



Finland EFFeCT National Workshop Report

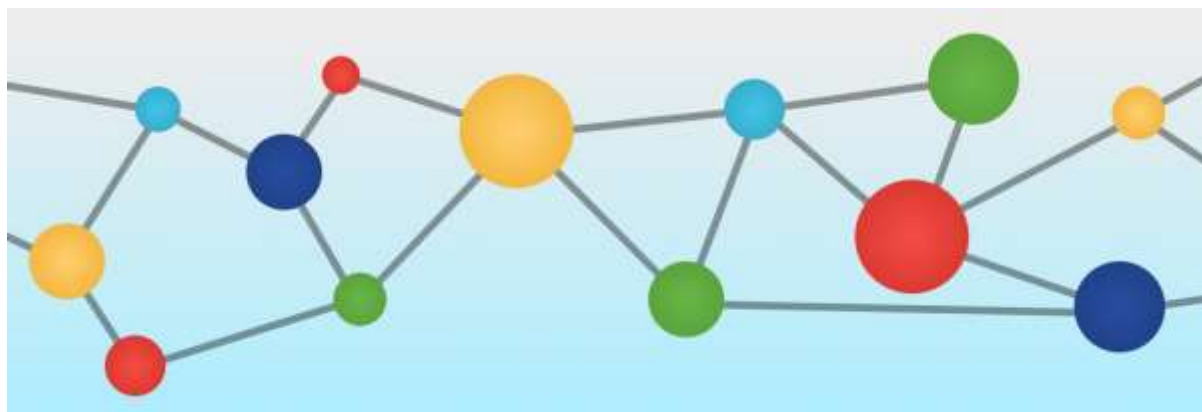


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1. Context

Collaborative learning has been in many ways a hot topic in Finland at least from the 1980s. The Finnish partner in the EFFeCT Project, the Institute of Educational Leadership University of Jyväskylä (JYU), has based all its qualifying and professional development programmes during its 22-year existence on collaborative learning using such concepts as dialogue, mentoring, tutoring, coaching and practicum. Thus, the opportunity to develop and make use of the Institute's efforts for educational leaders' collaborative learning in the EFFeCT Project was more than inviting for Mika Risku, Head of Institute of Educational Leadership.

For the EFFeCT Project, we decided to have the Finnish model of peer-group mentoring as our perspective. This, too, had its natural connection to the University of Jyväskylä because the Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FIER) that coordinates the national network 'Osaava Verme' for teachers' collaborative learning is located in the university. In addition, the other member of the Finnish EFFeCT team, Matti Pennanen, has actively worked in the Osaava Verme Project at FIER.

During the last decade, the Osaava Verme Project has been able to establish a national network for teachers' peer-group mentoring. The network comprises all the Finnish higher education institutions that organises either general or vocational teachers education, providing structures, education and support for teachers establishing teachers' peer-mentoring groups in municipalities. The project also has strong international connections. For more information in English, please, visit the sites linked to you on the following page.

For those mastering the Finnish language, the sites will also include access to the Finnish pages with additional information.

- <http://www.osaavaverme.fi/eng>
- <http://osaavaverme.wixsite.com/verme/en>



2. Goal

The Osaava Verme Project has made several attempts to establish peer-group mentoring also for principals. Similarly, the Finnish Principals' Association has been trying to establish national peer-mentoring support systems for its members. For various reasons, similar national structures and activities as have been established for teachers have not taken root for principals. There have only been small experiments.

Therefore, the Finnish EFFEct team together with the Finnish Principals' Association decided to set as the goal to initiate a principals' collaborative learning process by establishing national structures, education and support for principals' peer-mentoring following the Osaava Verme Project framework for teachers. It was also decided to organise the EFFEct Project Finnish national workshop to present, experiment and develop the EFFEct Methodological Framework having the establishment of the national peer-mentoring structures, education and support for principals as the concrete outcome for the participants of the workshop.

3. Process

The initial plan for the Finnish EFFEct Project national workshop was to let the EFFEct Project work to proceed to the point when the development of the EFFEct Methodological Framework would be ready enough to be presented and experimented for feedback, as determined in the overall project plan. The Finnish Principals' Association also needed their

time to put together a nationally representative group to work for the national principals' peer-mentoring network and thus take part in the EFFeCT Finnish national workshop.

Finally, it was decided to have the workshop in Helsinki on 27.3.2017. In addition to the material from the EFFeCT Project, data for the workshop was collected from principals by providing a peer-mentoring workshop for them in connection to the national Educa Fare in Helsinki on 27.1.2017. Educa is the largest annual educational fare in Finland. In all, fifteen principals signed in for this workshop and it was decided to arrange the workshop in three groups each being led by a possible future principal peer-mentor educator.



KUTSU: Educa-messut Messukeskuksessa 27.-28.1.2017

https://educa.messukeskus.com/whats_on/?lang=en

The Finnish Principals' Association had obtained an affirmative respond to participate in the national EFFeCT workshop on 27.3.2017 and to work for the national principals' peer-mentoring system from nine principals who successfully represented the various geographical regions of Finland. In addition, the group included Kaisa Isotalo, professional development coordinator for the Finnish Principals' Association, Toni Lehtinen, organisation secretary for the Finnish Principals' Association, Niku Tuomisto, development manager for the Finnish Trade Union of Education, as well as Matti Pennanen and Mika Risku representing the EFFeCT Project.

The national EFFeCT workshop on 27.3.2017 comprised three presentations and a collaborative learning group work. In the first presentation, Kaisa Isotalo discussed the efforts and plans of the Finnish Principals' Association to establish a national peer-mentoring programme for principals. Niku Tuomisto's presentation focused on describing what the Finnish Trade Union of Education could do to support the efforts and plans of the Finnish Principals' Association. Finally, Matti Pennanen and Mika Risku presented the EFFeCT Project and its Methodological Framework for teachers' collaborative learning suggesting how to together experiment and develop it and thus support the efforts and plans of the Finnish Principals' Association for principals' peer-mentoring.

For the group work, the participants divided into four groups. One group focused on designing the principles, structures, processes and practices for the national principals'

peer-mentoring, one on how to market the service, one on how to manage the funding and budget of the service, and one on how to obtain feedback from the principals participating in the national peer-mentoring programme.

It was decided that there would be two parallel efforts to provide peer-mentoring for principals. One consisted of the co-application of the Institute of Educational Leadership University of Jyväskylä and the Finnish Principals' Association for funding from the Finnish National Agency for Education to organise training for principals to act as leaders for principals' regional peer-mentoring groups. The other one, called SURE-Coach, would be a service which local education providers could purchase from the Finnish Principals' Association to advance the welfare of their principals with peer-mentoring.



<http://surefire.fi/web/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/08/SureCoachit-esite.pdf>

Later during the spring of 2017, it turned out that the Finnish National Agency for Education did not grant the applied funding to train principal mentors. In addition, the SURE-Coach effort was not successful either. As the construction of the EFFECT Methodological Framework was still continuing and required feedback, and the plans to establish a national programme for principals' peer-mentoring were not successful, it was decided to arrange a second national EFFECT workshop.

This workshop took place in Mikkeli on 29-30.9.2017. Thirty-four key actors in the field of educational leadership in Finland were invited to the workshop, which again introduced the EFFECT Project and experimented on its Methodological Framework. For this workshop, the topic of principals' peer-mentoring was broadened to educational leadership development and particularly to the advancement of educational leaders' collaborative learning in Finland.

Mainly due to calendar over-lapping, twenty-one could participate in the two-day workshop. The first day focused on the EFFECT Project, on the work conducted in it for principals' peer-mentoring and on how to expand this effort into advancing all educational leaders' collaborative learning in Finland. Applying the EFFECT Methodological Framework and particularly its enquiry and mixed-grouping methods, a needs analysis and brainstorming session was organised in four groups, which briefly presented their main results at the end of the day.

For the second day, the four groups were re-arranged so that each of the new four groups consisted of representatives of each of the groups during the first day. The task of the second-day groups was to come up with concrete developmental ideas for further elaboration. At the end of the second day, each group presented their results in a plenary session, in which the participants also made concrete agreements for short- and long-term goals and actions.



After the second national EFFEct workshop in the autumn of 2017, the work for the EFFEct project and for advancing educational leaders' and teachers' collaborative learning has continued. As elsewhere in this section, we will deal with the outcomes in the next section separately. Thus, we will here merely describe other events corresponding to the national EFFEct workshop(s) arranged in Finland and essential for the Finnish EFFEct Project.

Regarding collaborative learning events amongst the EFFEct partners, we were able to attend together with most of our EFFEct partners the Latvian national workshop in Riga on 18.10.2017, which in many ways supported our holistic scope on 'teachers' collaborative learning'. The EFFEct partner meeting in Prague on 27-28.11.2017, where the final methodological framework, portal, ebook and glossary were decided, conclusively confirmed us to continue on the comprehensive path we had chosen for the Finnish EFFEct Project.

In the lines of the comprehensive scope and formally outside the official EFFEct Project, we arranged a parental event in Jyväskylä on 17.4.2018 together with the Jyväskylä City Parental Forum and the City of Jyväskylä. The event followed the EFFEct Methodological Framework but was intentionally arranged as an event 'from parents to parents' to emphasise parents' ownership in the custody of their children.

The main topic of the parental event was bullying and the policy programme being compiled to prevent and handle it in the City of Jyväskylä. The 'from parents to parents' event started

with a play about the evolvment of 'a loser', which was being performed to a schools in Jyväskylä. After this, applying the modified 'open space' method parents, young people and school staff could visit at their own pace the four tables organised for the collaborative learning obtaining information and giving feedback on the draft 'bullying programme'. The City of Jyväskylä Parental Forum, The City of Jyväskylä Youth Council, the City of Jyväskylä, the University of Jyväskylä and the State Regional Authorities each tried to answer the questions and learn from the feedback. In all, around seventy people attended the event.



Inspired by this extended collaborative learning event, we decided to sign in for the European Parental Association General Assembly in Milan on 27-29.4.2018 to share our experiences. We were gladly welcomed to the conference and on its last day, we had the opportunity to present the EFFeCT Project. The plenary was followed by a workshop where the EFFeCT Methodological Framework as applied in the Finnish example of collaborative learning amongst teachers, parents, students and policy makers was experimented once more. There were around eighty people in the conference and about fifteen participated in our workshop. You can read about the results of the Milan workshop as about those of the other workshops in the next section.

4. Outcomes

As written about the Finnish context, collaborative learning has been a hot issue in Finland at least since the 1980s. Thus it was no surprise that when we were compiling the Finnish case study report at the beginning of the EFFeCT Project there was an abundant resource where to select the cases. Very quickly, we were also convinced that the challenge for the Finnish EFFeCT team was not how to motivate teachers and other educational staff to practice collaborative learning. This motivation appeared to exist broadly and be strong.

Motivation for collaborative learning was not what to emphasise. One can say that this was the first outcome of the Finnish EFFeCT efforts. **The emphasis in collaborative learning has**

to be on how to establish the structures, processes and practices for collaborative learning. Furthermore, the challenge is to create an atmosphere metaphorically from “competition of practices” to “collaboration of practice”. One can also add that success in establishing well-functioning systems for collaborative learning most likely would convince also those doubtful of collaborative learning by removing its practical obstacles in the everyday.

The Osaava Verme Project has established a rather stable national structure for teachers’ peer-mentoring to support teachers’ occupational welfare with collaborative learning. However, the network (which now is called Verme2 -project) is currently trying to expand their target groups to all professionals in educational field, also trying to create a similar system for principals. According to the Finnish Principals’ Association are in desperate need for a similar support. Thus, the Finnish EFFeCT team decided to work on the EFFeCT Methodological Framework as having principals’ collaborative learning supported with peer-mentoring as the scope and with the Finnish Principals’ Association as the key partner.

The piloting workshop at the Educa fare in January 2017 gave valuable information about the principles, structures, processes and practices drafted in the EFFeCT Methodological Framework. In addition, the need for collaborative learning supported with peer-mentoring became very explicit. All participants expressed strong wishes for peer-mentoring-based collaborative learning systems among their peers to support their everyday work. Even in the brief workshop, concrete results were obtained, some of which led to further actions and improvements.

The national EFFeCT workshop in March 2017 further confirmed that collaborative learning in general and peer-mentoring as one of its forms are regarded as essential occupational welfare and development approaches in Finland. All the participants’ responds were evidence for this interpretation. Similar to the piloting workshop in January, participants reported that the EFFeCT Methodological Framework as presented and experimented appeared purposeful and functional. What they feared most was how to establish similar systems for collaborative learning in the everyday.

The national EFFeCT workshop provided valuable information for the EFFeCT Project and its four work groups were able to construct concrete plans for modelling, marketing, funding and developing principals’ collaborative learning with peer-mentoring. These plans were highly contextual which we believe similar plans have to be in general. **To be able to establish sustainable structures, processes and practices for collaborative learning in the everyday, the context of the professional communities and individuals has to be taken into consideration.** One can say that this was the second major outcome of the Finnish EFFeCT Project.

The Finnish EFFeCT team and the Finnish Principals’ Association started working actively according to the plans made in the national EFFeCT workshop. However, the plans that aimed at providing support for collaborative learning with peer-mentoring for occupational welfare purposes all failed in one way or another. The Finnish National Agency for Education did not grant funding to train mentors for regional principals’ peer-mentoring groups and

thus to establish a national system for this purpose. Education providers did not acquire the SURE-Coach services for their principals. In addition, the Osaava Verme Project once again was not able to form a group of principals to be trained to lead principals' regional peer-mentoring groups.

The national EFFECT workshop in September 2017 focused on the encountered challenges taking a more holistic perspective on collaborative learning. Again, the experimentation of the EFFECT Methodological Framework received very positive feedback from the participants. Furthermore, the participants were able to come up with a holistic concrete programme for how to advance collaborative learning in the field of education. The programme comprises several approaches and key actions.

This extended programme has been highly successful. For example, the Institute of Educational Leadership applied for funding from the Finnish National Agency for Education to provide six professional development programmes for various professionals in the field of education ranging from teachers to municipal directors of education, and five of these programmes obtained the applied funding. They are all founded on the participants' collaborative learning including extending the learning to collaborative learning in their own professional communities. The scopes of the programmes vary significantly: developing early childhood education, inclusion, multi-culturalism, team leadership as well as updating one's own professional expertise in peer-groups.

The one application that did not obtain the funding did not have any other scope than to train principals to lead regional principals' peer-mentoring groups to advance principals' induction in the profession and occupational welfare. Could this be the outcome number three of the Finnish EFFECT team? **Collaborative learning is not regarded as a goal itself but it is considered as an instrument for concrete developmental purposes.**

In addition to regarding collaborative learning as an instrument for concrete developments, all the workshops conducted in the Finnish EFFECT Project indicated that, for successful developments, it was both essential to enable actors with various expertise and positions to learn collaboratively from each other and that the EFFECT Methodological Framework appeared to enable them to do so. An illustrative example is how parents, students, educational staff, university researchers and state regional authorities conducted collaborative learning for the City of Jyväskylä policy programme for preventing and handling bullying at schools.

5. Reflections

This Finland national workshop report is not really a report of a national workshop. It is a report that describes the Finnish EFFECT Project as a process focusing on the concept of the national workshop. However, there were, in fact, no one national workshop either but several of which not all were even included in this concise report.

There are three main reasons for this scope of the report. First, the report has the function of documenting the national workshop as prescribed in the project application and general plan. Consequently, the report had to focus on the national workshop.

Second, as the EFFeCT Project is a developmental project, a process had to be designed for it. Initially there was to be only the prescribed one national workshop, but the actual process demanded several to obtain the information necessary for the successful enactment of the project. Thus, there were several national workshops and the report also had to focus on the process that required them.

Third, the EFFeCT Project would not have achieved its goals if it had not been contextualised. This contextualisation caused several implications. To start with, the goals of the EFFeCT Project had to be matched with those of the partners who collaborated in the process to experiment and provide feedback to the EFFeCT Methodological Framework. In addition, managing the EFFeCT Project process had to be synchronised with the timelines of the partners and the other actors involved in the process. Finally, one must consider the outcomes of the Finnish EFFeCT Project as contextual, too, and look for the more universal outcomes in the more general parts of the EFFeCT portal.

One can synthesise the main outcomes of the Finnish EFFeCT Project as follows.

There appears to be a common understanding that today's world requires teachers' collaborative learning and not just teachers' but all actors' in the field of education. The need for collaborative learning comprises learning both amongst peers and amongst people with various expertise and positions.

Successful collaborative learning depends on successful structures, processes and practices for collaborative learning. These must be found on team, unit, consortium, regional, national and trans-national levels.

Successful collaborative learning takes into consideration the context. This consideration comprises the operational environment and its evolvment, as well as the organisation's mission, vision and strategies. For example, when enacting the EFFeCT Methodological Framework, one has to be sensitive to one's own setting and act accordingly. There is no one universal solution.

