis includes usually some logical steps as

- Segmenting texts into systematic units that could be analysed separately
- Sampling texts into limited subsets
- Coding texts in order to make them sensible and ready for the purposes of the research
- Reducing them into more efficient categories
- Making conclusions through analytical tools
- Reporting the results

It goes without saying that with qualitative content analysis it is rather challenging to find all those stages, still they do exist in the process of the data analysis as they combine the elements discussed in the previous chapter into the flow. The peculiarity of the qualitative content analysis is that the researcher goes from one step to another and then can return. The qualitative data analysis happens through continuous modifying and revising. (Krippendorff 2004, 88-89) The same way in the present data analysis the researcher returned several times to the stages of segmenting and sampling after proceeding to later readings. The volume of texts transcribed based on the interviews

was rather large and this explains why sampling and segmenting phases were to be revised again and again after the researcher got to analyse more and more texts.

The data analysis on school cooperation project "Allegretto" allowed receiving diverse interpretations of the same phenomenon. The data were analysed from different perspectives: municipal authorities, school principals and teachers, it also included individual and organisational perspectives, took into account strategic and operational questions.

It was challenging to combine those multiple conclusions from texts into one context. Still, the model of poles of cooperation suggested and developed already in the theoretical part helped a lot in coding and defining efficient categories for analysis. The analysis was done with reference to the quotations from the interviews that allowed identifying the context of findings, making the analysis transparent and trustworthy.

3.4. Quality of the Research

Quality of the research is discussed in order to see whether the research has been implemented according to the scientific requirements in general. But this determination is rather wide when it is understood that in case of the social sciences and especially with qualitative studies it is difficult to define the criteria and standards for such evaluation.

In order to start speaking about the quality of the research I would determine that this discussion would be preformed within hermeneutic paradigm. This is reasonable because hermeneutics moves away from the statistical generalisations and objective interpretations and emphasises personal interpretations as a basis for understanding phenomena of reality. Language becomes the main element that explains suitability of content analysis for the research, quantitative measurements are replaced by qualitative judgements and generalisations give place to specific issues. (Gummesson 2000, 177)

Thus, within hermeneutic paradigm the research on interschool cooperation is focused around the specific case of interschool cooperation between concrete schools in Finland and in Russia. The central elements of the analysis are the in-depth interviews with the participants of the interschool cooperation that mold the data for analysis of qualitative character. Those answers are presented as texts in the content analysis and the personal judgements make the basis for further interpretation of the researcher. The hermeneutic paradigm allows recognition of subjectivity and concentration on the concrete case as it is done in the present research; still, possibilities for generalisation might be discussed.

The first and foremost issue in discussing quality of the research is reliability. In the scientific literature it is understood as receiving similar findings in case if other researchers implement the same research using the same methods (Shipman 1982 in Gummesson 2000, 184-185; Easterby-Smith et al. 2008 and Silverman 2007 in Saunders et al. 2009, 326). But in case of the qualitative research this cannot be taken as measurement of quality of the research, since the qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews are used in order to research the specific situation of interschool cooperation as it is at the present moment with those concrete participants and processes involved. It means that repeatability is not declared as the main criterion of the quality. Because if it could be possible to make the research repeatable then the essence of the qualitative methods used in this case would be lost. Instead of that it is important to explain the choice of the research object, the research questions, and based on that the research strategy and methods, data collection processes and data analysis, as it is done in detail in this work. Thus, motivation for the research is explained by the researcher's interest and own experience in the educational sphere as well as by the researches conducted by others in the sphere of educational management and inter-organisational cooperation in business life as well. As the basis for the research, logically theory of educational management is discussed. Additionally theoretical framework is built around the topics of inter-organisational cooperation in general, reasons and the expected strategic benefits of that, as well as more specific issues of interschool cooperation and its possible forms. As it was mentioned earlier the complexity of the phenomenon makes it interesting to explore it through qualitative methods and to use case study strategy,

having an interesting case of international interschool cooperation between the schools of Kouvola and St. Petersburg. All that adds credibility.

Credibility of the research was guaranteed through advance learning of the case documents, i.e. the project plans and project initiatives. The coordinator of the project allowed access to those documents after receiving the information on what the research is planning to study. In addition to that to make data analysis sound credible, all of the interpretations are fortified by the direct quotations from the interviews and the project documents. The section discussing findings includes opinions that go in line with one another and sometimes contrast. This means that the research phenomenon is analysed through several perspectives and nothing is excluded because of contrasting opinions or differences in explanations. Vice versa I tried to take into account all of the opinions in order to enlarge the possible spectrum of research results and its analysis.

Validation of data has been mentioned several times in the data analysis section, because it is a integral part of the content analysis. How to evaluate this criterion? First of all, the phenomenon under study is cooperation between educational establishments. This phenomenon is studied from the perspectives of possible constraints and capacities that enable it and appear during activities. Initially the question was posed in a way that it was to discuss whether capacities or constraints prevail. Still, in the process of the research it was modified so that both areas are worthy to be studied and there can't be found something more important on the scale when the process is complex and includes both elements and exactly this approach allows discussing the phenomenon more closely.

In order to receive more prominent data, content analysis was not limited by the categories suggested in the theoretical framework that was in its turn used in order to validate the data after the results and findings were allocated into categories, to make the conclusions and to improve the framework through adding new categories received in the data analysis. This fulfils conditions of internal validity.

The external validity is checked through other researches performed about school leadership in Finland and in Russia in general in order to see how findings of the present research work in the larger contexts. That is why, findings of the research can be transferred to other settings as well. While creating the framework of inter-organisational cooperation I tried to use universal terms not specific only for educational management sphere, but for other sectors as well. This brings back the question of generalisation.

The problem of generalisation is an interesting point of discussion while using in-depth studies. Statistical results of the quantitative studies are believed to give basis for truthful generalisations due to large amount of respondents in the sample. Qualitative methods analyse and investigate phenomena in detail and generalised conclusions are made based on the assumption that the same processes might happen with other individuals, relations, structures, companies, organisations, etc. (Gummesson 2000, 89-91) Following this logic, it is believed that the results of this concrete case of interschool cooperation might be relevant for other schools as well. The possible challenges that are under study and the management tools, weaknesses and capacities might be found in cooperation between schools in other municipalities, other countries or even can be transferred to other organisation rather than educational in case of cooperative forms of activities.

However, all discussed is not the absolute and final objective. In his work Gummesson (2000, 90-91) justly argues that qualitative methods are not to discover universal absolute truths, they are not to arrive to the final point, because qualitative research is everlasting. One theory is created, then tested, then opposed by another theory and replaced by something better. The phenomena are complex in a way that the research conditions contain uncontrolled, unpredictable elements and that might cause that a theory will not be proved under other conditions, in the context of a new research.

This opinion is understood through the hermeneutic paradigm that allows the researcher combining the reasonable and emotional sides of the analysis and involving personal experience as well as pre-understanding of the situation. This personal experience and

pre-understanding of interschool cooperation made me search for a certain case to be studied. According to Gummesson (2000, 178) the researcher partly participates in creating the object of the analysis. This happened in case of the present research as well. For example, the way the researcher tried to find the case to be studied. Different forms and variants of interschool cooperation were dealt with and tried to access. Interschool cooperation between schools of Kouvola and the Russian school was chosen. Still, the researcher included not all of the schools into the study. For example, Kouvola co-education school was omitted, when its part in the project was understood as smallish and it is much the same as the one performed by Valkeala upper secondary school. The researcher made the questions that were used in the interviews holding in mind the research objectives and the framework of interschool cooperation received through literature analysis. All that demonstrates researcher's active participation in creation of the research object but does not lessen the level of validity.

To guarantee validity of findings triangulation (Ghauri and GrØnhaug 2010, 212-213) was used during research. In order to receive valid information it was important to have access to data from different angles. That is why interviews were taken with representatives of the city administration, school principals and teachers. In addition to that data from representatives of both Finnish ad Russian schools were received. Also different sources of primary data were used: personal interviews, email interviews, documents regulating the project of cooperation and emails of the representatives. The questions asked during the interviews concerned individual, team, and organisational and inter-organisational modes of activities. All that allowed better access to information on a deeper level, better understanding of the phenomenon under study. As it was found out during the interviews not every participant possessed the same amount of knowledge about interschool cooperation, that can be explained by different roles of the respondents, and different points of view gave more confidence when working with the data.

4. FINDINGS

Returning to the research questions as a result of content analysis the following issues are to be presented covering the features of management interschool cooperation based on the case study of interschool cooperation project "Allegretto". As far as the research question contained three main research sub-problems the findings will be presented in three parts, as it is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Findings

Management of Inter-School Cooperation		
Managerial Tools	Features	Challenges
1.Finding the Right Partner 2. Setting Targets 3. Distribution of power 4. Operational Model 5. Inner Work Group 6. Communication Tools 7. Coordination 8. Analysis of the Results 9. Experiences 10. Networking	1. Multi-Directional Flows 2. Conversation with Bottom-up Listening 3. Policy of the City 4. Free-will Endeavour 5. Part of Everyday Activities 6. Equality of Conditions while Facing Differences 7. Continuity 8. Learning through Sharing	1. Budget 2. No direct contact 3. Commitment 4. Time, Schedules, Delays 5. External Events 6. Trust 7. Language Problems 8. Allocation of Roles and Tasks

This approach to presentation of findings in the content analysis can be called a map of semantic nodes. There are three semantic nodes in this case: managerial tools, features and challenges of managing inter-school cooperation. They are further characterised through semantic attributions: elements that are attributed to the nodes and connect the nodes to each other. (Krippendorff 2004, 203) Those nodes, i.e. sub-problems of the research question, and their attributions, categories detached from the texts through content analysis, will be discussed in detail further on.

4.1. Managerial and Leadership Tools for School Cooperation

The first sub-problem was posed as how interschool cooperation is managed. For answering this question after content analysis of the the project documents and first of all transcripts of the interviews from the Finnish side and email interviews from the Russian side the following categories were found to be important. In this section they will be presented as managerial and leadership tools that were used in interschool

cooperation of the project "Allegretto". Those ones are the issues that are, so to say, on the surface. They can be found in the official documentation of the project and in the interviews with representatives of city administration. They are more official in character and the interviewees named them as a matter of fact.

4.1.1. Finding the right partner

The first and foremost issue in managing cooperative activities is definitely about finding the right partner. Both sides should understand why they are the suitable variants for each other. Some basic explanations should be found for partners to justify participation in cooperation. Outward and inward conditions should be taken into account. Definitely partners on Finnish and Russian side started to cooperate because of the larger strategies of the municipal authorities of Kouvola and St. Petersburg.

"The initiative on cooperation with Russia, St. Petersburg came from the previous Kouvola Board of Education and from its chairman Juha Katainen, who brought this subject to agenda on the general meeting and considered it very important to make a project on cooperation with Russia and from there it started" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

It was rather interesting to find out why exactly school 200 in St. Petersburg became a part of the project, when there are thousands of schools in the multi-million city. In this process definitely personal networks of the participants might help as well as advice and recommendations of municipal authorities, which possess the best information on the schools under their administration.

"Our partner in cooperation with Russia was offered at the municipal level by St. Petersburg Education Committee…We took contact from Kouvola city to representatives of Education Committee and asked what school they recommend, we offered Kouvola schools as partner schools and we received the suggestions about their schools and the very first cooperation contact and connections created coordinator on Russia from the Kouvola Vocational College who has been in Russia and known networks in Russia and St. Petersburg and she established those relations…i.e. the cooperation partner was presented to us by St. Petersburg" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

In addition to the environment, general background and opinion of the municipal authorities the participants need to see their own interest. The Finnish schools became interested because of the possibility to incite more interest in the Russian language learning in the region.

"*The Board of education was interested in how to encourage children to learn Russian language*"[Kristiina Strömmer, Kirkonkylä school]

School 200 from St. Petersburg became active in the project because of its specialisation in the Finnish language. In this school Finnish language is taught from the second school year. It means that the school 200 saw new horizons in the cooperation as well.

In addition to that the school 200 is positioned as an advanced educational establishment. It is interested in new experiments, new challenges, new tasks that are considered as tools for further development and improvement. For example, one of the Finnish language teachers explained why the Educational Committee of St. Petersburg suggested exactly this school as a partner for the schools of Kouvola.

"*extended learning of Finnish language, existence of experimental ground, creation of own methodological aid, participation in the international project*" [Julia Alieva, School 200]

It means that before cooperation is started the choice of partners should be thoroughly pondered over. The participants of cooperation should see the capacity in it and the possible positive influence of the participation in cooperation, its usefulness. The search for partners can start from the personal networks of the initiators and potential participants of the cooperation, further on previous experiences of the participating organisations might be checked and then help can be asked from the administrative authorities who bear the knowledge about all the schools that are under their lead.

4.1.2. Setting targets

The targets of the project on cooperation are written in the documents and were mentioned by the interviewees as well. The concrete goal of the project is:

"Creation and increase of cooperation with Russia in Kouvola schools through the following activities: 1.Operational model of cooperation with Russia and Internationalisation path in direction to Russia 2.Supporting Russian language learning 3.Creating cooperative relations between schools of Kouvola and St. Petersburg 4.Using benefits of IT in international cooperation" [Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan]

One of the interviewees commented that targets written in the plan are usually much broader than what is implemented in reality:

"plans are always better than implementation… but we must have targets and try to move towards them. " [Keijo Junttunen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

In spite of this fact, the interviewee justly mentions that targets are necessary for participants to know where they go to orientate, and then in the end they are needed for evaluation of the results. As it was mentioned the project has an overwhelming target, but each school determines their own particular targets, while individual teachers will formulate the targets for the classroom activities. It means that this is a multi-layer structure of targets. The targets of the particular schools will be discussed in the section about school operational plans. This section is concentrating on the targets of the general character. Continuing this talk, in case of cooperation the partners should have somehow similar targets, or targets suitable and acceptable by both sides.

"the beginning was a challenge, sometimes we had a feeling that our thoughts, what we wanted, what was written in our project plan as targets and what we presented to the representatives from St. Petersburg… they didn't understand the ideology of that. They had also a different idea and they wrote project targets in a different way…it can be that we have a Finnish language contract and they have a Russian language contract…Are they totally the same in ideas? …However the basic main point is, both sides shared opinion that internationalisation was the key target and both sides agreed to contribute to that…" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

From this comment it is understandable that the targets should be written in a way both partners understand them and the ideology behind them. When it becomes challenging, for example, because of language problems, it is necessary to find at least one key point, the vision that will equally be important for the participants. In this case, the city administrations chose internationalisation as the target concept. Both of them can further on specify the concept through concrete targets valid in their own activities. According to the features of the educational sector that were discussed in the theoretical part of the research everything that is implemented in the educational organisations should be relevant and go in line with the policies of larger institutions that are behind: the city and the state.

The cooperation project "Allegretto" can be presented as answering the general conditions and targets of the educational policy at the state level. Its importance is explained in the project documents as well:

"According to the Development Plan for Education and Research of the Ministry of Education developing entrepreneurship (and knowledge of work life and the related to it) skills is important to start at the level of Basic Education. Participating citizenship and entrepreneurship that are written into the basics of the Basic Educational Curriculum support the goals of fostering entrepreneurship and, with that, implementation of the project." [the Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

or

"Educational export should be fostered… Improving quality of education, reinforcing knowledge ground, making use of possibilities of educational export increase international opening" [Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan]

Even the choice of the partner for cooperation, Russia, is explained through the broader vision of economic benefits for the whole country:

"Russia is considered to be one of the most important and emerging economies with which cooperation should be especially added." [the Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

Those quotations explain that the cooperation project "Allegretto" is planned and is implemented in accordance with the targets of the Ministry of Education. The project can be considered as a strategic endeavour of the state importance.

Further on, moving down from the state level to the regional and municipal levels, the project on cooperation is explained through the Regional Programme of Kymenlaakso region for 2011-2013:

"knowledge of Russia is one of the cross-cutting topics… The plan of implementation of the Regional programme 2012-2013 emphasises increasing and reinforcing cooperation with Russia at different levels. " [the Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

Education administration representatives of Kouvola presented the same idea during the interviews in relation to the policy of the city.

"…and then the city [Kouvola] *administration policy, the strategy for St.Petersburg, Russia neighbourhood is so important that all service sectors and branches invest resources…"* [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Because of the easier access towards sources in Finland, there were better possibilities for analysis of what is happening with the Finnish participants.

Making the conclusion at this point, the accordance of the project and suitability of cooperation to the targets of organisations of the higher level is one of the central features of cooperation in educational sphere. Definitely, it should conceptually be a part of the bigger pictures in order to receive permission for implementation. Another point is that there will be needed a financial support from the administrative structures and the latter need to see that the finance goes in line with their financial plans. The question of financing will be discussed further on in a separate section.

4.1.3. Distribution of power: municipal authorities and schools, principals and teachers

Distribution of power is a basic element of shared leadership that has been discussed in the educational sector rather widely recently. It happens so, that traditional formal

bureaucratic leadership systems are replaced by more flexible approaches that reveal leadership capabilities of different participants. (Harris 2012; Hallinger and Heck 2010; Ishimaru 2013) In the same way, policy-making, planning, implementation, financing questions, etc. all those responsibilities were distributed through the whole educational system including municipalities, schools, principals and teachers as participants and leaders in this project.

In case of cooperation in the educational sector the city signs the contracts on cooperation. The contracts are not done at the level of schools.

"on our Kouvola or Finnish side it was started by and decisions of the highest level are made by the Board…in the big issues of the kind… and the Board gives us, the officials, the right and the task to prepare the cooperation plan and the cooperation contract with St. Petersburg Education Committee that was planned…well a year ago we did this contract and plan and it was approved by the Board and St. Petersburg Committee approved the contract from their side…so the Board approves the plan at the political level and implementation is the task of our officials, school workers and principals…"
[Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Why are contracts essential? In my opinion, this is well explained through the features of the educational sector. Some of the teachers who participate in the cooperative activities revealed that they have never seen the contract and some of them even heard about it for the first time. It means that contracts are created as an official bureaucratic endeavour, to record on paper that cooperation does exist. The contract that was signed in this case included the list of activities for the time of the project, but mostly it bears political and legal meaning.

Another important remark concerning the contracts and agreements is that it should be equally understood by the partners. That's why it is vital to find common language. The contract between Kouvola and St. Petersburg was done in Finnish and in English languages.

When the contracts are signed and the conditions are agreed upon leadership functions are transferred to the level of schools. The schools that agreed to take part in the research; each of them had their own operational plan of cooperation, where they

discussed the main targets, the main actors, the main activities and the amount of the budget necessary for this or that activity. Those plans are updated in accordance with the progress of cooperation. This is rather logical that in addition to the general plan for the project each school presents own version of the operational plan, because the schools are the actors of the cooperation and they are the one that can plan closer to the possibilities, closer to the reality and lead the project in its own way:

"...in practice we formulated cooperation framework, and we did the project plan that was handled in our own meeting, at which Veikko Niemi was present as well, and...our operational plan suffered and was compressed in accordance to the possibilities of the economic resources we received." [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

It means that schools have their own inner meetings to prepare the plans that run in accordance with the city conditions and requirements. But the representative of the city administration is present at such meetings. The first reason might be that in this case the city administration representative coordinates the projects at the same time. So, the task is to see if the school plans within the framework of the city targets and at the same time to get the information, so to say straight from the horse's mouth.

One of the sensitive questions is financing and this is managed in its best way through the principle of shared leadership. Cooperation project "Allegretto" is an additional arrangement for all the participants: the city and the schools. Definitely the city and the schools cannot cover all the additional costs that the project causes and they have to apply for financial support to the Finnish Board of Education.

"Financing was implemented partly by the Board of education, partly by Kouvola city and Partly by the school budgets." [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

So it means that there are three sources of financing for the Finnish schools. Definitely the schools can use their own budget, but it was interesting to see how the financing from outside: from the city and the board of education was divided. According to the interviewees from the administration and from different schools, there haven't appeared any problems and discussions:

"…I have been in the project just one year and it was really great in my opinion…I was in the primary school running the Russian language club and there was own budget reserved for the club and for the equipment there and when I was there in March and when we together with other teachers worked in cooperation we, well, for example, we searched for materials, books and everything of the kind, in my opinion it was great that for that primary school had own budget, and our school received own part, it means that this had been thought over in advance…" [Marja Lindquist, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

This actually describes that the schools in Kouvola manage to come to the common decisions and this is a sign of well-run cooperation on the Finnish side as well. This is highly important to understand why this participant needs so much, and why another participant needs this amount. For that the participants have to be aware of the particular targets and activities not only in own school but in other school as well. Financing can be a really sensitive topic if the issues are not agreed upon in a way they were done in the project "Allegretto".

As far as interschool cooperation in its core is to be implemented at the level of schools the main actors become teachers and principals. At the very start it is important to receive initiative of a principal and at least one teacher, then cooperation will start.

"…always to run any kind of projects in a school there is a need for an enthusiastic principal and at least one enthusiastic teacher…" [Timo Tiainen, Kouvola City]

If a principal is motivated, then the principal will find motivated teachers for implementing cooperation. Together with the teachers principals may decide in what form the cooperation and participation of the school in the project will be implemented.

"it started from the point who had a) interest b) some knowledge of Russian language c) some knowledge that could be interesting in this project…And in spite of the fact that the general plan is done weakly, for me it is really delightful that teachers got to act independently…there were issues [related to the project] *in Domestic Science, in English… in Russian… in Arts… so first we thought what could be done, then we calculated the budget, then we got to know how much money we receive and then we compressed and discussed what to do…"* [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

Principals act mostly at the background. Principals are links between the teachers and the city, they are instructors and supporters.

"...principals do not participate in making official...this is done by Veikko Niemi and the Board performs official cooperation. We are in contact to the school [in St. Petersburg] *and this has been done mostly by Anna..."* [Kristiina Strömmer, Kirkonkylä school]

But the role of the principal cannot be underestimated. Especially at the initial stage of cooperation, when relations between the partners should be started and formed and brought forward to further development the network of principals and the cooperation at the level of principals is decisive.

"we went far in our school...yes, we directly started to act through school principals and through that is was implemented in a better way, faster and more efficiently." [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

"and again about principals, well I have dealt with this kind of activities earlier and we know well one another and we have a kind of networks of principals and through networks we start: "there is this kind of activity, should we participate?" [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

Later on the principals are to pass over the responsibilities for operational activities to the teachers who have enough independence and are free to use their creativity and knowledge in order to include cooperation with other schools into a normal learning process.

"...then at the school level role of the principals has been fairly small...the principals are skilful in delegating tasks...what might be a problem...that teachers who in their school, in their classroom, in their teaching implement cooperation and project activities, this causes more work in addition to their lessons....and the teachers want and hope to receive some compensation or reward and in some schools those compensations were not arranged in a good way and that was a small problem in certain places..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Definitely without active teachers and principals the city could not make the cooperation at all. A lot depends on their motivation, networks, skills and knowledge. Teachers are the implementers of cooperation, that is why they need to have a certain degree of independence in order to apply their knowledge and skills under new conditions: cooperation between other schools. They are closer to the final targets of the cooperation, because in the end it is done for the purpose of improvement of student

performance at schools. But it is important to reward teachers for their commitment, because most of the tasks are delegated to them. This is vital to keep up motivation and participation at the same level.

4.1.4. Developing operational model

The operational model of cooperation was mentioned in the section describing the targets of cooperation where it was presented as one of the central activities. But I consider it as an important managerial tool, because when created it can be justly and deftly adapted to other cases of cooperation. It deserves special attention as well because the research is preceding the aim of creating a framework of interschool cooperation management. Exactly the activity of creating operational model in this cooperation is twinned to this aim.

I will make a remark that this operational model is mentioned only in the Finnish documents and it was discussed only during the in-depth interviews in Finland.

"With creation of the model it is being tried to guarantee long-term cooperation. Developing the model attention is paid to challenges of cooperative procedures with Russia, needs in cooperation of school of different levels, development perspective of education organiser, knowledge needs of teachers and business and work life needs that are laid into strategies." [Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

This seems to be rather bulky and complicated. That is why for me it became interesting if those issues that should make basis for the cooperation model were a part of the activities in the project "Allegretto" and I asked the interviewees to comment upon them.

That was a challenging question for the interviewees, especially when it was discussed with the teachers:

"well probably it is needed to develop communication skills when I don't know what to answer…" [Eeva Raaska, Valkeala middle school]

"I see that for the first time…" [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

And this is rather strange, because the project idea explains the central role of the teacher in the operation model:

"Developing cooperation model attention is especially paid to the teacher's 1.Knowledge of international and especially Russian culture 2.Use of IT for teaching purposes 3.Mastery of Russian language and culture 4.Update in knowledge of Basic Education Curriculum and professional degrees. [Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

Of course, taking some time and thinking over the issues the interviewees managed to comment upon the concepts through the cooperative activities implemented during the project.

Based on those elements I created the visual representation of the model in the form of the circles that is Figure 7. I decided to represent it as a circle with different layers. The larger circle is the background for cooperation. It concerns the activities across borders and it is based on the characteristics of the partner, in this case, Russia. The second smaller circle concerns mostly the Finnish side and the business and work life need in Finland. The third circle covers narrower area and is concentrated upon the city of Kouvola and its development questions. The next circle reflects the level of schools and the last, the most important one, the core of the model concerns the development needs of teachers because they are the main actors of the cooperation in education.

Develement needs of teachers' knowledge: language skills, Cultural knowledge, Internationalisation, IT skills, teamwork, scheduling, planning

Needs in cooperation of schools of different levels: differences vs. inclination to homogeneuos activities

Development point of view of the education organiser: internationlisation, internationalisation channels, Russian language in the region

Business and work life needs: increase in populaity of the Russian language, awareness of the necessity of cooperation in education, possibilities for broadening cooperation influence

Challenges in development of cooperative procedures with Russia: financing, multi-level management, coordination, bereaucracy, communication

Figure 7. Operational model of cooperation with Russia

All of those layers that represent the groups of challenges will be discussed separately and in detail further on in the order they are laid into the documents.

4.1.4.1. Challenges in cooperative procedures

Thus, among the challenges in cooperative procedures with the Russian side the following was mentioned:

"continuation of financing is definitely one challenge." [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

"this means uniform rules…of how to act in the Russian direction…and this is definitely the basic things…that are like the determined roles…there is a political level, then we have an administration level and then a school level…so how we act and who and how can carry out those issues in practice and who carries out and how and what channels are used in the direction of Russia…" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

"one challenge is that on our side our teachers and principals who are in speak Russian and English well, and on the Russian side not so ell so far…" [Timo Tiainen, Kouvola City]

"from the point of view of administration we need that we could get again financing and a separate person who could coordinate the project…" [Katja Berbacka, Kouvola City]

"when the project is being planned the schedule of signatures should be thought over precisely that they are suitable for everyone and that the officials should not change…" [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle school]

Those challenging matters will be as well discussed answering the third research question posed by the researcher. Representatives of the administration focus upon the financial side as a challenge, the question of coordination and the multi-level character of the management. Representative of the school level made a focus on delays because of the bureaucratic and hierarchic structures of the administration. Actually, there are much more challenges that will be addressed in a separate section, but as one of the respondents justly mentioned:

"There are challenges all the time because we haven't had anything of the kind earlier and this we do for the first time. " [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä School]

It means that as the time passes and if the project will receive further impetus for development and commitment and if more experience will be gathered it is expected that the amount of challenges might be decreased and the skill of their careful management, including recognition of the challenges and the process of dealing with them and overcoming them, might be acquired.

4.1.4.2. Needs in cooperation of school of different levels

The needs in cooperation of schools of different levels is definitely taken into attention when the schools did their own plans finding the key needs and issued for their own schools, the schools had their own teachers plan the activities for the students of certain ages.

"different school levels in Finland in Kouvola must have their own goals their own focuses, what the upper secondary school is targeting at , what the primary school is targeting at…" [Timo Tiainen, Kouvola City]

"in this case we try to increase cooperation between the primary school and the middles school so that it could be homogeneous, that there wouldn't be a border between the 6ᵗʰ and the 7ᵗʰ grades and in this project we pay attention to this switch, there is a clear link because in the upper secondary school they offer Russian culture courses…" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

It means that the concept of needs in cooperation can be understood differently. First of all it can be considered as schools performing as separate units and paying attention to their own activities, targets, etc. But on the hand it can be understood as necessity of schools of different levels perform cooperation between each other. Both meanings are valid in case of the interschool cooperation within the project "Allegretto".

4.1.4.3. Development need of the education organiser

Another element in the model is the development needs of the education organiser. The role of the education organiser is the city. From this point of view, the respondents answered that this element was implemented with success because in Kouvola Russian language possibilities increased.

"development point of view of the education organiser was implemented in a good way, we had a target of broadening knowledge of Russian language and culture in Kouvola at the level of basic education and in upper secondary schools…Russian language became an A2-language and the students have applied and the learning groups have been formed…" [Katja Berbacka, Kouvola City]

Still one of the interviewees had a broader view upon this issue:

"…the city is interested in internationalisation and this is in the end the same target as we have…to offer students of our school internationalisation channels and internationalisation and visibility and first of all just easily knowledge of the Russian culture because Finland can benefit from that…" [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala middle school]

Definitely this relates to other opinions as well, but this point of view has a broader scope of the development possibilities, and in my opinion this is actually the right approach, because language learning is one of the tools of internationalisation.

4.1.4.4. Knowledge needs of teachers

The next element of the operational model is central. It is the knowledge needs of the teachers. Teachers are the central actors of the project and teachers' competences and qualifications are among the conditions of the success of cooperation. In this project mostly the teachers had a chance to learn Russian language.

"as a part of the project a week language course was offered to teachers and principals in St. Petersburg last autumn. I will take part myself in a week language course next autumn." [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

But it must be immediately said that much more needs to be done. Just language courses are not enough. Cooperation is a complex activity and much is required to make it successful.

"well it is a must to know project work..." [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

"on our side the teachers' knowledge needs are mostly about how to organise the schedules, what possibilities there are to make internationalisation, elements of the Russian culture a part of normal everyday life, without making it extra...but deal with them at the lessons together with the normal curriculum." [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala middle school]

"we need to get this teachers' knowledge [knowledge of the Russian language and culture] on a broader scale ...not only the Russian language teachers but we need to educate teachers of different subjects and class teachers in a certain way that they would have the motivated basic knowledge may be about the Russian language and the Russian culture and generally about Russian and St. Petersburg region..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

"...yes, the teachers should know how to use IT equipment, this technology so that they could advise and keep contact to the schools of St. Petersburg." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Those remarks prove how many skills are needed for cooperative activities beside language skills of the target country for the key participants of cooperation. They include allocation of the work time, planning, making projects, reporting, teamwork is

needed, combining activities, making use of IT tools, especially when the latter are being developed so quickly that new devices might cause difficulties without preliminary practice. Trainings should not concentrate just on the language side, they should cover broader knowledge and skills for the benefits of cooperation.

Following this idea, for example, Anna Voipio, the class teacher from Kirkonkylä school was sent to the special training "Expert in Russia". This training combined the research data about Russia and Russianness for work life expertise and networking. The central topic of the training is how to apply in practice the knowledge about the Russian society, economics and culture. (Aalto University, 2013) According to the teacher herself she was really satisfied with the training:

"this training … for me as a teacher it is really fun to be with representatives of other professional spheres, there are entrepreneurs, there are lawyers…and this is exactly the Russian language that connects us and this is interesting…" [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

"I am doing the "Expert in Russia"- training and my project will be to write the curriculum for those optional studies [Russian language and culture] so that this could be offered to somebody else to use…" [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

It means that this kind of trainings could be offered more in the framework of cooperation. Cooperation is a new activity for many participants and trainings might burst up the capacity of the participant to be actively included into the project.

4.1.4.5. Business and work life needs that are laid into strategies

The last element in the cooperation model is the business and work life needs. This element returns to the feature that interschool cooperation should run in accordance to the state and city targets. Logically, it is that if as a result of the cooperation the students have better possibilities to learn Russian language they have better possibilities to find work places and establish businesses that will demand knowledge of the Russian language.

"Kouvola invests into tourism and logistics in the direction of Russia and this is taken into attention while implementing cooperation with Russia in the educational sphere and we are trying to find the suitable partners from Russia, St. Petersburg with whom it is possible to organise interschool cooperation." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

"There are companies that do business in the direction Kouvola-St. Petersburg. And it is possible to visit companies in both countries…and then compare and the students can get a broader understanding of the work life and why it is worthy to study…" [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala upper secondary school]

The question that born those comments and remarks was about the present state of things in the cooperation, still some of the comments were put in the future tense, as if something is still not created. This means that some elements of the operational model are brought into action, but some of them remain untouched and depend on the future development.

4.1.5. Inner work group

I would like to start the talk about the inner work group, or the steering group, with the quotation:

"to prepare the project inner work group is created. At the planning stage they map the school that join the project and their teachers. During the project it is planned to try different cooperation methods." [Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

In this document it is said about the inner work group just at the stage of planning. Still, the steering group was mentioned in other sources as well:

"there is a steering group in which the schools participate that is led by Veikko Niemi and this is born rather close to cooperation…" [Kim Strömmer, Kouvola City]

It means that a special managerial group was created for running cooperation and its practical implementation. The direction translation of the Finnish word *ohjausryhmä is* a steering group. It exactly and concretely reflects the essence and the role of the group. It is a managerial group that directs the whole process, brings it into move, chooses

what is better, etc. The interviewees discussed different activities that the steering group is created for.

"our steering group controls cooperation on behalf of the Children and Youth Services and there we handle how the project is implemented" [Kim Strömmer, Kouvola City]

What is interesting is that the group is created to manage cooperation but it is a product of cooperation at the same time. When it has representatives of school and the city administration.

"...we are then central here, there is an organised work group that is at the same time instruction group, that includes representatives of all the schools-participants, and representatives of the Board of Education and within it decisions concerning the practical implementation of the project are done..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

The group has complex roles: it instructs, leads, makes decisions and participates in cooperation and evaluates the results of what is done according to the targets.

"the role of the work group is to instruct and evaluate implementation of the project, that it is implemented in accordance to the targets" [Katja Berbacka, Kouvola City]

The steering group can be called an initiator as well when it initiates schools to start cooperation and initiates discussions that can appear in the process: what is happening, what is notices, what can be updated, what can be emphasised, etc.

"...definitely it is the steering group that starts conversation: what improvements or what has been noticed on the way and where we need invest more, etc." [Kim Strömmer, Kouvola City]

After all mentioned above I would say that the steering group is a mediator between the city level and the level of school. And this again reflects the idea that schools are the main actors in the cooperation and the main source of ideas in cooperation. Still, as it was mentioned by Veikko Niemi, the steering group is actually the central element, because anyway, as one understands from the characteristics of the educational management, schools cannot be left alone and become totally independent.

An important remark is also that the steering group does not carry out coordination tasks. Mostly it functions through the meetings that take place according to the schedules, about a couple of times in a year, while coordination is an on-going function that cannot be undertaken a couple of times per year to make cooperation actually happen.

4.1.6. Communication: personal and virtual tools

Communication is an important issue in cooperation management. What activities is it based on? Definitely it concerns the information flow, when important messages reach the right people and the right action follows. It is possible to talk about communication between the Finnish schools, participating in the project and between the schools and the city.

"Here in Kouvola we communicate a lot, we send messages to the schools that are in the project, to the principals and the teachers who participate; I have their contact information and they can contact me of course, because here in Kouvola communication flows well and it is not too formal but flexible and fast... all communication tools, telephone and emails..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

What may be emphasised is the informal character of communication. When the style is relaxed then it is more flexible and it is easier and the tempo is quicker. It is important as well to use different communication tools in order to make the information flow efficient. Still, as it was mentioned by one of the interviewees that withdrawal of coordinator had a negative effect on communication. It became slow and chaotic.

"let's see information sharing and forwarding...in the project there used to be a coordinator from KSAO and at that time communication was better because this coordinator managed to bring issues together and share the information. After that last summer the coordinator was left out and it [cooperation activity] *became more or less own job alongside with other tasks...the level of information flow became weaker and decreased..."* [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

IT tools of communication become an important part of the managerial arrangements because of their convenience. Their importance is written into the documents on the cooperation project as a key determinant of success and efficiency.

"In the project will be tried to use up-to-date information and communication technology for contact and cooperation" [Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan]

The participants of the cooperation project are aware of that and use the basic range of IT tools: emails, Wilma conversations and Skype that are at their disposal:

"And predominantly we have communicated through Wilma because this is the most convenient way..." [Eeva Raaska, Valkeala Middle School]

At the beginning of the project in order to make improvement and to make the communication possible the necessary technical equipment was supplied to school both in Russian and in Finland.

"to improve communication the necessary technical equipment was provided" [Julia Alieva, School 200]

Still, if the technical equipment is provided and IT tools are regarded as driving forces in cooperation and as enablers of cooperation it should be made sure that their use and applications do not cause problems.

"Between our schools [Valkeala Upper Secondary School and school 200, St. Petersburg] *meetings take the form of email exchanges, it could be possible to use online video conferences, but this is not used yet. We do have equipment for that but it is not used."* [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

If the situation remains like that, it turns out that the technical equipment is an unnecessary expense for the schools and the city. If the IT tools are thought over, then their use should be trained and their use should be well planned and introduced into cooperation by both partners, with preliminary decisions on the activities where the IT tool will be applied. So far, emails are mostly used as a channel of communication with the Russian partner.

"...about emails...correspondence was first in Russian when in the very beginning we had a coordinator of the Russian project, at the preparation stage...and now the project language is changed to English and we contact through emails... we have a contact person in the Education Committee [of St. Petersburg] *to whom we send all the messages and letters and this person sends them forward and then, as far as*

permanently here in Kouvola we don't have a coordinator, contacts have been taken through me ...I act here as a coordinator in Kouvola..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

What was important for improving communication processes with the partner is the clear decision about the communication language. Another point is to know the right contact person whom to address in all the questions. It means that mostly communication flow goes through the coordinators. This is correct. Even though there are individual communication acts the participants should inform the coordinator about those in order not to lose all important moments and elements of cooperation.

Besides IT tools visits and meetings are regarded as milestones of the cooperation. Cooperation started from visits of the Kouvola city administration to St. Petersburg.

"The goal of the visit to St. Petersburg 22-24.9.2011 by the Board of Education was the creation of cooperation between schools of Kouvola and St. Petersburg. During the visit they got acquainted to Comprehensive school №200 of St. Petersburg that offers special Finnish Language learning." [Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

Meetings can be first of all regarded as a managerial tool when they are held by the administration:

"...meetings are decided to be held at the level of authorities...there were starting meetings... there was an intermediate assessment meeting in January when we were in St. Petersburg and when the project will finish by the end of the year we will organise one more meeting ... and then we will evaluate and decide about continuation..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Still, meetings can be used as a cooperation method at the same time:

"Those official cooperation issues are in responsibility of the top administration, but we do have our local meetings about how we act in our school within the project framework. This kind of meetings we have had...probably a couple times per year..." [Anu Sundvall, Valkeala Middle School]

Meetings at school levels and study trips of teachers and students allow to get acquainted to the partner school in another country, to the city, to see a new culture through own eyes, and to see how education is organised across the border, in the

partner school, etc. Visiting one another participants have the chance to communicate, to share ideas, to plan and discuss future cooperative procedures.

From the point of view of communication, meetings and visits work more efficiently than email and telephone calls, still it is not always possible to organise a meeting when participants have other responsibilities:

"...arrangement of meetings is always difficult and we are trying to ponder over the possibilities of using new forms of electronic meetings and their benefits here in the framework of the project...those meetings don't mean skype-chats but something of the kind, for example Microsoft Lync that enables those distant meetings, virtual conferences... there is an idea to take them into use..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Though, Veikko Niemi talks about the new ways of making virtual conferences, personal meetings are always a guarantee of qualified information exchanges and progress. IT tools, though really convenient, might not always work.

4.1.7. Coordination/Monitoring

Coordination is a very important function in business management. Several times it was mentioned that cooperation in the project "Allegretto" was left without the coordinator:

"Saija Mäkinen was in the beginning making the plan and her goal was that she would lead the project but there wasn't received financing for that..." [Kristiina Strömmer, Kirkonkylä school]

Lack of coordination has a negative influence on development of cooperation. When there is no coordinator, there might appear problems with information flows, cooperation as a whole, schedules and delays, allocation of roles and tasks, no connectivity, etc.

At the present moment Veikko Niemi is fulfilling the role of coordinator, but he agreed that there should be a different person who could totally devote own work time to coordinating the cooperation. Everyone, who is involved in the cooperation project, has other tasks and is responsible for their fulfilment, that is why it is not possible to

coordinate cooperation full-time and that is why participants do not feel that the project is lead by someone:

"I sometimes think that there is no one supervising the project..." [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

That is why it is understandable that if the cooperation will be continued then there is a need in designating someone to coordinate, only in this case cooperation will become effective:

"... probably there is a problem that schools have many other tasks and there is little time for this project including communication and because of that one thing that could improve is definitely somebody who would be totally responsible for that project and who would work as a project agent" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Definitely coordination should receive a separate attention, because the coordinator who will be concretely concentrated on implementation of the cooperation will act on-time, will inform the right people in the right moment, will bring the necessary participants together and the parts of the cooperation puzzle into the right places. Still, possibility to employ the coordinator much depends on the financing and amount of the financial help. If this will not work in the future and if the schools will receive the shortened amount of the support then there will be again no possibility for coordination.

4.1.8. Analysis of the results

As far as the project was planned for two years till the end of 2013, during the interviews it was possible to discuss the results. Already in May 2013 the respondents could name the evident results that were received, if checking out the initial aims of the cooperation.

"...generally everything that was planned as targeted activities was implemented: trainings of the teachers were implemented, cooperation activities with a Russian school were implemented, visits were started, study trip was implemented, possibilities of Russian language learning in basic schools were partly implemented, so the results received and on time that goes together with the plan.." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Each school performs the analysis of results as well. For example, it is done through returning to the targets, financial follow-up and interim reports.

"In our school we check what targets we had and what has been done and then what the financial plan was like and what is happening in financial follow-up. All the time we monitor the financial side. And interim reports will be returned in May-June and there will be analysed where we are proceeding, but then next autumn is coming too fast, so it would be nice if we could continue cooperation further…" [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

Those "in-process" measures make it much easier to make the final evaluation as well. The same idea is expressed in the project documents.

"In the project interim and final evaluation are implemented" [Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan]

Actually in the project plan evaluation tools are discussed:

"The project operations, results and effectiveness will be analysed through the inner self-evaluation and this is implemented according to the composed plan. The evaluation material will be gathered for the interest groups and the project actors through the prepared questionnaires…" [Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan]

The planners offer self-evaluation as a tool according to the plan. As it was understood, at the time of interviewing there was no plan for evaluation made.

"evaluation is difficult in this project and in this activity... yes, it is written how to evaluate activities, how to evaluate results and influences…the coordinator here, in other words me, will do the evaluation plan and will carry out the evaluation for inner use and then definitely we will have to ask students what is their assessment…and of course quantitative evaluation of the results that have been received by the time…" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

In the quotation the quantitative characteristics are mentioned as an important part of the evaluation. But how much will those numbers show about the cooperation? Will the number of students who want to learn the Russian language be eloquent enough? I will question that because actually the quantitative characteristics can't reveal cooperation in

its meaning. Actually, the importance of the qualitative analysis is discussed in the project plan as well in case when feedback as an evaluation tool is used.

"Feedback is gathered from the teachers and students participating in the project…Feedbacks are analysed qualitatively…" [Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan]

So, it means that to receive the whole picture in analysis it is better to use both quantitative and qualitative methods.

In addition to self-evaluation and feedback the planners suggest benchmarking and comparative development as evaluation tools.

"In addition to self-evaluation it is possible to implement comparing development with an education organiser that possible does cooperation with Russia." [Allegretto – Kouvola goes to Russia: the project plan]

This idea makes sense especially, when cooperation with Russia is a new experience for Kouvola and the schools of the city. Still, there was no talk about benchmarking during the interviews and benchmarking might be used cautiously, keeping in mind the conditions of the local municipality and the targets of the local schools.

Even having the main principles written on paper, evaluation remains a challenging task.

"I can't name any evaluation criteria, there are no, we need to think over it really seriously and that is a weakness: this evaluation…" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Evaluation becomes challenging because there is no clear vision of what should be evaluated. Is it the level of Russian knowledge? Is it the number of Russian language lessons? Is it the new skills acquired through cooperation? Is it the new teaching methods acquired? Is it studying materials developed in cooperation? What to evaluate and at which level, while cooperation has a multi-level structure: will it be the level of the city, or the schools, or the individual level of the principals, teachers and students.

4.1.9. Experiences

Whenever there is a new attempt to start interschool cooperation it should be checked out whether the participants have previous experiences in school cooperation or in the activities of interest. The previous experiences can be used as hints and forecasts of what can work well, what should be ignored, what should be paid attention to, what results can be expected, etc.

"this cooperation to St. Petersburg or to others is not a novelty, the city has experiences in that…and Kouvola Upper Secondary school has experiences…and this contributes to the project, as there have been earlier experiences and broader cooperation…" [Kim Strömmer, Kouvola City]

"and we made study trips to different parts of Europe and other countries and they are approximately the same..." [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

Previous experiences might help a lot. But at the same time they cannot be just copied from the past and used. The conditions of the interschool cooperation are different whenever new partners appear and it is necessary not to overestimate the experiences had in the past. Everything should be evaluated and weighted within the framework of the given present case of cooperation.

4.1.10. Networking

In the first chapter of the research I explained the choice of the terminology and the differences between the words networking and cooperation. While I chose cooperation as the best term that reflects the active work of school organisations between each other, networking was characterised as a stable form of people's relations. Still, for school cooperation networking is one of the features and central elements, because it assumes participants, organisations and individuals, establishing links to new colleagues within one country and across the border in case of the project "Allegretto".

Networking is described as one for the central activities in the project:

"Creating cooperation networks with Russia between schools and different school levels…" [the Project Idea on Increasing Cooperation between Schools of Kouvola and Russia, 10.01.2012]

Participants have noticed networking taking place while being involved into cooperation as well.

"… making new contacts. I don't mean friends but colleagues from St. Petersburg, from Russia and the results of our work: schools and students have those possibilities to get international experiences and international friends with whom they can email and skype… probably this positive experience" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

In the section about choosing the partner for cooperation, networking was used as one of the tools for searching for the partner. It means that this procedure is important and can be used at different stages of cooperation and for different purposes.

4.2. Characteristics of Interschool Cooperation

This chapter will answer the second sub-problem of the research question is about features of interschool cooperation on the whole. How can it be characterised?

4.2.1. Interschool Cooperation as multi-directional flows

As it was discussed in the previous section it can be understood that cooperation includes different actors from different levels and all of them cooperate with one another in this or another way as a part of the project on cooperation. There are different links between different levels and participants and this is interesting to see where those directions aim.

"I have been to a Kouvola city meeting where it was discussed what to do in each school and then I have been in contact to the primary school … I inform my principal about the situation in our school…There is a lot of the cooperation between schools of Valkeala…And the best cooperation partner in school 200 is Natalia (Natalia Sizova, vice-principal of school 200), *I have communicated with her in English…"* [Marjatta Lehto, Valkeala middle school]

It means that cooperation exists between the schools and the city, between teachers and principals and between the partner schools in Finland and in St. Petersburg. Interestingly the direction of cooperation from Finland to St. Petersburg goes through the vice-principal of school 200 in St. Petersburg. In addition cooperation activities exist between the schools in Valkeala and cooperation between teachers of the same school is also pointed out. It means that there are vertical and horizontal direction of cooperation of different importance.

First of all the cooperation is made between the city and the schools: this cooperation happens in the steering group where the exchange of ideas and the project issued are prepared:

"...now the situation is that responsibility for the project is on my shoulders and I discuss all important ideas with my foreman Ismo Korhonen, who is responsible for children and youth services, because he was participating in the project at the approval stage and when the plan was being done and he is aware of what can be done in the future and in which direction can be developed... and I also discuss with our project group, principals of school that are in the project and we together prepare and discuss the changes or new ideas...." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Still the direction of the cooperation between the schools and the city is not felt by every participant. The schools do have to report and send message to the city, but not always the direction in the other direction is felt. Because of that representatives of schools feel no support but loneliness.

"I feel that I don't know how wide is the support in the project. We feel alone here. I know that Veikko Niemi patronises this but is there any other support from educational administration?!..." [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

The schools of Kouvola are expected to cooperate as well, being situated in the same school campus and following the idea of providing the smooth path from one educational stage to another concerning this project as well:

"Valkeala schools apparently do cooperation between one another, for example, Valkeala middle school and Kirkonkylä school, because it is the same school campus

and students continue from the primary school to middle school, that's why in their plans there are certain common points concerning the project…but this is the target that the project instils cooperation between the schools-participants… and again upper secondary schools like Valkeala upper secondary school and Kouvola co-educational school, they organise common study trips and act in cooperation…" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Still this cooperation does not have any prominent significance in reality, it is performed on a small scope and mostly concerning some practical issues, for example the school that is visiting the partner in St. Petersburg can bring the post from other schools there.

"…at the same time we do some cooperation with middle school, with the teachers, but really on a small scope, for example when we went to St. Petersburg they asked if we could take their drawings to the school and something of the kind, truly practical cooperation…" [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

Some of the interviewees believe that the schools of different stages are different and have their own operational plans for cooperation and have nothing in common. Because of that they think that cooperation between different schools in Kouvola is subsidiary or is not needed at all.

"…we have here middle school, upper secondary school and primary school and we do not actually do anything together…what could be really smart that we could have a campus here and we could make more cooperation but this hasn't happened, we met in St. Petersburg and then again we have forgotten each other…" [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

"we [schools in Kouvola] *have a general meeting under leadership by Veikko Niemi in the administration building at the city level but we have so little in common…But for example if in autumn a group of students will visit us, yes we will organise the programme in a way that these students visit each school here."* [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

The last remark justifies that even though the cooperation between schools of Valkeala is tried to be ignored, the schools will have to cooperate anyway. From my own point of view, this cooperation is vital, because of the common educational path that should be created between the schools of different stage and because of the Russian school as a partner that has all the educational in one school.

Definitely the most important direction of cooperation, actually the key direction of the cooperation flow is from Finland to St. Petersburg and vice versa. Cooperation line in these directions should be really firm and run without interruptions. Still, some shortcomings were mentioned as well.

"...the most difficult was to make cooperation with the school from St. Petersburg because there they have even worse IT possibilities than we here...and the teachers and students do not have school email address, we received and they did not..." [Kristiina Strömmer, Kirkonkylä school]

" I will criticise a bit...in my opinion there was a bad plan when we were there in the school for the first time...I don't know what there should have happened but there was happening the following: the teachers in panic started to search for communication with another teacher, it was not decided how cooperation between schools happened..." [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

As it is said the reasons of the weakness of cooperation activities across the border may be different. IT tools were named as insufficient or lack of organisation has been noticed among the reasons. Still, this section aims at discovering the numerous cooperation flows and it is not a goal to speak more precisely about something that did not work well. Now it is possible to draw a scheme of cooperation lines in interschool cooperation that is presented in Figure 8.

The figure depicts the main directions of cooperation in case of the project "Allegretto". The blue arrows show the strong flows of cooperation that exist in case of the project under analysis. The white arrows show some elements of cooperation that do not prove to be developed ones or that face impediments for implementation. And as it can be seen from the figure the key direction of cooperation is rather weak that makes important to see what kind of challenges appear from the managerial point of view.
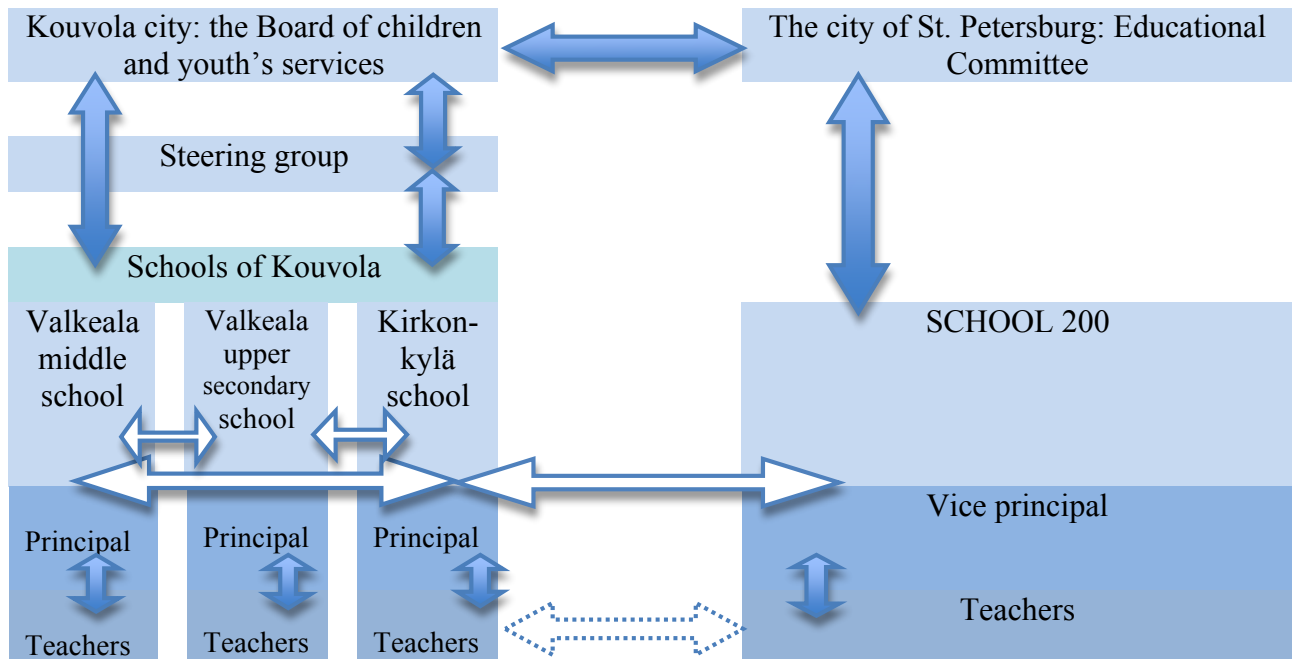
Figure 8. Interschool cooperation as multi-directional flows

The arrow with the dotted line shows the weakest cooperation flow. Why is it depicted like this? Based on the interviews it was many times said that during cooperation activities the first and foremost person to cooperate through is the deputy principal in school 200. It means that the direct cooperation at the teachers level is missing. Definitely teachers meet and share ideas in person during meetings. But they are not that often, that is why it is the area that should be developed, if both cities and schools are interested in bringing cooperation to a new level.

4.2.2. Interschool cooperation as a conversation

Conversation as a characteristic of cooperation includes two-way directions.

"...what I have changed in my work processes probably is that more time is spent on conversations in work groups about issues or project or something, it is necessary to make people talk and express their own opinion..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

It is interesting that the interviewees note that importance of conversation was learnt during the process of cooperation. This is true. Conversation may be a product of

cooperation, when it is born in the process of people working together. Conversation is a tool of cooperation, when the cooperation happens through conversations and is being developed through it. At the same time in my opinion conversation becomes a target, because all of the participant need to establish conversation between them in order to make cooperation work.

One of the key features of the interschool cooperation is the emphasis on bottom-up listening. It means that even having a huge role the city cannot prescribe the actual activities to be implemented. The schools again prove to be the core element in the process of cooperation.

"Everything starts from the school level…they were asked to make plans and what they thought about cooperation from big perspective that is determined in the project and they sent their ideas to Veikko Niemi and then there is our work group where we handle the plans and approve…Well, in my opinion, it was a good and strong idea that all knowledge comes from bottom up, that we do not determine from top that you have to do this and that…So we receive more commitment and enthusiasm to participate in the project…" [Katja Berbacka, Kouvola City]

This happens because the schools have the best ideas about the basic school activities and how cooperation may be included into it, the teachers are aware of the school reality at the first hand and are aware of the best methods of making cooperation possible. It means that teachers become the main source of knowledge. That is why the schools are to receive a certain degree of independence while participating in cooperation.

"...actually it was decided that they [schools] *did themselves the plan for own school as a draft and it was decided that according to the targets of the project and the temporary schedule schools can generate ideas and implement activities in their own school without asking approval in advance, but then of course, after reporting we receive information on what was done and what was changed in the plans…"* [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

The essence of bottom-up listening is that teachers perform as cooperation implementers and as idea-makers.

"the plan is corrected according to the new ideas…New ideas and interesting situations are necessary for motivation" [Julia Alieva, School 200]

The bottom-up listening mitigates the hierarchies and makes a shift to horizontal structures in different ways through discussions at the school levels and messages to the city, through feedback and freedom of making own plans for schools. As it was fairly mentioned by the interviewees it is a very vital feature in interschool cooperation because it has a direction influence on motivation, commitment and enthusiasm.

4.2.3. Interschool cooperation as a policy of the city

Definitely after discussing that interschool cooperation is a part of the city strategies, the role of the city can be characterised in different levels. First of all, it is named as a political.

"The role of the city have been political: we give a possibility to make this cooperation and also support it in a certain way but in a small volume because of the economic resources. In the very beginning the role of the city was big when the cooperation relations were being agreed upon and when the contract with St. Petersburg was being signed, but then later on the role of the city has decreased and became really small." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

This feature of the interschool cooperation is understandable. The city is a part of educational administration and is a link between the board of education and the schools in the local region. That is why interschool cooperation should run in accordance with the policy-making procedures as it was discussed earlier. Exactly the city is the initiator of the interschool cooperation in question because it is at the level of the city administration it is decided about the propriety of the endeavour. The city is to provide financing and support as well and those issues reflect the political role of the city. The participants do feel the support of the city at the background and explain that this gives more assuredness about what is being done.

"is the city a financier or from where do we get the money? Yes, definitely it [the city] *has a big role, I don't know if this fact excludes the possibility that schools and respectively teachers could work in cooperation individually but yes, the work becomes*

easier when there is a bigger organisation behind…" [Eeva Raaska, Valkeala Middle School]

Still according to some of the respondents it is believed that if the cooperation happened just at the school level, without participation of the city, then it could be more flexible. It is stated that the cooperation could be more efficient if it were at the individual level or at the level of school organisations.

"the bigger instances are behind, the more awkward it [management of cooperation] *is…if it is from person to person or from school to school, then it is in a way more flexible, but when we end up asking for permissions from here and there, well it becomes more difficult…"* [Anu Sundvall, Valkeala Middle School]

But there is a question how plausible it is to implement cooperation in reality without participation of the city administration.

"We have visited school 500 and school 384 … and cooperation with them did not go further, but in this case [in case of the project "Allegretto" and the visit to school 200] *when there were decision-makers from both cities visiting together well it* [cooperation] *started more easily."* [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

When interschool cooperation is performed as a policy of the city then it becomes real. There have been attempts to start cooperation at the school level, but it worked only when the city administrators joined the schools in the process as decision-makers.

4.2.4. Interschool cooperation as a free-will endeavour

In the theoretical part of the research it was discussed several times that volunteering participation in cooperation is the main condition irrespective of the chosen form of cooperation, be it team-teaching, or collaborations, or partnerships. Without volunteering participants the project couldn't succeed. Participation in cooperation cannot be compulsory.

"…there were enthusiastic teachers, enthusiastic schools…it was easy to get volunteer to start cooperation, it means the ground for cooperation is really good. It was not brought to schools by force, but schools were volunteering to do those activities. If it

were dictated, then it could be questionable: is there time for that?" [Kim Strömmer, Kouvola City]

What makes the teachers and principals be eager to participate in cooperation? Mostly it is the opportunity to diverse the everyday work, the possibility to something different, not only well known and repeated routines.

"that's tremendously nice to receive different tasks…something new for me.." [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

Not only novelty of the tasks is important. As it is mentioned the teachers often have more skills and arts that they cannot apply in their usual work, what probably makes them lose motivation and interest, lacking opportunities for development. But this kind of cooperation projects makes the teaching tasks to receive new shades: they are to start thinking what can be done in order to enrich the contents of the learning process.

"Every year we have a development conversation and Kristiina [the school principal] *asked if there is knowledge and skills that we can't use in the current work and I answered yes…I said that I have language skills and so on…but they are not used in this work…and that happened a week before the email* [from Veikko Niemi asking about possibilities to join the project "Allegretto"] *and Kristiina came and said: here is a job for you, will you take?"- and from that it started"* [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

Free-will participation is the perfect basis for interschool cooperation. Only under condition that there are individuals, i.e. teachers and principals, that want to cooperate, it can be then started and implemented. Volunteering character of participation, as well as the bottom-up listening discussed in the previous section, is vital for motivation and commitment of the participants. Generally people volunteer if the activity is to bring something new and diverse to the everyday routines and is to develop the teaching staff professionally through new ways of work, through new experiences, where they can apply the possessed skills and knowledge and receive new ones.

4.2.5 Interschool cooperation as a part of everyday activities

Allegedly the project on cooperation of the type that offers new tasks and activities is to demand additional endeavours from the individuals that are responsible for operational implementation of the project.

"...it brings additional work and it should be thought over precisely. You can't just order: "Now discuss!" There should be some idea and when we have such precise curricula, it would be good to include those [activities that are a part of the project] *into curricula...based on my own work, there are usual lessons, but there is additional work connected to the project, I have to find additional time"* [Marjatta Lehto, Valkeala middle school]

Still, in the case of the project "Allegretto" the teachers managed to include implementation of the project activities into usual learning process and that is believed to be the right way to do it. Definitely much depends on the purposes that are followed: how much is to be done in cooperation? This outlines the approach for implementation of the project. How important is the cooperation? If it is an activity of secondary importance then there is no need to make something bigger out of it and spend additional time and forces.

"...this [cooperation] *works but it is not possible to invest more into it ...and there is no reason to invest because this is not anyway the primary task in school...what I would like is that the results could be seen more on the school level, for this level we need more visibility...but we have groups that have participated, they know the contents through the teachers, those study groups that have participated: it is already more than nothing..."* [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

Definitely teachers, who implement the project, will have to think thoroughly how to introduce the project activities into the classroom, but this should be a part of the curriculum and run in line with every day normal school life.

"well, of course, it brings more pondering but preparing a normal lesson a teacher needs to think, in my opinion the best situation is when a project is not separate from the teaching work routine, but becomes an additional element in teaching, learning or during a lesson...that it wouldn't be an isolated separate hocus-pocus" [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

So, it means that making the project a part of every day activities also has an influence on motivation and commitment to cooperate. If the activities are included into usual work without causing stress and any pressures this influences the motivation and the smooth flow of the cooperation in a positive way.

4.2.6 Interschool cooperation as equality of conditions and possibilities while facing differences

When the choice of the right partner was discussed as one of the main managerial tools in interschool cooperation it was mentioned several times that both partners should see benefits in the cooperation. This idea continues here, as interschool cooperation will succeed only in case when the conditions and possibilities of its implementation for both partners will be equal. First of all, it goes without saying that the main actors on both sides are teachers and they seem to have the same opinions on how the cooperation should be fulfilled.

"*now when contact persons* [in St. Petersburg] *have changed, starting from last autumn it was easier for us to talk in English, and exchange future plans, and agree on the final seminar and how to evaluate those seminars, etc. … Surprisingly we think the same way, and as persons teachers are the same anywhere, at least in St. Petersburg, and there were no disagreements…"* [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Both partners have something to share and this issue will bring the cooperation forward. If to remember the talk about transformational partnerships, I have mentioned that the mutual benefits and changes should be present in any type of cooperation. And during the interviews this thought was proved.

"*…and we have something to give from Finland, from Kouvola to St. Petersburg…our good practices and on the other hand there is much knowledge there as well…so both get benefits, not so that one gives and another receives but both definitely gain…"* [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Still, not everything happens to be equal in reality and this becomes an impediment for cooperation. For example, if schools in Finland did receive the financial support from

the board of education and from the city, the school in St. Petersburg does not have any supportive budget to help in cooperation.

"...in Russia in St. Petersburg the school didn't receive any project finance or funding, the Committee doesn't give the school separate money for arranging project visits and the school has to cover those cooperation expenses by itself, to gather, to search for..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

At the same time while IT tools are vital for international school cooperation and both partners understand this fact, the Russian school had better equipment to use in cooperation.

"...being in contact with St.Petersburg wasn't easy for us because of technical reasons...and that probably caused the biggest delays from our side...in St. Petersburg their IT readiness was of a higher level" [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

It means that if at the starting point the conditions are the same, operational issues should be checked and rechecked several times. The managers of cooperation should preliminarily understand the possible differences that might cause impediments for cooperation that could stop it. For example, in case of the Russian school it could be possible for implementation of the cooperation and for more active participation in it to find educational sponsors, while the Finnish side could proved better readiness for IT use.

Equality of conditions as a feature is valid only when differences receive the due attention. Those issues should not be confused. The equality concerns the conditions and possibilities that enable cooperative activities. Still schools present different organisational cultures, Russian and Finnish school function in different school systems and different people are involved that might have different opinions. For example, the schools function differently or the Russian administration system peculiarity is strictly regulated that it is needed to know exactly whom to contact in which situation.

"we have different schools in this project, the schools of Kouvola, and they function in a different way: the upper secondary school functions differently in comparison with the basic school but that has been richness for the project..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

"...generally the whole Russian school system and political culture and administration system of St. Petersburg is strictly regulated, we had taken into attention this system, and who decides about what issues, who advises and talks about issues, and that there is no sense to talk with a person if he/she is not in the right position in the system..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

According to the respondents there haven't been any problems caused by those differences. So, it means that the partners ere ready to face them and to handle them.

"There haven't been any difficulties. In spite of cultural difference and methodological peculiarities we always manage to find the variant suitable for both sides" [Julia Alieva, School 200]

Another positive thing is that those differences are discussed in positive connotations. It means that the participants correctly understand that they are to become beneficial.

"well, in my opinion it is just positive that we can learn that they do like that, that this school system works in a different way, this is just interesting..." [Marjatta Lehto, Valkeala middle school]

In the project the differences may be faced not only across the borders, but also in case of Finland between the schools in one country. As far as in the project there are schools of different levels this is to be taken into consideration as well.

"...of course, we have basic schools and upper secondary schools in the project and their activities are different, students are of different ages and if we, for example, organise trips to St. Petersburg we need to pay attention to different issues in case if primary school students go there or upper secondary school students travel..." [Katja Berbacka, Kouvola City]

Those different moments are to be taken into attention, because they are to become opportunities and not impediments, when carefully managed.

4.2.7. Interschool cooperation as continuity

In the theoretical part of the research I spoke about different forms of interschool cooperation that differ in time of their implementation: from the single projects that can last for one studying term to the long-term partnerships. The project "Allegretto" was to

be undertaken within 2 years. Still, according to the respondents 2 years are not enough for this kind of activities.

"this kind of work demands at least 5-year plan…" [Anu Sundvall, Valkeala Middle School]

This will be proved while the problem of time allocation and delays will be discussed later on. Because the cooperation is much more than cooperation of two individuals and includes school and administrative organisations, so it can't happen immediately. While it requires much more time, it should be planned for the longer period. Both partners should understand whether they want to create a form of continuous partnership that can contain other forms of cooperation in it.

"One of the evaluation criteria could be that some continuous operational model would be born based on the project. That it wouldn't go like that: project starts and project finishes and then after that it is forgotten, but out of this there should be a continuous cooperative relation between Kouvola and a school from St. Petersburg that continues and both teachers and students would work in cooperation even if it happens for example just on the internet platform…" [Timo Tiainen, Kouvola City]

It means that the purpose is to receive continuous results that will be valid in a long run. The project is to have a long-term influence, so this cooperation has to be continued and to take more profound forms.

4.2.8. Interschool cooperation as learning through sharing

Learning goes hand in hand with the process of interschool cooperation. First of all it concerns the learning process of the student led by the teachers that is the main process in school organisations. Still, in case of the interschool cooperation learning receives a broader scope. Learning happens not only at the level of students, but also at the level of teachers, principals, representatives of the city administration and the whole organisations, as schools and the city. Mostly this learning will concern exactly the process of cooperation: how it should be started and led forward, how mutual learning between the partners can be achieved.

"well, development can be seen in learning from the point of view of cooperation: how it is worthy to start and with whom…more experience…how we need to act, more knowledge about operational models…2 years were spent on learning…" [Kim Strömmer, Kouvola City]

"now we could take an example from that direction [from Russia] *how they organise something…buildings are totally different than ours but something works really much better there in Russian schools than in Finland. So, we do have something to learn from them nowadays."* [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

This proves the idea that was mentioned already when experiences as a management tool of interschool cooperation were discussed. The new case of cooperation means new learning anyway. Learning demands time and this brings us back to the question of continuity. Two years for interschool cooperation in the project "Allegretto" were spent exactly on the preliminary learning: participants were to learn one other, systems were to find points of contact, methods of cooperation were to acquaint with and tried in practice, etc. This proves the idea that two years for interschool cooperation are not enough if the target is to establish something more prominent and more stable in the long run.

Learning also happens through organised sharing. Anyway the cooperation includes sharing of time, sharing of ideas and experiences. Those are the natural processes that when people meet and work together thy share their professional lives.

"generally when new people arrive we always learn how another person is thinking…I have been for a year in the project and I have cooperated with two teachers and I have learnt to analyse: "well, it is possible to understand this way as well"…"[Marja Lindquist, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

In the process of this kind of project as the project "Allegretto" sharing can receive more concrete forms as well. For example, as a result of the participation in the project the Russian language teacher from Kirkonkylä school is enthusiastic about an opportunity of creating new materials, so that other teachers could use them later on.

"…yes it is nice to teach Russian language course, it is interesting to myself…and if I could write down on paper what we do because now I invent that we do this and that but in reality this could be shared with others more…" [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

Still, in this project on cooperation sharing is not carried out at the expected level. The teacher of Arts from Valkeala middle school explains that she lacks information on the studying processes from Russia.

"what I think on behalf of the Arts, well, we do our work here and in St. Petersburg they do their work and then we exchange exhibitions. But how could I pass something about our artistic culture and how could they give some package to me so that, based on their hints, I could demonstrate something really Russian, the way they do it in the Russian way? But this sounds too unbelievable especially if I haven't even met the teacher…it is a different thing if I read about Shishkin from the art history book in Finland, and I can do that and I can show Shishkin's works to the students...but if I see how the locals go through their own art history… " [Eeva Raaska, Valkeala Middle School]

It means that the cooperation project does exist and sharing does happen. But mostly it is performed in the way that each school implements own issues with own targets within the framework of the project. Figure 9 depicts the cooperation style chosen in the project.
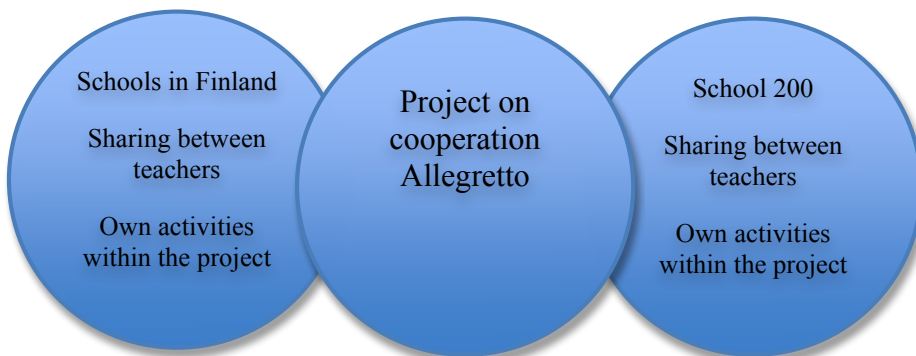

Figure 9. Cooperation in the project "Allegretto"

This approach towards sharing somehow lessens the effect of the cooperation on the whole. This weakness makes participants wondering if cooperation really is happening. Ideally the situation should look like it is shown in Figure 10 that depicts exactly the wish of the teacher of Arts in order to feel that cooperation actually works.

What is important is the enlarged amount of common cooperative activities, not only single activities implemented in each school that relate to the framework of the project on cooperation written on paper. In the figure the activities overlap and that should be in the centre of cooperation. Sharing between schools in Finland and the school in Russia should become the essence.

Finnish schools   Russian school

Sharing
between
schools

Common
activities

The project Allegretto
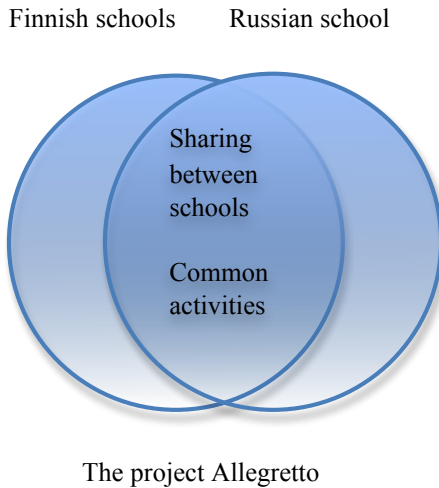
Figure 10. Sharing in cooperation

To make sharing take place across the borders then the cooperation project will have to be taken to a new level: the continuity should be reached, new forms of cooperation should be tried and implemented. For example, team-teaching could be a very interesting method that would definitely guarantee active sharing and active cooperation and can be easily included into the everyday activities of the schools.

4.3. Challenges in Managing School Cooperation

Challenges have been already in a way touched upon when operational model for interschool cooperation with Russia was discussed, as they were addressed as one of the elements of the operational model. In this chapter they will be discussed more precisely and some other issues will be added in accordance with the responses of the interviewees.

4.3.1. Budgeting

The first and foremost challenge that was mentioned almost by every respondent was budgeting. First of all it concerns the Russian school, because as it was found out they do not receive any financial support from the city and educational administration for implementation of cooperation at all.

"in Finland the expenses are compensated, in our school we do not have this arrangement…" [Liubov Isaeva, School 200]

This is a big challenge because it means that the Russian school will not be able to be devoted to cooperation as the Finnish schools, many activities will not take place at all. What is possible is that the school will search for sponsors and for financiers, this will demand additional attempts from the schools, but the result might be worthy.

Concerning Finnish schools, they do receive financial help from the city and the Board of Education, but the budget received for the project "Allegretto" happened to be many times smaller that was applied for.

"The budget shrank…we applied for, I don't remember, may be for 70 000 Euros and we received 8 000 Euros. That's a big difference. We had to reduce coordination part, and, of course, development and extension of cooperation with Russian side…That changed a lot the plan of coordination and of course the operation plans of schools. In the beginning they were bigger, broader and included more activities…IT equipment and computer devices, that could enable more contacts to the Russian school, could be provided on a broader scope but we had to cut expenses on them as well in this project." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

This caused many changes and additional work. Everything had to be reconsidered, much had to be withdrawn and that caused decrease in the importance of the whole project for the city and for schools.

"usually finance is the main challenge, that we do not have money to implement something, there would be desire to implement, but no money." [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

As far as motivation and enthusiasm were received from the participants, it could become a much bigger issue that could have even more commitment from the participants. But lack of money and insufficient budgeting may have a negative influence on the motivation. In addition to that, because of the small amount of the money received interschool cooperation "Allegretto" was left without the coordinator, whose importance in leadership and management of cooperation was proved to be vital from different perspectives.

Financing is the key area to work over when applying for continuation. It was understood how many opportunities were lost because of the insufficient budgeting. Probably those losses should be emphasised while applying for continuation money.

4.3.2. No direct contact

Definitely cooperation will be fulfilled if the participants get to know each other. When people start keeping in contact then conversation will be established, networking will grow and cooperation will take active forms.

"when fist natural contact appears and people get to know each other, then it is easier to make practical things [concerning the project on cooperation]..." [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

One of the teachers witnesses that she was really successful in keeping contact to the Russian vice-principal. She mentioned that everything went well whenever something was agreed upon. In her opinion one person is enough for making procedures work.

"The most important is when people organise activities between each other. I have managed really well together with Natalia (Natalia Sizova, Vice-principal of school 200) *to agree upon what to do. And then we just mark the date and time when students do something and then it happens. So, if there is at least one person with whom you decide about work and with whom you can agree or cancel and plan and next time do even better then work proceeds."* [Marjatta Lehto, Valkeala middle school]

Still, not everyone was so positive about that. Some of the respondents were really critical about having no direct contact to the teachers of the same subjects to decide

upon the cooperative activities. Everything goes trough the translator in the Finnish school and then to the vice-rector of the Russian school who then forwards the message to the necessary teachers.

"it feels a bit strange to send something first to our Maria for translation, she reads it and then it goes to the principals and only after that it is forwarded to a teacher who participates in cooperation, so it is a second-hand, it is not a natural contact and exactly in this case it should be one-to-one…" [Anu Sundvall, Valkeala Middle School]

Lack of direct contact makes the whole cooperation unclear and creates the feeling that there is no cooperation at all. Some of the respondents notice that this happens also because of their own fault of not taking contact.

"In my opinion contact that we are targeting at is missing as before, we have tried something of the kind this spring and something received in answer but the whole case is unclear…" [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

Those remarks explain the weakness of the cooperative flow at the level of teachers. That explains lack of sharing as well. People having no direct contact cannot organise any common activities and cannot share and be involved into real cooperative activities. Having no direct contact restricts networking as well. This is the evident area where improvements should be done.

4.3.3. Commitment

Much has been said about motivation of the participants. Lots of issues influence the level of motivation and enthusiasm. For example, the volunteering character of cooperation, the possibilities to apply skills under new conditions, no pressures and stress, etc. increase the desire of the participants to continue. Veikko Niemi mentioned how he was positively surprised to find immediately interested teachers and principals who joined cooperation with pleasure. But he mentions as well how challenging it is to keep them motivated and devoted to the project.

"There is definitely one problem or a challenge, it is engagement. Teachers and schools and principals who joined the project, they are participating as before and invest their

time and work into cooperation; but what I noticed is turnover. Teachers and those teachers who were a part of the project put it in motion and then were transferred to other tasks and now there is a question if we receive new inspired teachers to continue the project…" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

The challenge is definitely to keep up the interest as before. For example, decrease in budgeting and opportunities for fulfilment of ideas might have the direct negative effect in loosing emotions about cooperation. In addition to that the challenge of turnover should be thought over. If somebody leaves the project, then the replacement should be ready, but the replacement that will be knowledgeable and interested as the one that left.

4.3.4. Time, schedules, delays

Delays and challenges with schedules are first of all caused by bureaucracy. Schools are autonomous but they will remain dependent on the city administration anyway. Dealing with the same issues year after year and at the level of the city administration makes the school workers feel uncomfortable.

"I think that they try to do a very complicated thing out of this, elementary cooperation between people would be better… Not so that their bureaucracy communicates with our bureaucracy…that is in vain…" [Anu Sundvall, Valkeala Middle School]

It is believed that if the majority of issues were handled at the level of schools then cooperation could work easier, more flexible and longer. Still, the respondents mention that the Russian side proves to be bureaucratic and by this it slows down and disturbs the smooth running of cooperation procedures. The respondents compare the Finnish system and the Russian and they are surprised why the neighbour remains to be so stiff with hierarchies.

"…it was difficult that it started so slowly when it had to start from the top…especially in Russia the top education officials have to participate [in the project]*… for example, here in Finland we in our school can do own projects alone…nobody interferes and if either parents pay or if we receive financial help from somewhere and it is successful through that…but in St. Petersburg it doesn't succeed without the top administration blessing…"* [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

The stiffness and waiting were caused in the aftermath of changing the main figures in the positions of the educational management in St. Petersburg. The project almost had to be started anew.

"In both countries there are different administration systems and there is always a need in approval of the specified level. Probably schedules of the officials are rather different and there are always delays because of waiting for the specified signatures…When the project is being planned the schedules of signatures should be thought more thoroughly and it could be good that the specific officials were not changed as it happened in St. Petersburg, in between the head of Educational Committee was changed and then everything as if started form the very beginning…" [Pauli Pölönen, Valkeala Middle School]

Cooperation belongs to activities that work well with more relaxed horizontal structures. That is why those bureaucratic features should be overcome and the hierarchical control should be lessened, otherwise cooperation risks becoming just waiting for signatures and approvals. This is directly connected with the next challenge of delays and inefficient use of time.

Bureaucracy is not the only factor that causes delays and waiting. The problem of time management within the project is one of the most evident ones while coordinator was removed from the project. The city administrators and principals have to find additional time in order to fulfil coordination functions. This causes pressures and delays and shrinking of cooperative activities.

"Preparation of issues for consideration, documentation of meetings and experiences, communication: this is not difficult but obviously time-consuming. May be if we could employ a secretary who…but we don't have such a person for this work and this is a difficult thing, because of that we could communicate more than we have done." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Another issue that causes delays is that a partner does not answer. Without the answer of one of the sides it is not possible to proceed to further steps. Receiving no answer gives an impression that the partner is not interested, that is not good for cooperation either.

"...when we were sitting there in school [in St. Petersburg] *with their teachers, in my opinion, we shared ideas really well, but the problem is that nothing followed after that...the initiative cooled off... we specifically agreed and we have sent them everything possible and we have visited them and now it is their turn to send something to us but we haven't received anything..."* [Anna Voipio, Kirkonkylä school]

One of the respondents is rather satisfied with the pace the exchange of messages happens, though she mentions as well that when waiting lasts longer than one week it feels that something doesn't work.

"it has been nice that in my opinion answers to the emails cam rather quickly, in case of replies to my messages it hasn't being longer than a week. But sometimes if we have to wait a week then we start to think that the message hasn't reached the recipient...well, but it has been ok." [Eeva Raaska, Valkeala Middle School]

Another problem with delays is born due to the fact that often exchange of messages happens through one central person and if the central person leaves then everything works much slower or even stops.

"...when there is one common email address there [in school 200, St. Petersburg] *and when one central person left for a maternity leave ...well cooperation is good but is rather slow..."* [Kristiina Strömmer, Kirkonkylä school]

Discussing how important continuity is for this type of cooperation it was mentioned that two year is not enough to reach the set targets. As it was said earlier the two years were spent just for learning, getting acquainted with the framework. The plan for the two years was two unrealistic. The begin was shifted to much later point in time. And though the interviews were held in May 2013, while the project was to end by December 2013, the respondents explained that cooperation was just in the beginning.

"now we have just started...for the two years we have just been pulling it [the project] through and nothing has happened...and only this spring it has started to happen and if it will end this autumn this is totally irrational..." [Anu Sundvall, Valkeala Middle School]

Many of the activities planned were not fulfilled by the time of the interviews. That is why preparation and preliminary learning should be given special importance and own time. Because of this huge delay generally it is challenging to implement everything

according to the targets and plans. Time period left for implementation becomes shorter and operational procedures are fulfilled under pressure.

"at first we were waiting and then suddenly we had to start working...the bad feature is the timing...now we have to do everything within 12 months...even less than 12 months..." [Eeva Raaska, Valkeala Middle School]

This kind of late starts are challenging also in implementing single tasks. Exactly delays with single tasks can cause delays with broader campaigns within the same cooperation. That is why it is important to make the necessary arrangements and preparatory work, be it learning or other organisational moments, on time.

"this year it was so that I started organising our study trip too late and that was stressful a bit...well, the trip went really well, but it is worthwhile taking care of arrangements on time..." [Marja Lindquist, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

One more challenge with timing and scheduling is to fit in all the ideas on cooperation into the restricted period of time given for implementation.

"the most difficult is to find time to implement all ideas..." [Liubov Isaeva, School 200]

In order to make this issue easier it is good that participants and leaders work out the hierarchy of ideas: what is more important should be implemented at earlier stages and brought to the foreground, what is less important can be left as optional fulfilments.

It means that rhythm of cooperation is not a tiny challenge. It should be considered from different points of view as allocation of time for different tasks, delays because of bureaucracy, late starts, own time for preparatory actions, not to slow down its flow.

4.3.5. External events

Outward events are challenges that cannot be much influenced by management. They appear as a matter of fact and pose impediments in implementing the planned activities. The project "Allegretto" did face those challenges as well. In this case it was the general

bad economic situation in Kouvola region and temporary layoffs of the teachers caused by it.

"also resources… one of the challenges is the general economic condition of Kouvola…"[Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

The main problem was that layoffs of the teachers coincided with the planned visit of the Russian teachers and students from school 200. This explains how worried representatives of the Finnish schools and Kouvola city administration.

"then there will be temporary layoffs [of the teaching staff] *that pose a problem in organising the visits"* [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

This challenge incites the cooperative flow between the schools in Valkeala. Only through their cooperative organisation school could overcome the weakness of the participants absenteeism to welcome the Russian partner in Finland.

4.3.6. Trust

The question of trust is very important in case of cooperation. Without it nothing works. Establishing trust between partners is very challenging. As the rector of Valkeala upper secondary school mentions, they tried to cooperate with other schools but the promises for cooperation were never fulfilled. As a result it is more difficult to trust anyone later on.

"…in a way you can't trust anything. Because we visited school 500 three times, and there were principals and teachers present and it was promised to do. We invited them to visit us in Kouvola but nothing happened, there was no group visiting here though we visited them so many times. And now this school 200 seems to be more promising. They said that they will come for a visit in autumn, and the principal and teachers visited us last year, last winter." [Keijo Hulkkonen, Valkeala Upper Secondary School]

In my understanding the late start that happened in the project "Allegretto" is connected not only with learning of the procedures and receiving the necessary skills for cooperation, but for establishing trust between the partners as well. As far as the Finnish school had negative experiences it was more difficult to trust the partner across the

border in the project. That is why it is important for the both sides to show interest in cooperation, to actively communicate, to answer the messages, to visit, to fulfil the promises. After two years of the project it is the crucial moment for the school. Trust is established, cooperation procedures are mastered and now it is the time to make cooperation more profound.

4.3.7. Language problems

Language is a tool of communication. Correctly chosen language of international cooperation is a guarantee of effective international communication when messages are equally well understood by the partners. In case of Finland and Russia it was challenging to determine the common language, especially at the first stage when there were different people involved into the project. Insufficient knowledge of Russian ion Finland, no English language skills in St. Petersburg administration made the process of cooperation really complicated.

" ...communication with the Russian side has improved in comparison what was in the beginning... at that time there was a different contact person in the St. Petersburg committee and their language skills...they didn't know English at all and here we didn't know Russian; language problem was may be one of the problems in the beginning. Now the contact persons in Russia have been changed, they know English and with them it is possible to speak English and write and this has added effectiveness to communication with the Russian partner. Though communication with St. Petersburg happens mostly in written form, speaking is a challenge as before...it is better to write an email than to phone...it is easier" [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

Changing persons in the key positions positively influenced and allowed making English as official cooperation language. Still, the respondents find it difficult for the Russian side to speak English and written forms of communication prevail. At the level of schools communication takes place in English or in Finnish, because there are Finnish language teachers. Still, what is good is to make the main cooperation documents in English and in the mother tongues of the cooperative sides to control and guarantee better understanding. In addition to that finding the right people for cooperation with the necessary language skills is an essential factor.

4.3.8. Allocation of roles and tasks

Due to the fact that cooperation is a novelty, it brings new tasks, but at the same time it is not a priority task for all participants. This explains dubious character of cooperation and it causes dubious attitude towards the new roles that appear within cooperation. Definitely, it brings opportunities for development on one hand.

"thanks to the project any participant can try new different roles that improves his/her professional skills" [Julia Alieva, School 200]

But at the same time it might be challenging when people face the problem of introducing new tasks into their everyday routine. Because of the novelty character of cooperation many roles and tasks remain unclear that is why participants of different levels are frustrated with the questions how they should do something, where to start and how to proceed. The problem of having no resources to cover coordination expenses made it challenging to find the person who will coordinate cooperation as a whole.

"... tasks were a challenge here, because different tasks of the project were a little unclear, nobody wanted to coordinate that, but this is anywhere dealt with, it is just additional work to everyone, and it was decided that I will take coordination responsibilities at this stage so that we could proceed with the project... but still we try to divide the tasks... principals report on behalf of schools so that I could gather information...however allocation of roles and tasks is challenging in this organisation and in this project, and the question of time that is closely connected to it is another problem; based on that in the future there should be more time for those who participate..." [Veikko Niemi, Kouvola City]

That is why some schools have their own coordinators within a school and cooperation leadership is performed at different levels. Actually, this is a type of cooperation where every participant implements the role of a leader in this or that way. The city is a leader for schools, in schools there are principals that and project coordinators lead teachers, teachers lead students into cooperation during the learning process.

As one of the respondents justly mentions it is very important to find the right people to implement this or that task. Potential participant's skills and knowledge should be checked for possibilities of applying them in cooperation.

"the right allocation of tasks according to the person's character, his creative potential, his IT skills allows to reach harmony in combining responsibilities" [Julia Alieva, School 200]

This challenge is exactly about the skills to work in "split egg" roles. Evans (2002) speaks about the manager's work in split egg matrix, but I would say that because of the peculiarity of cooperation between schools, those "split egg" roles are to be tried on by all the participants: the city administration representatives, the principals and the teachers, because they manage cooperation in this or that way at their own level. The split egg role includes combination of the responsibilities for the project, in this case cooperation, and connected with it responsibilities changes and development. At the same time, the usual operational responsibilities do remain. It goes without saying that this might be challenging, and getting used to this type of roles takes time.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses findings of the research presented in the previous chapter against the context of the Finnish and Russian school systems. By doing this, the researcher aimed to validate the data received in the research and to include the data into broader contexts. Further on, the findings discovered in the process are to be brought into system and the framework that was started in the theoretical part is refined based on the findings in this chapter receiving new elements or modifying the earlier ones. In the end conclusions about contribution of the research, its limitations and possible applications are made.

5.1. Findings in the Context of the School Leadership Principles in Finland and in Russia

The results that were received through the in-depth interviews and discussed in the previous chapter can be easily correlated to the principles of school leadership in Finland and in Russia. Characteristics of the Finnish and Russian school system leadership intertwine with several features of interschool cooperation management revealed in the present research.

In Finland, the National Curriculum gives overall policy directions and sets a broad framework at the national level. Municipalities in their turn have decision-making power to refine this curriculum for local schools. Municipalities have the following management tasks: owning schools, allocating budgets, working out the specific curriculum, deciding the criteria for principals and performing self-evaluation. (Taipale 2012, Hergreaves 2007) This explains why interschool cooperation reflects the policy of the city and why in case of the project "Allegretto" all the documents regulating interschool cooperation were signed at the municipal level. In addition the situation in Russia with the school system has something in common. According to the Russian Federal Law education is coordinated at the level of federal and regional state authorities. Municipal authorities plan and organise, regulate and control school of

different levels to implement general federal educational policy. They allocate budgets to cover expenses on education and they hire principals of schools. (Kliachko et al. 2003)

According to Andrew Hergeaves (2007) the Finnish National Board of education works out guidelines for and supports educational policies through funding, evaluation and basic curriculum content. What is important is that the state does not prescribe the curriculum and by this the state steers and encourages continuous cooperation, because at the municipal level qualified teachers that know what is best for their students write together in teams much of the curriculum. This principle is manifested in interschool cooperation should correspond to the educational policies of the Finnish Board of education. The latter becomes the funding organisation for interschool cooperation as well as the respondents witnessed it. In addition cooperation is incited by the state at the level of the city and the schools and this explains again correspondence of cooperation to the state and municipal targets as well as its multi-directional character.

A. Hergreaves (2007) talks about principle of subsidiarity. At the national level there is a centralised broad vision, legislative statements and funding, while operational decision-making is transferred to municipalities and schools, because those structures can guarantee implementation of the centralised national level issues in practice. The redistribution of leadership between municipal authorities and schools, between principals, teachers and other staff steers more intensive interaction and broadens communication at all levels. What can be found as well is mutual learning and mutual dependence on one another. It means that municipalities and schools work side by side and for management of interschool cooperation in the project "Allegertto" the steering group is born.

Andrew Hergreaves (2007) determines the focus of Finnish educational leadership on learning. Learning is regarded as an ongoing process that lasts the whole life long that is why the whole system of educational management is built around this central concept. I would like to quote here A. Hergreaves who declares that educational leadership in Finland can be characterised as "leadership for learning, leadership by learning and

leadership as learning". This explains that interschool cooperation is a process of learning as it was proved in the analysis as well. This feature should be emphasised even more. Interschool cooperation is organised for better learning results of the students, as it is in case of the project "Allegretto" when the students receive an opportunity to receive knowledge about the Russian culture and master Russian language at earlier phases. At the same time leadership of interschool cooperation happens by learning, i.e. by learning new people and new school systems, those who participate in leadership tasks receive new skills and develop their professional knowledge and through receiving leadership tasks participants learn how to work in split-egg roles and acquire cooperation management operational models for future use.

It was found out in the present research that schools are the central level for school cooperation and teachers and principals are the main doers. Principals of schools and teachers as experts are professionally responsible for the quality of their work and on the whole for school operations. What is characteristic for Finnish schools is the high level of teachers' autonomy and principals' independence. (Hergreaves 2007) This also explains why bottom-up listening determines movement of interschool cooperation and why schools make their own operational plans for the cooperation.

Schools as organisational cultures share common beliefs and purposes that encourage and support people at all levels to make them commit to the school operations, raise aspirations and improve individual and organisational performance. What was found in Finnish schools by OECD research performed by A. Hergreaves (2007) was the culture of trust, cooperation and responsibility. According to this research those elements can be found both in the classroom at one single lesson and at the level of Ministry of Education. Taipale (2012) also mentions trust as one of the central values in educational organisations. Principals and teachers as experts are trusted for they are considered qualified, committed and responsible in their duties and the other way round, schools trust their local authorities and governors for receiving the exact amount of resources they need. That is why creation of trust in interschool cooperation is posed as a big challenge and as a prerequisite for successful cooperation.

In Finland relationships in schools are not very hierarchical; they are rather flat and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish support staff from teachers. What can be often noticed are cooperative structures and processes. (Hergreaves 2007) It is clear that Finnish school system is ready for cooperation and cooperation is a part of school cultures. Importance of interschool cooperation is understood and receives support from the city and the state through budgeting and official relations. That makes participants be surprised with still too hierarchical structures and too much bureaucracy on the Russian side.

What is evident is strict hierarchy in the educational management in Russia. In comparison with the Finnish system it is not that flexible as far as historically it was created under conditions of administrative system, where administrative managing methods were used and the structure of linear hierarchy (Kliachko et al. 2003, Shamova 2002; Beliakov 2009). This means that a lower level follows prescriptions of an upper level while manages those levels that are below it. Decisions of the senior levels go directly to the next level and cannot be addressed to those positioned even lower. According to Beliakov (2009) the whole system with four levels of authorities that were discussed earlier - federal, regional, municipal and school levels- makes management very difficult with numerous bureaucratic and administrative barriers.

Still, researchers justly found out, that under conditions of changing environment educational management in Russia cannot stay unchanged. It needs to be adapted to the new socio-economic conditions. So, nowadays one can notice a kind of dualism in the Russian educational management. If to take into account administrative character of the system then improvement should be done in the process of allocation of duties and functions between the key players in the management system of education. While following the marketing directions educational management should develop horizontal structures, base its operations on forecasting and consulting. And following the Finnish example, development of cooperative elements will be very important. Borders and barriers between levels and schools should be withdrawn and attracting social forces into education such as creating boards of guardians, funds and other social supports are

among new waves in the educational management. (Shamova 2002, Kliachko 2003, Beliakov 2009)

This additional support becomes very essential when school determines the inner structure of their operations in Russia. They provide and implement educational process and other operations including financial and economic spheres, take in students and fulfil human resources management functions, being responsible for social conditions for employees at work and rewards. (Kliachko et al. 2003) Exactly the financial sphere is a key part in the latter statement. As it was found out in the present research school 200 in St. Petersburg does not receive financial support from the city and this destroys the equality of conditions principle that should be guaranteed between cooperation partners.

Participation of the Russian school in cooperation with Finnish school is probably a consequence of the transformations in the approaches to educational leadership in Russia. Increasing cooperative forms of connections with other sectors within and out of educational sphere will be one of the directions. (Shamova 2002, Kliachko et al. 2003, Beliakov 2009)

Still in some cases cooperative decisions can cause negative connotations with teamwork that brings more workload and infringes with the main duties of teaching staff. (Hergreaves 2007) A good way to lessen those negative impressions is to make cooperation a part of everyday activities without making it as an additional burden as it was done in the project "Allegretto".

In general, Finnish model of educational leadership definitely contributes to educational outcomes, having more emphasis on the processes, conditions and goals, than merely on the results. This attention to the process than to the result is the best prerequisite of high performance. (Hergreaves 2007) This principle explains why development of operation model for interschool cooperation with Russia is one of the core activities and why analysing the results in the end of the project is so challenging. Specifics of educational system are such results can be received and analysed only after a long period of time

from the real possible managerial action, because a certain educational programme takes time to be realised. That is why from the managerial point of view it would be convenient to control and evaluate not only results in the end or after certain phases, but analysis of separate activities should be in question. Those intertwined activities of control and evaluation are very important in the analysis of ultimate results. As one can see this process has a form of a flow: one action smoothly follows the other, and the next one is tightly connected with the previous one. It means that if something is not in order in one phase then the whole flow is distracted. (Beliakov 2009)

As far as interschool cooperation is a complex phenomenon that includes many actors too much attention just on the processes and not on the results does not give a clear picture where the cooperation goes. Interschool cooperation with the Russian partner is determined as a strategic target and this requires thorough analysis of results and development of suitable procedures for that.

It was mentioned that it is necessary to determine quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the results. Because of the "dilatory" character that is typical for educational system all managerial impact should be based on modelling and forecasting of changes in educational system. Forecasting is important to make results be adequate for new conditions in the environment. (Beliakov 2009, Zhuravleva 2008)

Describing the process of improvement that is happening in the Russian educational management Beliakov (2009) pays attention how important it its to provide information and on time. What kind of information might be needed? For example, there is a need in information about educational system and its condition, its elements, description and comparison of the present and the future. In this case Beliakov (2009) talks about monitoring as a basic source of information for educational management. Monitoring includes gathering, processing, storage and provision of information about educational system. Monitoring usually gives information for the definite moment and post factum. Through monitoring it is possible to achieve informative unity, authenticity and completeness. The same idea was addressed when the interviewees mentioned how they

need a coordinator and how it is difficult to allocate the roles of coordination between the participants nowadays.

Speaking about the Finnish educational management system can be understood through broader nation-wide system of social norms. Among them there is a bridge between the past and the present that guarantees both possibility for pedagogical change and continuity. (Hergreaves 2007) This was emphasized in the present research when interschool cooperation is understood as possible only in continuity. It is believed that it is not possible to reach any targets in a short period of time and why participants need invest their resources into something that does not exist in 2 years. The bridge to the past was mentioned as well as previous experiences of the participants in interschool cooperation projects that might help in the present and the future.

According to the new trends in the Russian state and society educational system becomes more dynamic and diverse. Jastrembovich and Zhuravleva (2008) justly mention that before the Russian school can develop the leader should solve numerous problems. The most evident ones can be lack of teamwork between pedagogical staff, lack of creativity among teachers, too traditional views and values of teachers who need improving their pedagogical skills. That is why one possible management tool will be forming cohesive team of teachers driven by the same ideas.

Jastrembovich and Zhuravleva (2008) discuss one case of school administration that was first and foremost concentrated on teachers' proficiency, socio-cultural environment of the school self-development of students and teachers as a key element of management. Ideas of self-development were shared through lectures and consultations. The most important decisions in this school are made by the pedagogical council, teaching methodology council and creative group of teachers. In the school everyone clearly knows what to do and who is responsible for what.

Another element in the process of modernisation is attracting community into educational management. Active participation from society in the person of parents and students is rather difficult. Problems of free time, unwillingness to take more

responsibilities are human issues that become barriers in implementation of the change. Putinzeva (2008), the principal of a high school, shares her own experience of creating new forms of self-governed in schools. Putinzeva's leadership of school moved to strategic orientation, long-term programmes, introduction of technological and cultural changes and attraction of intellect and experience from other spheres. The school is open to society, it includes students, parents, and teachers into decision-making at the level of local community and vice versa there is cooperation with public organisations, municipal authorities, business representatives and through that school staff received new ways and ideas for problem solving within school, including those that are not typical for the sphere of educational management.

Today there is a tendency towards humanitarian orientation and democratisation in the educational management of schools. But scientists speak about different barriers that hinder implementation of changes. First of all, it is the socio-economic background of the system. As it was mentioned already the authoritarian leadership style that has been characteristic for all spheres of life is one of those factors. Another group of barriers are directly connected with the basic education system. In the Russian society education has a low status, pedagogical staff is moving from the sphere of education into other spheres in order to earn their living, financing of education follows old models, and the country still lack economic stability. (Alekseeva & Rekichinskaya 2008)

The third group of level are connected with individual, psychological factors. The shifts in the administration demand the suitable psychological climate. That is why much work is needed in order to improve psychological culture of educational leaders and teachers. (Alekseeva & Rekichinskaya 2008)

Those examples demonstrat that transformations started to happen in school management in Russia. And participating in the project of cooperation with Finnish schools school 200 could try some transformations as well. To make interschool cooperation more democratised and allow teachers more freedom and active direct contact to the Finnish partner. They could try to involve parents and other social forces in order to make more forms of cooperation possible and to achieve genuine sharing

that should be in the ground of interschool cooperation. Lots of those features exist in Finnish school leadership and some practices could be shared and that could be a significant result for the Russian partner as well.

Definitely both systems, though having something in common, demonstrate big differences and the essence of cooperation is to face them and to cooperate them. Features of interschool cooperation management go much in line with the principles of educational management in Finland and in Russia found out through wider researches and much is explained through the general characteristics of the school systems and many challenges that were revealed during the interviews are made clear. That shows that findings can be regarded reliable and valid through their connection to the broader contexts.

5.2. Framework of Managing Interschool Cooperation

In the theoretical part of the research I created an initial framework of managing interschool cooperation based on the case studies of different forms of interschool cooperation. The framework includes strategic capacities of interschool cooperation that are presented in the horizontal line and poles of cooperation that reflect challenges of interschool cooperation that are depicted in the framework in the vertical perspective and they can be found in Figure 4 on page 29.

In case of interschool cooperation within the project "Allegretto" it is possible to find the same dimensions and poles of cooperation. First of all relations between the partners were found out to be in the development phase after discussing. The participants are trying to establish more prominent relations and develop *networks* with the colleagues within the project, as this is a prerequisite of active cooperation. Based in the findings the term relations was interchanged with the term networks. Individual needs in cooperation are evident because of the autonomy of teachers and teachers as the main actors that can decide themselves about their activities as a part of cooperation. Still they do expect to work in teams; they lack *direct contact* with colleagues across the border and new, more profound forms of interschool cooperation with school 200.

Each participant has an amount of tasks to be implemented within the cooperation, and those tasks drive the cooperation processes ahead. Objectives of cooperation are set in the project documents and the structure is given in the operational plans of each school, taking into consideration the schools' own capability and interest. In spite of the fact there is a certain structure of implementation of the tasks, *allocation of tasks and roles* is still posing a big problem. That is why using previous *experiences* and acquiring new ones helps a lot to bring the targets into structure with reference to the right allocation of tasks.

Much was told about motivation for cooperation within the project. First of all, the environment, the general school systems and principles of school leadership both in Finland and Russia stipulate interschool cooperation. In Russia the general transformational character of educational management searches for new forms of improvement and cooperative elements are among them. In Finland cooperation is within the broad social norms that determine educational system as well and are written down in the National Curriculum. Though *differences in school systems*, *language problems* and *outward events*, as the economic conditions in Kouvola, might cause some negative effect on motivation. In the interviews it was named that volunteers were found really quickly for participation in cooperation, it means that cooperative intent was natural for all the participants in Finland and in Russia as well, as school 200 proved to be interested in cooperation in comparison with the previous experiences and tries. When inter-school cooperation is organised as a *free-will endeavour* and follows the principal of *equality of conditions* collaborative intent is fortified in all participants. *Finding the right partner* and establishing *trust* are important issues for supporting collaborative intent.

In the analysis of the responses received during the interviews *sharing* was defined as a core dimension in inter-school cooperation, that includes common activities, shared plans and objectives, shared responsibilities for the partners. This is presented exactly as a capacity, because it is in force of schools to provide it in order to reach better results. As the first pole of coordination there is organisation, meaning that schools represent different organisational structures and cultures with their own needs and it is necessary

to face those differences, including difference in the school systems and approaches to educational management. This was exactly found out in the interviews. For example, bureaucratic principles and too strict levels of management cause challenges with *time* and constant *delays*. Inter-school cooperation is characterised as *policy of the city* that means that cooperation is not possible without the approval of the city. Correspondence to the state and municipal *targets* is the key prerequisite for inter-school cooperation. Another pole under the same dimension is non-hierarchical structures. Bureaucratic barriers are a big challenge and this is the consequence of too hierarchical structures. That is why the principle of *power distribution* is widely applied. And in order to overcome this challenge, new structures with matrix elements can be created, as *the steering group* in Kouvola.

Another dimension is *continuity*. According to the respondents in case of the project "Allegretto" interschool cooperation makes sense only in case if this continues for a longer period of time and has results in the long-run. This idea is relevant for the educational sector where the results can be analysed just after a longer period. It means that timeframe is the first pole of cooperation in continuity. The suitable timeframe is the first point to determine in case of interschool cooperation. As it was mentioned by the interviewees there are certain problems with the time, when sometimes they have to wait too long. Definitely the timeframe much depends on the resources: the available teachers and principles, possible *budgeting*, materials for cooperation, possible IT tools that will be needed for communication. As it was found out budgeting was a big issue in the project, when they did not receive as much financial support as was planned. And on the Russian side they do not receive any financial support from the state or the city for the project. Among the resources an important role is played by the people who implement it. That is why one more challenge was discussed that may belong to the same pole: *commitment* of the participants. If there is no commitment, then timeframes cannot be set on a regular basis.

Efficiency is a very difficult dimension. It is difficult to discover this capacity in the partners. Much becomes understood through joint reporting, meetings, conversations and the final analysis of the results. The first pole of cooperation in this dimension is the

joint action. It is closely connected to the dimension *sharing* as well. The joint action happens through different forms of *communication*: visits and meetings and IT tools. The joint action helps to overcome the challenges that were mentioned earlier as language problems and facing differences. The quality pole means creation of something new and introducing innovations. For example, the *operational model of interschool cooperation management* through certain activities as it has happened in the project "Allegretto". The quality pole can be evaluated through *analysis of the results* that received special attention in the project "Allegretto" due to its complex character.

As a result of the data analysis some elements may be added to the framework in addition to those already discussed: *learning* and *monitoring*. Those dimensions can be characterised through their poles of cooperation and can be found in Figure 11.

Individual	Structure	Environ-ment	Organisa-tion	C O O P E R A T I O N	Resources	Joint Action	Everyday routines	Conversa-tion
Net-working	Tasks	Motivation	Sharing		Continuity	Efficiency	Learning	Monitoring
Team	Objectives	Collaborative intent	Non-hierarchy		Time-frame	Quality	Split-egg roles	Multi-directional flows

Figure 11. Framework of Managing Interschool Cooperation

Learning is an important dimension that can be characterised through the poles of *split egg roles* and *everyday routines*. As it was discussed learning is regarded as a result and as a prerequisite of cooperation. On one hand the participants are to continue their usual tasks and to fulfil their usual duties. Still participants of cooperation are put into new conditions of split egg roles, which they are to learn and master in the process of cooperation. The objective is to learn how to make the work in split egg roles a part of everyday routine.

Last but not least is the dimension of *monitoring*, or *coordination*. Much was commented how cooperation in the project "Allegretto" was missing and how evident it was to have it. The poles of monitoring will be the *multi-directional flows* of cooperation, its complex character and many formal structures and information flows.

At the same time *conversation* as an informal communication format allows more flexibility and freedom in communication within cooperative activities. This explains why monitoring becomes a capacity when the balance between the poles of cooperation is found.

Definitely those dimensions and poles of cooperation can be all intertwined and linked with one another. Still, this framework reflected all the findings received in the analysis and managed to include all the characteristics of cooperation management that were discovered in the given research.

5.3. Contribution, Limitations and Possible Applications of the Research

This research revealed characteristics of cooperation in the educational management through finding out the management tools used in interschool cooperation, the main challenges and principles. Previous researches proved the importance of cooperation and its growing popularity in educational management of today. The previous researches also concentrated on this or that form of interschool cooperation that was used for this research as well. On one hand, it might be regarded too wide an approach, on the other hand for this broad approach I decided to use the concept of poles of cooperation that has not been applied for the research of school cooperation earlier.

Still, the present research is definitely limited to the certain case study of one particular project on interschool cooperation that has been undertaken in Finland and Russia. There are certain schools that were studied. It goes without saying, that the results can be much explained by the school leadership systems used in those countries and probably implemented with participants from other nationalities and cultures might have different results.

After getting acquainted with the educational management principles in general the research was designed in the way to include representatives of different levels of schools management in Finland: the city, principals and teachers. That allowed

receiving the broader picture and more details on the studied subject from the necessary experts that are aware of all the processes within cooperation. Data collection on the Russian side was limited to email interviews that were mainly answered by the Finnish language teachers.

As a result the framework of interschool cooperation management was created. Framework of managing interschool cooperation includes both capacities and constraints through certain categories that were found out in the research that exactly answers the posed research question. In this framework I tried to find out more general characteristics and not to narrow down to a certain form of cooperation. In addition to that, this framework can be applied for management of cooperation in other state sectors and even other businesses. The poles of cooperation and dimensions can be used at the planning stage, continuously in the process of cooperative activities and while implementing the analysis of results.

If to talk about further research in the sphere, it is possible to research in detail different categories that were discovered during the analysis of the primary data. For example, communication in the process of interschool cooperation is managed, or creation of matrix structures in interschool cooperation, knowledge sharing in interschool cooperation, quality analysis in interschool cooperation, or finance management in interschool cooperation. There are numerous issues to be studied. In addition to that, the research studied basic education institutions and cooperation at the level of professional schools and higher education establishments, universities and universities of applied sciences that cooperate in a different way may be studied separately.

On the whole, the topic of inter-organisational cooperation might receive more and more interest while the organisations learn to recognise its positive influences and to minimise the challenges that might appear in the process.

REFERENCES

Aalto University (2013). *Venäjä osaaja – oppisopimustyyppinen täydennyskoulutus Korkeakoulutetuille* [online]. Available from Internet: <URL:http://pienyrityskeskus.aalto.fi/fi/koulutus/course/venaja_osaaja-oppisopimustyyppinen_taydennyskoulutus/ >

Alekseeva, T. & Reckichinskaya, E. (2008). Management innovations in upper secondary school. *Pedagogical Review* 10, 10-12.

Beliakov, S.A. (2009). *Modernisation of Education in Russia*: *Improvement of Management*. Moscow: MAKS press.

Bouchamma, Yamina and Michaud, Clémence (2011). Communities of Practice with Teaching Supervisors: A Discussion of Community Members' experiences. *Journal of Educational Change* 12, 403-420.

Bush, Tony (2008). *Leadership and Management Development*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Busher, Hugh (1996). Co-operation and tension between autonomous schools: A study of inter-school networking. *Educational Review* 48:1, 55-65.

Butcher et al (2011). Transformational Partnerships: A New Agenda for Higher Education. *Innovations in Higher Education* 36, 29-40.

Corbo, Angela M. (2010). Still Deciding: Working with Learning Communities. *Business Communication Quarterly* June 2010, 191-96.

De Lima, Jorge Ávila (2010). Thinking More Deeply about Networks in Education. *Journal of educational change* 11, 1-21.

Ding, Rong, Dekker, Henri C. and Groot, Tom L.C.M. (2010). An exploration of the use of Interfirm Cooperation and the Financial Manager's Governance Roles. *Journal of Accounting and Organisational Change* 6: 1, 9-26.

European Council and European Commission (2000). *Project Management*. Strasbourg: Strasbourg Cedex.

Evans, P., Pucik, V., & Björkman, I. (2011), *Global Challenge: International Human Resource Management* (2nd ed.). NY: McGraw-Hill.

Flick, Uwe (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Ghauri, Pervez and GrØnhaug, Kjell (2010). *Research Methods in Business Studies*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Goetz, Karin (2000). Perspectives on team Teaching: A Semester I Independent Inquiry. *A Peer Reviewed Journal:* 1 [online] [cited 25 February 2013]. Available from Internet: <URL:http://people.ucalgary.ca/~egallery/goetz.html>.

Gummesson, Evert (2000). *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Hallinger, Philip and Heck, Ronald H. (2010). Leadership for Learning: Does Collaborative Leadership Make a Difference in School Improvement? *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 38, 654-678.

Hargeaves, Andrew et al. (2007). *School Leadership for Systemic improvement in Finland: a Case Study report for the OECD activity Improving school Leadership* [online]. Available from Internet: <URL: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:sRYHXFfqtQgJ:

www.bestlibrary.org/files/school-leadership-for-systematic-improvement-in-finland.pdf+&cd=1&hl=fi&ct=clnk&gl=fi&client=firefox-a >

Hargreaves, Andy (2009). A Decade of Educational Change and a Defining Moment of Opportunity – an Introduction. *Journal of Educational Change* 10, 89-100.

Harris, Alma (2012). Distributed leadership: implication for the role of the principal. *Journal of Management Development* 31: 1, 7-17.

Ishimaru, Ann (2013). From Heroes to Organiszers: Principals and Education Organizing in Urban School Reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 49, 3-51.

Jamali, D (2005). Changing management paradigms: implications for educational institutions. *The Journal of Management Development* 24, 104-115.

Jastrembovich, T.I. and Zhuravleva, N.N. (2008). Management of innovative activity in secondary comprehensive school № 33 named after the hero of Russian Federotion Nemitkin M.U.: technology approach *Pedagogical Review* 10, 3-4.

Johnson, Bill and Madejski, Bartek (n.d.). A Fresh Look at Team Teaching. *The Teacher Trainer Journal* [online] [cited on 25 February 2013]. Available from Internet: <URL: http://www.tttjournal.co.uk>

Kliachko, T.L. et al. (2003). *System of financing education: analysis of efficiency*. Moscow: Technopechat.

Klöckner, Konrad (2002). BCSW: Cooperation Support for Distributed Workgroups. *Parallel, Distributed and Network-based Processing*. 10th Euromicro Workshop on Proceedings, 277-282.

Krippendorf, Klaus (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Mateo, Jesús Martinez, del Rey, David Pérez and Hernández, Susana Munoz (2010). Student Motivation and Cross-Curricular Development through e-Learning applied to Cooperation. *Education Engineering* 4, 913-919.

Nguyen, Phuc Nguyen (2011). Applying "Theory of Reasoned Action" to Explain Inter-Firm Cooperation: Emperical Evidence from Vietnamese Enterprises. *International Journal of Management and Information Systems* 15, 61-75.

Putinzeva, I. (2008). Development of public management forms as a management model of publicly active school. *Pedagogical Review* 10, 6-8.

Shamova, T.I. et al. (2006). *Management of Educational Systems*. Moscow: Academia.

Saunders, Mark, Lewis, Philipp and Thornhill, Adrian (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Taipale, Atso (2012). *International Survey on Educational Leadership: a Survey on School leader's work and continuous education* [online]. Available from Internet: <URL: http://www.oph.fi/english/sources_of_information/publications>

University of Jyväskylä (n.d.). *Master's Degree Programme in Educational Leadership* [online]. Available from Internet: <URL: https://www.jyu.fi/edu/laitokset/rehtori/en/courses/mpel>

Walker, Kasey L. and Stohl, Cynthia (2012). Communicating in a Collaborating Group: A Longitudinal Network Analysis. *Communication monographs* 12, 448-474.

Wong, Kam-Cheung (2006). Contextual Impact on Educational Management and Leadership: A Case of Chinese Education. *Educational Change* 7, 77-89.

Yin, Robert K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Zhuravleva, N.N. (2008). Relevant questions of innovative activity management in the modern educational institution. *Pedagogical Review* 10, 2.

APPENDIX 1. Questions for the interviews

1. Could you introduce yourself and explain your role in the project Allegro?

2. Where did initiative for the project come from?

3. How did you find the Russian partner?

4. There exist official plans for the project. How are they created, approved (meetings, correspondence, etc.)? Where decisions are made?

5. With whom do you communicate concerning the project, how do you communicate and could you characterise communication as efficient or not? Why? What would you improve?

6. Planning and implementation are the milestones of any project. How will you estimate the relationship between them concerning the project?

7. The project has been running for 2 years. What was the most positive experience for you as a participator?

8. If you have some new ideas/points of view what are the tools of sharing them? Whom do you need to address and how? How are experiences of the participants used?

9. For the time the project has been running were there any changes made in comparison with the first accepted plan and why?

10. How will you characterise the project? Is it manageable, useful, stressful, unrealistic or unreasonable wasting time and money?

11. Have you faced any difficulties while implementing your tasks? What were they? Do you have any negative experience?

12. After the time that passed can you say that the project was favourable for you and for other participators? Did you learn something new? Did you change something in the professional processes? Explain.

13. After getting acquainted with the plan I noticed that the majority of visits was planned from the Finnish side to Russia: how could you explain this?

14. Those who participate in the project have their usual duties as well. How do you manage to combine responsibilities?

15. Cooperation includes cooperative planning with the Russian partners. How does it happen? What language do you use? How well do you understand one another? Is consensus easy to achieve? Did you experience any surprises, interesting moments, problems during this operational cooperation?

16. Is it easy to keep participators well motivated for cooperation (schools as a whole, school principals, teachers, pupils)?

17. What are the main problematic areas to achieve mutual decisions in cooperation? (budget, tasks, roles, time, involvement, thematic issues)

18. Was there anything that didn't work as expected?

19. One of the key elements of the cooperation plan is development in many senses. After 2 years of the project in run did you notice any development? How is it possible to measure it? Who evaluates the results? What are the evaluation criteria?

20. How would you characterise relations in cooperation and interests of different people involved into it?

21. Different schools are different systems and different organisational cultures: Do you pay attention to these aspects while cooperating, or this is not an important aspect in terms of cooperation?

22. In the project documents they talk about operational model of cooperation with Russia that includes several elements. Here they are. Could you say that this has been developed and applied during this cooperation?

23. What are your expectations about the future of the project?

APPENDIX 2. An Example of a personal interview in Finland

1. Voisitko esitellä itseäsi ja selittää sinun rooliasi yhteistyöprojektissa "Allegretto"?

   Timo Tiainen ja Kovolan kaupungin toisen asteen koulujen päällikkö ja vastuualueeni on lukiokoulutus ja ammatillinen koulutus ja rooli Allegretto hankkeessa on ollut toistaiseksi aika pieni

   Ja vähän tehtävistä?

   Mistä tehtävistä? No, johdan siis lukiokoulutusta ja ammatillista koulutusta, ja ne kaikki tässä hankkeessa mukana olevat oppilaitokset, toisen asteen kouluja, on mun ala

2. Mistä aloite (idea tästä hankkeesta) tuli? (onko joku tietty henkilö joka on ehdottanut tätä) ?

   Meillä oli aikaisemmin tilaajatuottajaorganisaatio nyt Kouvolan kaupungista, mutta tämän vuoden alusta sitä luovuttiin ja, totta, tää idea mikäli olen oikein ymmärtänyt, alun perin on lähtenyt siitä, että siinä oli tilaajana lautakunta, joka vieraili Pietarissa ja siellä nostettiin esiin tavoite, että Kouvola-Venäjä välistä yhteistyötä täytyy lisätä ja minä olen toiminut silloin, niin kuin, tuottajapuolella ja tää varsinainen hanke lähti sitten tilaajaorganisaation puolelta liikkeelle

3. Miten löysitte venäläisen yhteistyökumppanin?

   En ollut mukana sillä haussa

   Eli et tiedä, se on aika mielenkiintoista… totta kai Pietarissa on niin paljon kouluja ja miksi just tämä koulu oli valittu?

Se nimenomaan… kun se lähti tästä tilaajaorganisaatiotoiminnasta, mä en ollut mukana siellä yhteistyön osapuolien hakemisen aikana

4. On olemassa viralliset yhteistyötoimintasuunnitelmat tähän hankkeeseen liittyen. Miten niitä luodaan, hyväksytään? (tapaamiset, kokoukset, kirjeenvaihto) Kuka tekee ja missä tehdään lopulliset päätökset?

Tässä edelleen ne organisaatiot muuttuu… niin, tämän vuoden alusta nyt päätöksen tekijänä on ollut viime kädessä lasten ja nuorten lautakunta, joka on myös käsitellyt tämän yhteistyösopimuksen Pietarilaisen osapuolen ja Pietarin koulutuskomitean kanssa

APPENDIX 3. An Example of an Email Interview with Russian participants

№	Вопрос	Ответ
1.	Представьтесь, пожалуйста, и расскажите о Вашей роли в проекте сотрудничества со школами города Коувола.	Учитель английского языка, помощник учителя английского языка (проведение внеклассных мероприятий, организация игр при внеклассной работе)
2.	Как Ваша школа стала участником проекта? Как появилась инициатива проекта? Почему ваша школа участвует в данном проекте?	Углубленное изучение финского языка, изучение жестикуляции, создание сценария, уроки в игровой форме, проведение уроков в игровой форме
3.	Существуют официальные планы и договоры о данном проекте сотрудничества. Каким образом они создаются и утверждаются (встречи, переписка, собрания)? Кто участвует в создании проектов? Кем и где принимаются окончательные решения?	Изучение внутри русского педагога, школ, преподавателей, учителей — тимада конспекты, совместно принимаются решения
4.	С кем Вам необходимо контактировать касательно данного проекта? Считаете ли Вы коммуникацию (на уровне Вашей школы, на уровне городского управления и на уровне школ партнеров) эффективной? Можно ли что-то улучшить в коммуникационном процессе?	Сотрудники контакт с учителями, а также обучение детей внутри школ. усилие (государством сектор, facebook, email) Для улучшения коммуникации прибав нед. пед. осмысление
5.	Планирование и выполнение являются вехами любого сотрудничества. Как вы оцениваете их соотношение в данном проекте?	Реализация всех запланированных программ в полном степени
6.	Проект длится уже 2 года. Что было самым положительным опытом для Вас?	Отличное общение, лидер, тесен-генд
7.	Если у Вас есть новые идеи/мнение касательно данного проекта, кому и каким образом Вы о них рассказываете?	Коллегам, членам администрации школы
8.	У каждого участника (школы как системы, преподавателей, директоров школ, представителей городской администрации) есть знания, опыт, свои представления о сотрудничестве. Оказывает ли это влияние на процесс сотрудничества? Каким образом?	Демилизация через ведет к созданию получ. аспектов, новых проектов, способов сотрудничества