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CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND
FEEDBACK: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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Thesis abstract

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Tiivistelmä/Abstract <p>Current forms of student-centered models of learning attempt to address the educational needs of the post-modern society. Even if new models of teaching are being applied, a new way of assessing pupils has not yet been implemented. There has been recent research on formative assessment and feedback; but much is still needed to investigate, especially concerning elementary school contexts and this research addresses this gap. The focus of this research is on assessment in the teacher-pupil relation since, there needs to be renovation or even radical reformation of the roles and responsibilities assigned to teachers and pupils (Dixon, Hawe & Parr, 2011). This qualitative empirical research aims to explore elementary school teachers' beliefs and practices in assessing and giving feedback and correlate those to the theory of formative assessment and feedback, in order to demonstrate what teachers know and apply and what they still need to improve, according to the models of feedback of Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006). The data was collected by interviewing elementary school teachers with semi-structured open-ended questions; and by the feedback these teachers gave to case scenarios. The study is significant for it is reliable and valid and participants are from different contexts and experts in their field.</p> <p>The findings in this research show that, when assessing pupils, these teachers still mostly rely on test and exam numbers. They do not make use of self-assessment or peer-feedback as ways of assessing or involving pupils in the assessment process; or as a way of fostering learning. Data shows that teachers have either theoretical or empirical knowledge on the aspects related to the timing of feedback, to discussing with pupils about their learning and to shaping teaching according to the feedback they give. Data findings show that they do not give feedback on the process and do not make the assessment criteria clear for the pupils and do not seem to give relevant information on the feedbacks given. In conclusion, teachers need to receive teaching and training on assessment and feedback so they can make use of self-assessment and peer-feedback to foster pupils' learning and self-regulatory skills, and by doing so address the needs of the fast changing society we live in.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

Assessing is an important part of our lives. People evaluate mostly everything; either in formal or informal ways, whether consciously or unconsciously. Assessing becomes even more important when it comes to the school context because our society accepts the school as the organization that has the power of issuing certificates of knowledge and the teacher as the person responsible for deciding the content on these certificates.

Our society has gone through many transformations, especially in the last decades. Social contracts kept as sure and unchangeable are being reevaluated. This is happening in all spheres of society, including the educational system, whose changes are more related to the teaching methods, school systems and the role of schools and teachers. The transformations on the educational system have granted improvements, but they have also brought some uncertainties along; as some of the areas have not yet been deeply reevaluated and restructured. One of those areas is the way pupils, teachers and schools are assessed.

Current forms of student-centered models of learning are trying to address the needs of the post-modern society in the educational settings; but even in those models, a new way of assessing learners has not yet been implemented. One important aspect related to assessment practices mentioned by Sawyer (2008) is that still today it is required that all learners learn the same thing at the same time. Some small changes have taken place to a certain extent, such as the use of self- and peer evaluation. Nonetheless, most current assessment models seem to fail in assessing deep learning. Learning is deeper when learners are granted the opportunity to think and solve problems within the content they are trying to master (Sawyer, 2008). Therefore, the important aspect to be assessed should be the learners' deeper understanding rather than superficial knowledge, but this cannot be achieved only by giving learners exams or multiple tests and grading those.

Unfortunately, the important and intriguing question "how to reconcile accountability with customized learning?" (Sawyer, 2008, p.9) that has been raised by new teaching and learning practices as well as by the new form through which education is seen does not seem to have an answer yet. In fact, this accountability might be one of the reasons why new ways of assessing have not yet been implemented together with new ways of teaching and learning. As stated by Irons (2008), assessment needs to suffer changes so that a designed model is found – a model that is at the same time manageable, related to the workload, valid

and reliable, related to academic quality and effective as a learning mechanism for learners.

1.1 Research scope

There has been recent research on formative assessment and feedback; but to my knowledge, there is not much research on formative assessment and feedback within the elementary school context, therefore, this research addresses this gap. The research will address assessment in the teacher-pupil perspective. It does not focus on governmental or school perspectives – although they are not totally dissociated from the teacher-pupil's, since schools need grades for accountability purposes and the teachers are the ones responsible for coming up with those grades – The decision of not focusing on the governmental or school perspective was taken firstly because too much information would make it difficult to narrow down the scope of the research; and secondly because the teacher-pupil perspective was considered more important as it influences learning in a more direct way.

The problem in the teacher-pupil perspective on assessment is that presently in many places they are still based on the old ways in which our society and therefore our schools functioned. Teachers would play the role of a factory supervisor and pupils, in turn, would play the role of workers in a production line (Sawyer, 2008). In effective teaching, assessing should be done in order to make sure that “the next teaching act can be matched to the present understanding of the students” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 88). As stated by Covington (2000), in today's society individuals are considered worthy according to their achievements and for this reason most youngsters judge and measure their worth as learners based on the grades they achieve on summative assessments. It is apparent that, even currently, assessing does not address or measure deep learning and has not yet been adapted to the new models of teaching and learning.

Feedback is a topic of considerable importance because it has great influence on learners' achievements. Grades, on the other hand, do not fully help pupils to develop learning or to motivate for learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). “There needs to be renovation or even radical reformation of the roles and responsibilities assigned to teachers and pupils” (Dixon, Hawe & Parr, 2011, p. 365). More research needs to be done in this area, so that an improved and greater picture of the situation can be portrayed before future actions are taken in relation to assessing learning.

My objective in this research is to explore elementary school teachers' beliefs and their own perception of practices in assessing and giving feedback and to compare their mentioned concepts and practices to actual practice and to the theory of formative assessment and feedback, as presented by Irons (2008). In order to explore and be able to analyze elementary school teachers' conceptions and practices on assessment and feedback, I have invited fourth grade teachers to participate as interviewees. Four fourth grade school teachers have participated in the research; three teachers of Finnish and one of Brazilian nationality. The Finnish teachers are from the northern Finland and work in two different schools, one public and the other private; the Brazilian teacher works on a public school in southern Brazil.

The data has been collected using two instruments: The first was a semi-structured interview with nineteen open-ended questions. The questions aimed at portraying a picture of teachers' concepts and perceptions of practice on assessment and feedback. The second instrument was a set of three case scenarios that were chosen, as opposed to observation of actual lessons, for practical reasons. They aimed present teaching-like situations for teachers to react upon and give feedback to. Two of the cases presented pupils with learning difficulties and one portrayed a pupil with great achievements.

1.2 Research significance

The topic of this research is current and of international interest and applicability. It is a relevant topic because children form their attitudes towards learning during the first years of study (Hendy & Whitebread, 2000). Although the data has been collected in two different countries, it is not aimed as a comparative study; but this fact gives the research a broader applicability. The research is focused on elementary school environments because current studies on formative assessment and feedback in those grades are not as abundant as studies on high school or university levels.

1.3 Previous research

As stated before, to my knowledge, there is not much research on formative assessment and feedback within the elementary school context. There is, however, previous research on assessment for learning by Dixon *et al.* (2011), where they investigate teachers' beliefs and knowledge about feedback and their perception of practice. They affirm that teachers

have differing perceptions both of their own role and pupils' roles in the feedback process – this is something with the findings of this research are in accordance. They are also in accordance with their findings that even if teachers express the same beliefs, teachers' practices are different, that is, teachers might believe something about their practices, while performing it in a different way.

In the investigation of Dixon and his colleagues (2011) about teachers' knowledge and perception of practice on feedback, they have divided the teachers in three groups they called (1) the technicians, (2) the pragmatics and (3) the empowerers. These groups will be explained further, as teachers taking part in this research can also be placed into those groups. Another important aspect of the study of Dixon and his colleagues (2011) which is deeply associated with this research concerns their conclusion that attention must be paid to the teachers' development of the understanding of feedback interactions, especially concerning to self- and peer feedback, so that they may be able to foster students self-monitoring and self-regulatory behavior.

1.4 Research structure

This research is structured starting with this introduction followed by the presentation of the theoretical framework as well as a thorough explanation of methodologies including data collection and data analysis. Those are followed by discussions and conclusions that, as stated before, are in accordance with previous research. Aspects of ethics, reliability, validity and limitations are also addressed. Therefore, readers can have a truthful picture of the elementary school teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge related to formative assessment and feedback. It is expected that readers reach their own conclusions on this important matter and that further discussion occur on the subject, because, although of some importance, this research does not aim in exhausting the topic but in beginning a discussion that will need further research– since changes in the ways pupils are assessed is just in its initial phase.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to construct a background on the relevance of formative assessment and feedback, it is necessary to start by reviewing the concept of self-regulated learning (SRL) and its relations to assessment and feedback. SRL is intrinsically connected to formative assessment and feedback, since the use of formative assessment and feedback helps to foster SRL (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

2.1 Self-regulated learning

Self-regulation is important because it supports and develops life-long learning, which is a major function of education (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-Regulated Learning is a process by which a learner can regulate their learning process, aiming to achieve a determined learning goal. It does not refer to an ability or skill but it is rather the process by which the learners transform the mental abilities into academic skills (Zimmerman, 2002). Learners are responsible for initiating and directing their own learning (Zimmerman, 1989), which is seen as the result of the learners' proactive activities, rather than an event that happens as a response to teaching (Zimmermann, 2002). As the name itself indicates, learning is centered in the self, that is, the individual is responsible for their own learning process and outcome. As stated by Zimmermann (2000), this refers to a cycle of self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions that lead to a determined goal. It involves self-awareness, self-motivation and behavioral skills (Zimmermann, 2002), and the use of specific strategies in order to achieve the established goals is imperative (Zimmermann, 1989).

2.1.1 Zimmerman's model of self-regulated learning

According to Zimmerman's model of the self-regulatory process, self-regulation is a cyclic process, as represented in *Figure 1*. This model presents three phases that are: the forethought phase, which includes the sub-processes of task analysis, goal setting and strategy planning; the performance or volitional control phase, which includes self-control, self-instruction, imagery, task strategies, attention focusing, self-observation, self-recording and self-experimentation, and the self-reflection phase that includes self-judgment, self-evaluation, causal attribution, self-reaction, self-satisfaction, affect and adaptive-defensive

reactions. These phases are cyclical in that the reflection on a prior phase will affect the subsequent phase and therefore the whole process (Zimmerman, 2002).

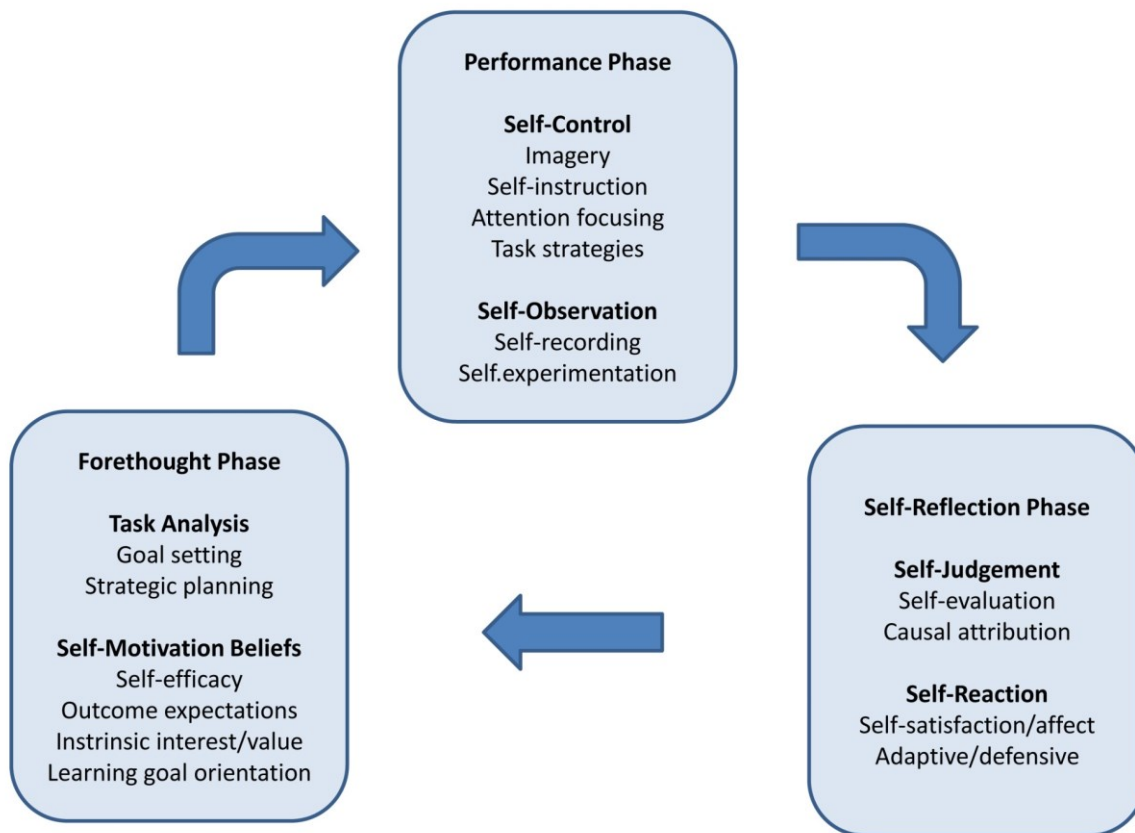


Figure 1 - Phases and sub-processes of self-regulation as presented by Zimmerman (2002).

Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013) in their article analyzing when self-assessing happens, argue that self-assessment does not lie only on the self-reflection phase but it is already part of the performance phase and even the forethought phase, if learners are given the assessment criteria at the beginning of the process, together with the instructions to the task.

2.1.2 Butler and Winne's model of self-regulated learning

In Butler and Winne's model (1995), represented in *Figure 2*, is shown a detailed path of feedback in the self-regulated learning process. In their model, self-regulated learners draw on knowledge and beliefs in order to construct and interpret a given task. Based on that interpretation, they set their goals. Aiming at reaching the goals, they apply strategies that generate cognitive and behavioral products. The monitoring of these processes of engage-

ment and the updated products developed generate the internal feedback. The internal feedback provides grounds for reinterpreting elements and changing strategies or for reinforcing them. If external feedback is provided, it can confirm, add to or conflict with the learner's internal feedback, influencing the subsequent self-regulation.

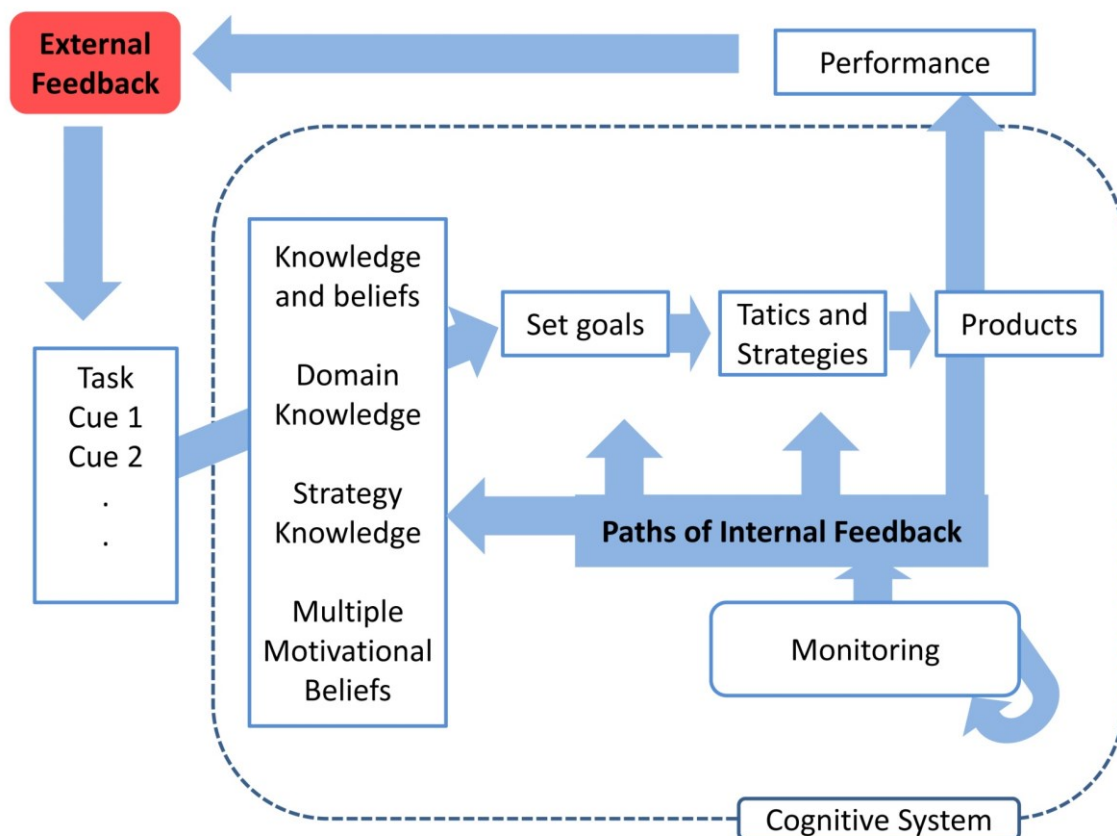


Figure 2 - A model of self-regulated learning by Butler and Whinne (1995), color added.

2.1.3 Self-regulated learning and its relation to assessment and feedback

Taking into consideration Zimmerman's model of SRL (2002), the role of assessment and feedback falls mostly on the last self-regulatory phase, the self-reflection phase. In this phase there are two major sub-processes, which are self-judgment and self-reaction. The self-judgment derives from a comparison between the self-observed performance and the standard or goal previously established, and the causal attribution refers to where one believes the cause of error or success lies (Zimmerman, 2002). The generated self-judgment will influence the next sub-process, which is the self-reaction. This process includes the feelings regarding one's performance. So, if the learner is satisfied with the performance, their motivation and self-satisfaction will increase. On the other hand, if unsatisfied, the learner will go through all the phases again in order to achieve the established goal, show-

ing then adaptive reactions. If the learner has defensive reactions, they will try to protect the self-image and, by doing that, they will withdraw or avoid opportunities to learn and perform according to the established goal, by doing so, they change the first established goal (Zimmermann, 2002).

Although the above mentioned process does happen, according to Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013), self-assessment, as a key process for self-regulation, begins already in the forethought phase. The authors affirm that, when learners are given the assessment criteria from the beginning of the task, they already plan their actions according to it, therefore, the self-assessment process already begins, because the learner has to evaluate if the chosen strategy will produce the expected results, according to the criteria. The self-assessment also continues in the performance phase, since while self-monitoring their work, learners detect if their performance is adequate or not and modify their actions, based on the result of this performance self-monitoring, therefore, they self-evaluate their process of learning.

Considering the above and also what is mentioned by Irons (2008) that says that the main focus of formative assessment and feedback is to help students see the level of learning they have achieved up to certain point and clarify their expectations and standards; it is possible to say that external assessment and feedback as well as self-assessment and the resulted internal feedback affect all phases of the self-regulatory process, as demonstrated in *Figure 3*, that shows the cyclical process of self-regulation with its phases, as expressed by Zimmerman's model (2002), as well as the self-assessment process, in green, as demonstrated by Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013) and the influence of external feedback to the phases, in red, as expressed by Irons (2008).

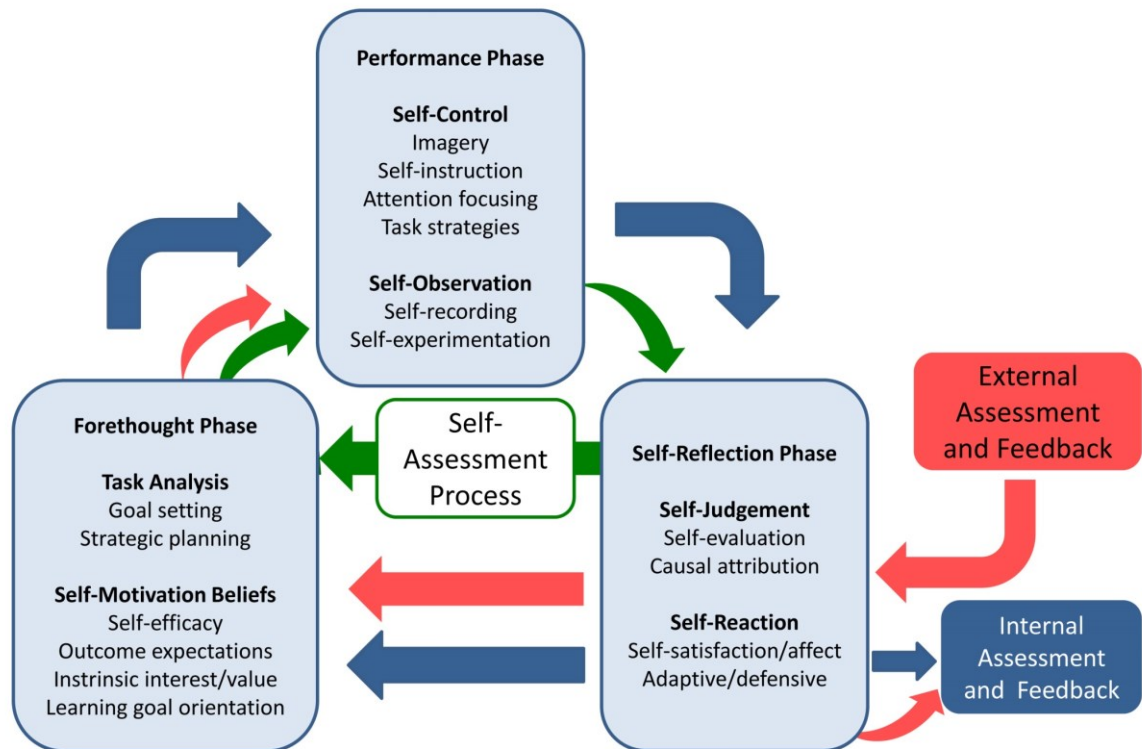


Figure 3 - Phases and sub-processes of self-regulation as presented by Zimmerman (2002), own addition of the influence of assessment and feedback to the process, based on Irons (2008) and Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (20013).

2.2 Assessment

Assessment is part of the formal teaching contexts, from basic to higher education. According to Shepard (2000), assessment is seen as an integral part of instruction in a given learning culture. Assessment is mostly used for accountability purposes but its range is much greater than just determining a learner passing or failing to achieve certain knowledge for the continuance of the process of learning in any given place. Assessing can be a tool for improving learning, when it is used to this purpose (Irons, 2008).

In effective teaching, assessing should be done in order to make sure that “the next teaching act can be matched to the present understanding of the students” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 88), meaning that assessment should help learners and teachers understand the learning development, considering the learners’ progress, achievements and needs for improvement. There are many ways of assessing learners’ development of learning, but they are divided in two major categories of assessment which are (1) summative assessment and (2) formative assessment.

2.2.1 Summative assessment

Summative assessment has been the most used way of assessing learning in the last centuries. Summative assessment results in a grade that is used to judge the learners' performance (Irons, 2008). Among the tools for summative assessment, tests and exams are the ones that seem to be mostly applied. Tests might be intended for different purposes or designed in different forms – or with different background concepts – but their main purpose is to determine how much knowledge the learners have, up to a determined point in time, on a certain subject. Therefore, no matter the kind of test or exam, they will generate a summative assessment that will determine the learners' classification at the end of the teaching block, the course or the school year.

The idea of judgment is present in any summative assessment, since it can be used to determine the merits of learners, teachers, schools and even countries. As learners have an increasing load of summative assessment, there is no room for them to be driven by learning. Because, in order to balance the workload of their activities, they end up choosing strategies that will fulfill the summative assessment criteria and their engagement in formative activities will be diminished. Summative assessment is always perceived by the formal education community as having some sort of repercussion (Irons, 2008).

2.2.2 Formative assessment

Formative assessment includes all forms of assessment that are planned so to generate feedback on the learners' performance in order to improve, enhance and accelerate their learning (Sadler, 1998). The main factor that differentiates formative assessment from other forms of assessing is that learners are expected to occupy a central and active role in the process (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). This is of extreme importance when considering that thinking over the process of learning makes it possible for learners' reflection and metacognition, that is, thinking about the process and thinking about knowledge (Sawyer, 2008). By doing so, learners become responsible for their learning and this way, assessment can be used for the purpose of empowering learners to become self-regulated. There is empirical evidence that learners who are more self-regulated are as well more effective learners (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

This kind of assessment is closely connected to feedback because the main purpose of formative assessment is not to come up with a grade or a passing or failing concept, but to help learners go forward on their learning and, at the same time, improve the mechanisms of their learning process and develop their skills. In formative assessment, the assessing tools are ways of developing learning and feeding learners forward. They are powerful tools and have the potential of being constructive (Irons, 2008). Formative assessment tools do not aim to measure learning, but to help its construction. As its aim is not judging performance, it does not carry the repercussion effect mentioned by Irons and anteriorly cited.

There needs to be a change in the culture of assessment, if it is expected that learners become more self-regulated; shifting from summative to formative, in order that students have the opportunity to learn from their assessment rather than be driven by complying with summative assessments (Irons, 2008). It is expected that this shift begins with teachers rather than with learners, since it is teachers' role to foster authentic learning (Sawyer, 2008).

2.2.3 Self-assessment

An important aspect of assessment lies on self-assessment, which is the learners' own judgment of their performance. It is a qualitative assessment and it has no relation to grades or numbers. It presumes understanding the learning process in order to learn from mistakes as well as from accuracy. This judgment is done by the learners themselves, as they consider their own goals and the assessment criteria. The assessment criteria can be established by the teachers and should be informed to the learners before the work is done, so that they have the time for assessing and improving their own work before a final assessment or external feedback (Panadero, 2011; Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013; Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2014).

Self-assessment plays an important role in self-regulated learning models, as the learners themselves need to evaluate their learning in pursuance of making the necessary changes in order to achieve previously established goals. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), self-assessment activities encourage reflection on the learning process. This way, self-assessment is connected to the reactions and strategies the learner is going to use. These reactions can happen in three different dimensions that are: (1) the behavioral self-

reaction, improving learning performance; (2) the personal self-reaction, improving their personal process and (3) the environmental self-reaction, improving the environment around them (Zimmerman 1989).

According to Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013), teachers should encourage the use of self-assessment as an instructional strategy; aiming to guide learners in self-evaluating their work in order to improve their self-regulatory skills because there is evidence that demonstrates the relation between self-assessment and self-regulation. According to Panadero, Alonso-Tapia and Huertas (2012), there are tools that can be used to promote self-assessment and self-regulation, as long as they are well structured and well developed; among those are rubrics. Rubrics are a report given to learners with a set of expectations for a determined task, where it is listed the criteria for the task and the levels of quality (Andrade, 2000). The development of self-assessment skills will not only help learners evaluate their own work but it will help them to better understand assessment and feedback from external sources as well (Irons, 2008).

2.3 Feedback

Feedback is information to learners concerning their behavior, performance or learning development. Feedback has been proven to have one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, falling into the top five categories that influence learning, but its impact can be either positive or negative (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). As mentioned before, the effect of feedback can vary, therefore, it is necessary to take into account that it is not possible to measure the effectiveness of feedback unless it is clear what the feedback itself is trying to achieve (Price, Handley, Millar & O'Donovan, 2010).

The concept of feedback has been developed during the past decades. Unfortunately, it is still seen by many as a teachers' transmission of information to learners – assuming learners will decode this information and apply it to their actions. Feedback cannot be seen only as a cognitive process of transferring or decoding information under the penalty of missing the interactions of feedback with motivation and beliefs. Research has shown that feedback has the power of influencing the way learners feel about themselves, in a positive or negative way, and it also influences how and what they learn (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), apparently, learners like to receive feedback, but as demonstrated by a great number of researches, there are many points to consider when analyzing feedback and its influence and efficacy on learning improvement. Some of these aspects to consider are discussed further later in the models of feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006). These models were chosen to this research due to the fact that they aim in improving learning. They are also current, complement each other for understanding prime aspects to be taken into consideration when giving feedback, and focus at improving learners' self-regulation as well. Although much has been researched, feedback is a vast field and there is still a wide range of it that needs further investigation

2.3.1 Internal feedback

Internal feedback is the information learners generate for themselves as they engage in tasks. They include information about task success, productivity, tactics, strategies and affects (Carver & Scheier, 1990). Learners' beliefs about the learning process influence the monitoring and the quality of the feedback they generate internally. The range of their understanding also shapes the interpretation of the feedback provided by external informants (Chinn & Brewer, 1993).

Learners generate internal feedback as they monitor their engagement in the learning activities and tasks and assess their own progress toward the goals (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Internal feedback is part of the self-assessment process for, according to McMillan and Hearn (2008), learners identify their learning and work strategies, provide feedback to themselves, which is internal feedback, based on standards and criteria, and determine the next steps or plans to enhance their performance.

2.3.2 External feedback

External feedback which is feedback received by an external informant, that can be a teacher, peer or other media, provided accidentally or purposively, is limited in its effect (Hattie & Timplerley, 2007). According to Butler and Winne (1995), research strongly suggests that external feedback suffers influence of learners' knowledge, beliefs and own thinking. It seems to be common sense that the effectiveness of feedback rests on how it is structured, its timing, the kind of task and its purpose.

In order that feedback have a powerful effect on learning, it needs to be part of the learning process, that is, there must be a context in which the feedback is inserted (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In the same meta-analysis, Hattie and Timperley (2007) also affirm that some types of feedback are more powerful than others. The highest effect size relates to information about task and effectiveness, and the lowest effect is found in relation to praise, rewards and punishment. That is to say that guidance is more productive than punishment or praise.

External feedback can coincide or conflict with learners' own internal feedback and, as a result, it might change learners' knowledge and beliefs, which can then influence their self-regulation. This way the learners would have to actively engage with the external inputs in order to respond to them either by an internal process effect or an external outcome (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

2.3.3 Peer-feedback

The aim of peer-feedback is to convey information to improve learning. While there is evidence proving that peer-assessing can be biased by race, social status and friendship, among others (Layton & Ohland, 2000), this cannot be associated with peer-feedback, which does not imply determining or grading the work of others. A study conducted by Patri (2002) showed that when firm criteria are set, peer-feedback enables learners to judge the performance of peers in a way comparable to teachers.

So that peer-feedback can lead to improvement in learning, the presence of dialogue is made necessary. This dialogue with peers will enhance in the learners the feeling of self-control over the learning in different ways. Besides that, a peer who has just learned something can better explain it in an accessible and known language to another peer. It is also sometimes easier to accept examination from peers than from teachers. When peer-feedback happens in group discussions, it also gives alternative perspectives on problems and it can work as a motivational factor (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Another important factor related to peer-feedback is that learners can develop their evaluative knowledge and expertise by assessing the work of others. By evaluating a task similar to their own, learners gain understanding of different outcomes and possibilities of the task; they meet similar difficulties and they learn strategies of others that they might apply

themselves (Dixon *et al.*, 2011). It is the teachers' responsibility to develop the learners' evaluative expertise and that is of major importance since, by doing so, the learners will achieve reflective habits (Buhagiar, 2007). Another beneficial effect of evaluating the work of others is that it allows a higher degree of objectivity compared to when evaluating one's own work. Protocols for critical friend reviews provide structure and scaffolding for peer assessors; and learners develop their own self-assessment process more easily, when first applying the criteria to the work of others (Walsh & Sates, 2011). By assessing peers, learners gain knowledge and skills needed to engage in self-monitoring (Dixon *et al.*, 2011).

Peer-feedback helps to encourage dialogue, while it also supports the learners in understanding the assessment criteria. It promotes learners' knowledge from the assessment as well as develops constructive and valuable feedback. Another important benefit is that peer-feedback can help teachers save time in assessing and giving feedback (Irons, 2008).

2.3.4 Formative feedback

Formative feedback is information communicated to learners with the desire of modifying their thinking or behavior, intending to improve their learning (Shute, 2008). According to Irons (2008), formative feedback should attempt to supply the learners with indication of where they are in relation to achieving their goals, where they need to progress and how they can do it. The goals should be understood by the learners as well as considered achievable and valuable. Feedback should be communicated in such a way that learners can make sense out of it and it should also be encouraging and prompting to taking actions. This description is in line with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) model of feedback that states that effective feedback should answer three questions of the learners, which are: "Where am I going?", "How am I going?" and "Where to next?" meaning to address the goals, the progress and the activities needed to progress toward the goal.

2.3.5 Hattie and Timperley's model of feedback

According to Hattie and Timperley's model, demonstrated in *Figure 4*, the purpose of feedback is to reduce the disparity between the learners' current and desired understanding. Therefore, the goal setting plays a major role in the effectiveness of feedback, since teachers should take them into consideration when giving feedback and learners when receiving

feedback. It is the teacher's role to help learners understand the goals and to provide learners with means and support for achieving the goals. The learners' role relates to the achievement of goals by increasing efforts and seeking better strategies and information, or in the case of a less productive approach, abandoning or reducing the goals. If the same goals are taken into consideration by both parts, the discrepancy in understanding the feedback, between learners and teachers, can be reduced

As mentioned before, in their model Hattie and Timperley (2007) state that feedback should address the questions, "Where am I going?", addressing the goals, "How am I going?", addressing the process toward the goals and "Where to next?", addressing the actions to be taken in order that current and desired performances are aligned. This way, feedback addresses not only to state the current situation but also feed actions forward. In their model, feedback can be focused on the levels of task, process, self-regulation and personal evaluation. According to Hattie and Timperley's research review, the power of feedback lies on the self-regulation and process levels, and how feedback will contribute to these processes will depend on its focus and on the level to which it is directed. A definition of those levels is seen below.

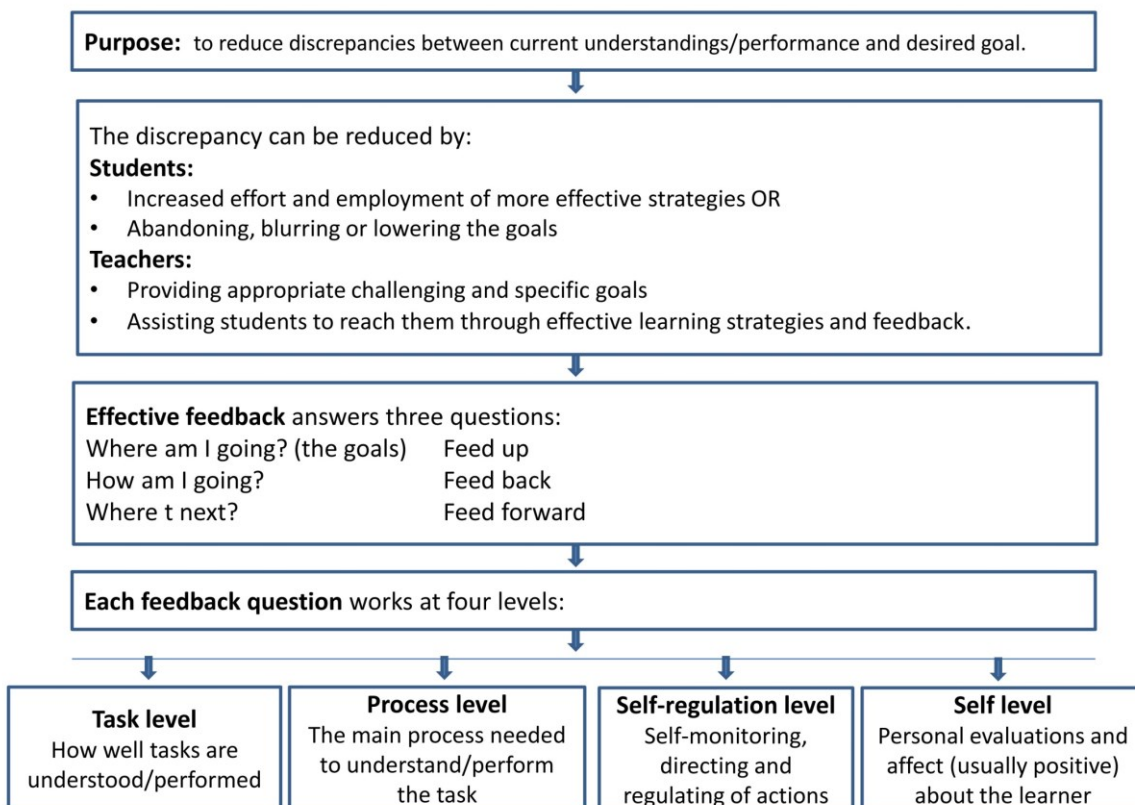


Figure 4 - Model of feedback to enhance learning by Hattie and Timperley (2007).

— *Levels of feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007)*

As expressed above, Hattie and Timperley's model of feedback present four levels of feedback that should address each of the questions feedback is supposed to answer, as described below.

Feedback focusing on task: This level of feedback relates to the task, if it is correct or incorrect. It includes directions to obtain more, different or correct information. It is the most common kind of feedback. It has to do with any aspect of task accomplishment, like correctness, orderliness or attitudes. Teachers generally mix task level of feedback with the personal level, which dilutes its effectiveness; but by itself it can be powerful. Feedback on task is more effective when it is about inadequate interpretations. This kind of feedback is effective when given as soon as the task is done and it should not be complex. It can be given individually or in group; when in group the way it is received will vary by the individual perception of importance as well as the learner's commitment and involvement in the task. Feedback at this level does not help enhance learning as it is more focused on the result and therefore performance.

Feedback focusing on process: This level of feedback is aimed at the process used in performing a task. It helps learners reject erroneous hypotheses and provides cues and directions for searching a different strategy, for applying the chosen strategies or for seeking help. In their meta-analysis, Hattie and Timperley (2007) affirm that this level of feedback has one of the highest power effects. According to Earley, Northcraft, Lee and Lituchy (1990), feedback focused on the task process helps learners shape their task strategies and therefore it also enhances self-regulation

Feedback focusing on self-regulation: This level of feedback has influence on learners' self-efficacy, self-regulatory proficiencies and self-beliefs. The aspects that mediate the effectiveness of this level of feedback are: the capacity of generating internal feedback and of self-assessing, the readiness to put efforts into seeking and dealing with feedback information, the degree of confidence, attributions of success and failure and the learners' level of competence in seeking help. It focuses on having the learners self-evaluate and on directing them toward their goals by prompting questions so that learners themselves are going to reach conclusions and seek changes in order to achieve their goals.

Feedback focusing on personal evaluation: This level of feedback is directed to the learners themselves and it is abundantly present in many classrooms. It contains little or no task-related information and it is seldom possible to convert the given information into engagement or commitment to learning or understanding of the task. Hattie and Timperley's (2007) review of research showed that it is the less effective level of feedback for developing learning. According to Walsh and States (2011) praise has long been thought to be positive reinforcement but it seldom meets the criteria for effective feedback because teachers' expressions of praise are evaluative rather than descriptive and therefore they do not convey to learners information on what is positive about their performance or how to improve it.

2.3.6 Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's model of feedback

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's model of feedback (2006), shown in *Figure 5*, synthesizes the current thinking of the concepts of self-regulation and feedback. In this model, learners have an active and central role in the feedback process. They take part in monitoring and regulating their performance in relation to the goals and to the strategies to reach them. Their model is drawn on the model of self-regulated learning by Butler and Winne (1995), previously presented.

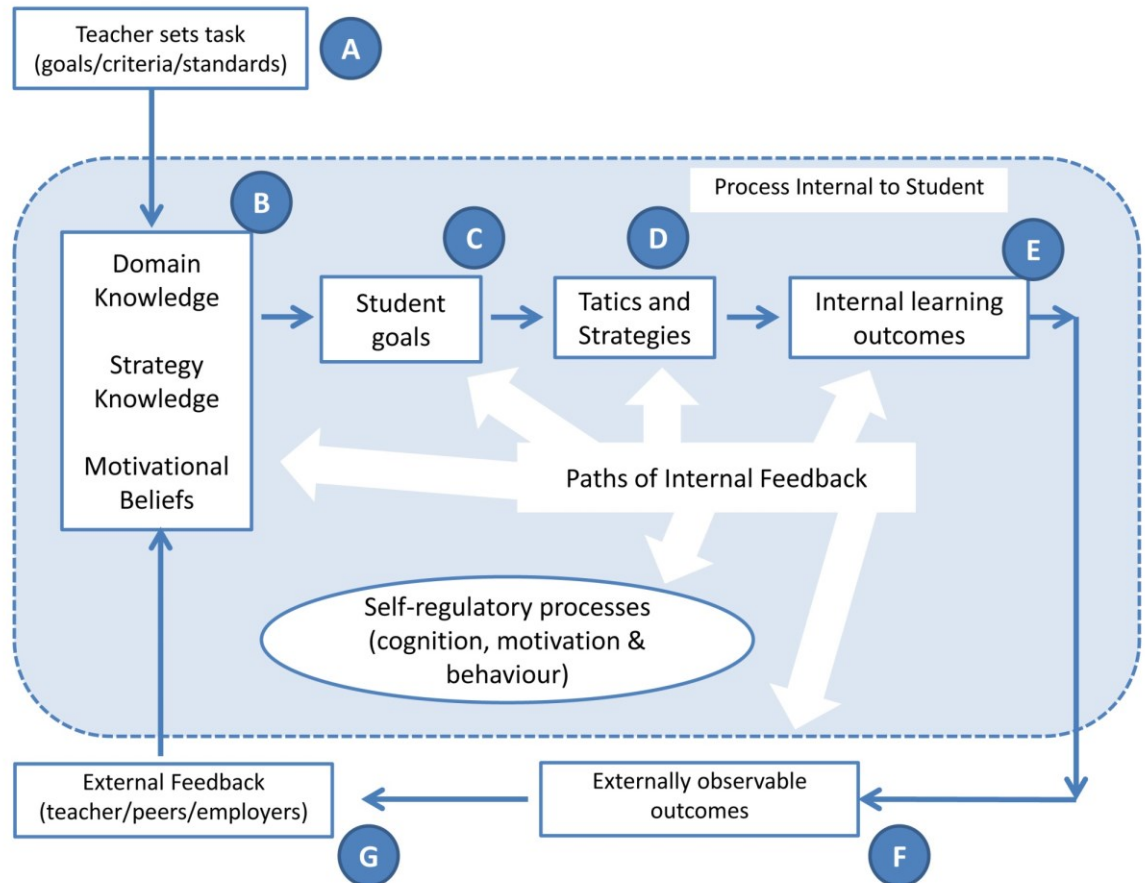


Figure 5 - A conceptual model of self-regulated learning and feedback by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006).

In Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's model, the task assigned by the teacher (A) initiates the self-regulatory process in the learner. Learner draws on prior knowledge and motivational beliefs (B) to engage in the task and construct a personal interpretation of the task and its requirements. Based on this, the learner sets the goal (C). The learner's goal and the teacher's goal for the task might overlap. The degree in which it overlaps may vary though. The goals (C) will shape the strategies and tactics (D) used to develop the internal (E) or external (F) outcomes. Internal outcomes refer to changes in cognitive, affective or motivational states during task engagement. External outcomes are the behaviors and products themselves. Monitoring of interactions between task and outcomes generates internal feedback at different levels, as for example, the cognitive, motivational and behavioral levels. The internal feedback is a comparison of current progress to the established goal and it might lead to a reinterpretation of task or to an adjustment of strategies or goals. External feedback (G) comes from an external origin that might be a teacher, a peer or others. This additional information will expand, coincide or conflict with the learners own interpretation of the task, the goals and strategies. In order for the external feedback to have effect on the

internal process and therefore on the outcome, the learner must employ the information. External feedback must be interpreted, constructed and internalized by the student in order to have a significant influence on subsequent learning (Ivanic, Clarck & Rimmershaw, 2000).

— *Principles of good feedback by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006)*

Along with their model, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick present seven principles of good feedback practices which are in accordance with the self-regulated learning models and on the theory of formative assessment and feedback. Their principals of good feedback aim at strengthening the learners' capacity to self-regulate their own work. The principles are further explained below.

Good feedback helps clarify what good performance is: Research shows that there is a discrepancy between learners' and teachers' conceptions of goals and assessment criteria. Weak or incorrect conceptions of goals influence what learners do and also the value they give to external feedback. According to Hounsell (1997), if learners and teachers do not share, even partially, the criteria and standards of assessment goals, the feedback information received is improbable to relate. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2007), good feedback helps clarify task requirements, that is, goals, criteria and standards. Teachers should provide learners with descriptions of assessment criteria or the standards that define different levels of achievement, in a simple and understandable way. As mentioned by Panadero, Alonso-Tapia and Huertas (2012), it is important that the assessment criteria is clear to the learner from the beginning of the learning process so that the goal is well established and the strategies chosen accordingly.

Good feedback facilitates the development of self-assessment in learning: Learners who are provided with opportunities to reflect on their own learning process develop their self-regulatory skills. Teachers should provide learners with chances to self-monitor and judge the progression of the work toward the goal, in order to build their capacity for self-regulation. Research shows that good practices of self-assessment can lead to significant improvements in learning and achievement, and this result is improved when self-assessment is associated with external feedback.

Good feedback delivers high quality information to students about their learning: Teachers have a key role in developing learners' self-regulatory skills and in providing external

feedback. Good quality external feedback concepts are still being constructed, but they should provide learners with information that would help them self-correct and improve their performance. It should also be timely, focusing on strengths and weaknesses, and at the same time offering corrective advices that direct the learners toward the goal, standard or criterion, with balanced praise and constructive criticism.

Good feedback encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning: So that feedback may be turned into action, it must be understood. In giving the feedback, teachers must keep in mind that it must relate to the learners' goal and it must be possible to be correctly decoded and understood. This understanding comes through dialogue. Learners will be able to act according to the feedback received if it is understood and internalized by them. In order that this understanding take place, feedback should be more like a dialogue than transmission of information, meaning that learners are to receive information and the opportunity to discuss it – since discussion with the teacher helps learners develop their understanding of goals and standards and receive immediate response to difficulties or misinterpretations. These discussions can happen not only with the teacher but also with peers. Peer-feedback will be discussed more widely in a further section.

Good feedback encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem: There is evidence that teachers have an effect on learner's motivation and self-esteem. By praising efforts and strategic behaviors, and by focusing the learners on learning goals through feedback, teachers can lead them to higher achievements. As stated before, according to Hattie and Timperley (2007), research shows that feedback on personal characteristics, as ability or intelligence, is the less effective level of feedback for developing learning. It has also been shown by research that grades have a negative impact on motivating for learning. Grading learners' performance has less effect on learning than giving feedback comments because it leads to comparing to others rather than focusing on personal difficulties (Butler, 1987).

Another aspect to take into consideration is that learners' beliefs also impact their motivation for learning. There are two kinds of beliefs that drive learners and their actions toward learning, (1) believing that abilities are fixed or (2) believing that abilities for learning are changeable. The ones who see them as fixed interpret failure as a result of their low ability and most likely are not to put efforts to change it. On the other hand, those who see them as changeable interpret the failure as an obstacle to be overcome and are likely to put efforts to have it changed (Dweck, 1999). It is important that learners receive feedback as an

evaluation of the performance in a certain context and toward certain criteria, not as an evaluation of their personal characteristics or abilities. When considering feedback on personal characteristics, it is important to take into account that, according to Butler and Winne (1995), learners' knowledge, beliefs and thinking jointly interfere on the effects of external feedback.

Good feedback provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance: In order that feedback be effective, it has to be of quality and it has to lead to changes in the learners' behavior (Yorke, 2003). The effectiveness of feedback on learning cannot be seen, unless the learners have the opportunity to complement or redo the work being evaluated (Boud, 2000). The timing of feedback lies not only on the delivery but also in its application, that is, feedback can be used immediately and over a longer period (Price *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, feedback is more effective when given during the progress of a given task, in the aspect of immediate effect – and also when providing the learners with strategies applicable in subsequent work – for the longer duration effect.

Good feedback provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching: Assessing affects teachers as well as learners. Teachers learn about the extent to which the learners have developed and can customize their teaching based on it (Yorke, 2003). In this principle, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) affirm that in order to provide relevant feedback, teachers need information on learners' progress; they need to be involved in reviewing, in reflecting and in taking actions to support learners' development and self-regulation. Assessment tasks may help teachers generate information to shape their teaching, as well as discussions on the given feedbacks, on goals and on processes of learning. Learners' self-assessments also provide information to teachers.

2.4 Summary of theoretical background

The theoretical background has portrayed a general picture on the theories of self-regulated learning, assessment and feedback. Self-regulated learning is connected to assessment and feedback, since learners assess their work and performance during all phases of the self-regulatory process. This assessing includes self-assessment, generating internal feedback and external assessment and feedback, which can confirm, add or contradict learners' self-assessment. Assessment is part of the learning process and can be summative, generating a judgment; or formative, aiming at improving learning. Feedback is information learners

generate or receive on their learning. This information can be self-generated, which is internal feedback or received from external informants, which is external feedback that can come from teachers, peers or other means such as technological tools. Formative assessment and feedback aims on improving learning.

Likewise, the theoretical background has also presented the models of feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) which are current models of feedback that help understand what aspects should be taken into consideration when giving feedback. The levels of feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007) are: feedback aiming (1) on task, (2) on process, (3) on self-regulation, and (4) on personal evaluation. The principles of good feedback by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) state that good feedback should: (1) help clarify what good performance is, (2) facilitate the development of self-assessment in learning, (3) deliver high quality information to learners about their learning, (4) encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning, (5) encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem, (6) provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance, and (7) provide information to teachers that could be used to shape their teaching.

There has been recent research on formative assessment and feedback; but much is still needed to investigate in this field. There is not much research on formative assessment and feedback concerning elementary school teachers and this research addresses this gap. This topic is especially important because, according to Hendy and Whitebread (2000) children form their attitudes towards learning during the first years of study and according to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), teachers have a key role in developing learners' self-regulatory skills and in providing feedback.

3 METHODOLOGY

This empirical research is qualitative in its essence. A qualitative approach was chosen because the main objective was to understand teachers' current practices and concepts on assessment and feedback in the light of the theory of formative assessment and feedback by Irons (2008). As stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative researchers aim at making sense of or interpret phenomena in accordance to the meanings people bring to them, doing so in their natural setting. This research is an effort to see and an attempt to disclose how teachers perceive assessment and feedback and how this perception relates to their practices in everyday situations in the classroom. It also aims in helping disclose their theoretical and practical knowledge of the theory of formative assessment and feedback, as presented by Irons (2008).

3.1 Research method

In order to achieve the above mentioned, a qualitative descriptive analysis was chosen because this kind of analysis focuses on the "what" of questions and because it is in accordance with the main objective of the research, further explained below. It is my understanding that the requirements for descriptive analysis that, according to Glass and Hopkins (1984), involve gathering data which describes the events; and then organizing and tabulating the data, and describing the information, were fully accomplished. It is also considered that the purpose of this research is in accordance with the goal of qualitative descriptive analysis that, according to Sandelowski (2000), is to make a comprehensive summary of events. He also affirms that qualitative descriptive analysis is to be used when a straight description of a phenomenon is expected. These criteria are applicable to the aim of this research.

3.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this research is to explore elementary school teachers' concepts and perception of practices in assessing and giving feedback, to compare those both to their practices in the case scenarios and to the theory of formative assessment and feedback, as described by Irons (2008). As a consequence, it is the intent to demonstrate the areas related to assessment and feedback that teachers have either theoretical or empirical awareness of as well

as the areas in which they do not show such awareness. Therefore the research questions are:

1. What concepts of formative assessment elementary school teachers implement and what they do not implement when assessing pupils?
2. What concepts of formative feedback elementary school teachers implement and what they do not implement when giving feedback to pupils?
– This research question will be answered while taking into consideration the models of feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), presented in the theoretical background section.

3.3 Participants

Four elementary school teachers have participated in the research. They were selected based on two factors: availability and being a teacher for grades one to four. Their participation was voluntary and no compensation of any sort was granted. All respondents were fourth grade teachers; two male and two female; their age ranging from 35 to 55 years. Three of them were class teachers and the time they spent with pupils ranged from 15 to 25 hours per week. One of them was a subject teacher, spending two hours per week with the pupils. Three of them were experienced teachers, having from ten to 31 years of experience and only one was a novice, with less than two years of teaching experience. Three teachers were Finnish and one was Brazilian. Finnish teachers were from the northern region and worked in two different schools, one public and the other private. They were interviewed in the schools they work. The Brazilian teacher works in a public school in southern Brazil and was interviewed by Skype, with the assistance of a web camera.

3.4 Instruments

Some of the common data collection methods applied to questions within the sphere of empirical research include surveys, interviews, observations and portfolios (Kunpfer & McLellan, 2001). The data was collected using two instruments: the first one was an interview and the second one was case scenarios.

3.4.1 Interview

The first instrument was a semi-structured interview with 19 open-ended questions (Appendix A). In order to increase the reliability of data collected by interviews, it is important to follow certain guidelines. The most effective interviews require the researcher to develop a guide to use during the interview process in order to help organize the information (Kunpfer & McLellan, 2001). This criterion was observed in the interview instrument. The interview questions related to feedback were formulated based on the principles of good feedback by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006). The questions related to assessment and self-regulated learning were developed based on my own theoretical and practical knowledge, therefore, they are not based on any specific article or theory. The questions aimed in portraying a picture of teachers' concepts and perceptions of practices in assessing and giving feedback. The interview was, therefore, semi-structured and questions open-ended, and where some clarification was made necessary, extra questions were asked. The objectives of the interview were (1) to determine the teachers' beliefs related to assessment and feedback and (2) their knowledge extent on formative assessment and feedback and also (3) to establish their own view on their practices in assessing and giving feedback to pupils.

3.4.2 Case scenarios

The second instrument was a set of three case scenarios (Appendix B). They were chosen instead of observation for practical reasons, for instance distance and lack of time due to deadlines. The case scenarios were created with the purpose of obtaining reactions from teachers as if they had been observed in a natural setting; and they have been developed to be close to teaching-like situations. These case scenarios were not based in theory but in my own experience as a 4th grade teacher and from my experience of previous data collection, where I observed a 4th grade group for about a month. Two of the cases presented pupils with learning difficulties and one portrayed a pupil with great achievements. This last case was created so that it would be possible to see how teachers give positive feedback. The aim of the case scenarios was to determine which concepts of formative assessment and feedback were either present or absent in practice. The case scenarios were tested with three volunteers, before actually being sent the teachers. The aim of the testing was to

check if the cases were clear and if they would convey enough information to the teachers. Some changes were made to the case scenarios after testing.

3.5 Procedure

The interview was conducted as a conversation between the teachers and the researcher. As a researcher, I have tried not to lead while asking the questions or listening to the answers so that the results would not be biased. The interviews took place from 20 October to 1 November 2013 and lasted between 27 to 47 minutes. The Brazilian teacher was interviewed in Portuguese, which is the teacher's mother tongue, as well as the researcher's. Finnish teachers were interviewed in English, which is a second language for them and the researcher. The interviews were recorded by Iphone AudioMemos. Each interview was transcribed during the week that followed the interview. The interview in Portuguese was firstly transcribed and then translated into English. The transcription were thorough, keeping record of all words of the respondents as well as their pauses and interjections. Only off-topic comments were not transcribed. Those included situations such as an incoming phone call, somebody asking for information or a pupil coming to talk to the teacher. Such happenings were mentioned in the transcripts as "off-topic conversation". As no image was recorded during the interviews, a decision was made not to add any comments related to teachers' emotions, expressions or general behavior, except when it was necessary for understanding what was being said, such as gestures made to convey or stress the information given. Although it was possible to notice that some of the teachers had difficulties in answering certain questions and some showed a degree of jitters; those factors were not highlighted when analyzing the data, exception made to some hesitation or long pauses before answering that were taken into account. Teacher 4 did not answer questions nine and ten because they were not asked. During the interview the teacher moved away from the topic so many times that it was not noticed that those questions were not asked. Although it is unfortunate that the teacher's contribution was lost, this fact is not considered as having damaged the results of the research. The whole transcribed content is in Appendix C.

The case scenarios were sent to the teachers by e-mail, after they had been interviewed, together with the instruction on how to proceed. The participants had previously been informed about the case scenarios and agreed on giving feedback to them. The case scenarios were sent to the interviewed teachers, after each interview. They have all returned the case

scenarios with their feedbacks (Appendix D) by e-mail, until 27 November 2013. Besides the interactions mentioned before, no other contacts or communication of any sort occurred between the teachers and the researcher on subjects related to the research.

3.6 Data analysis

As stated by Patton (1990), there are no rigid rules for making methods decisions in evaluation; the art of evaluation includes creating a design and defining relevant information for a specific situation in a particular context. This statement exemplifies the approach to analyzing the data collected for this research.

The approach taken to the analysis of the data is in accordance with the qualitative descriptive analysis that, according to Vickie and Clinton (2012), does not use a pre-existing set of rules but is rather purely data-derived in the sense that codes are generated from the data in the course of the study and the presentation of the data involves a straight forward descriptive summary of the content, organized in a logical manner. They also affirm that it is a very useful approach when the researcher wants to know what is involved in a certain event. Therefore this kind of analysis is in accordance with the research questions and aim of this research.

In order to achieve the above described logical and organized presentation the data was handled and coded in many different ways. Firstly, as mentioned before, it was transcribed and transcribed. It was then copied to Nvivo software, which is qualitative data analysis computer software, designed for qualitative researchers, which helps in analyzing small or large volumes of data. The data in Nvivo was coded, following two different coding frames. Coding data in these coding frames helped in making data known and familiar. These coding frames are not deeply explained in this research because they were discarded – since, despite helping familiarize with the data, they did not help in finding answers to the research questions, therefore a new step was started, as explained below.

This new analytical procedure started by adding the interviews in their integrity to a table so to compare the answers of the teachers to each one of the questions separately. This way it was possible to have a general view of all teachers' answers. This view was summarized in a column named conclusion. This work along with the conclusion reached was a means of better understanding the data, so that the whole picture could be seen. After this, another

table was created to compare the answers of the interview to the feedbacks given to the case scenarios – to see if they would confirm or contradict the affirmed practices. These tables are not attached to this research because the contents are revealed in the results section and appendixes C and D, previously mentioned. This process made it possible to have a clear picture if teachers conceptions and practices were aligned or not to what they stated. This last procedure was somehow limited, due to the fact that teachers' feedbacks to the case scenarios were not long and therefore, it was not possible to find examples to all of the questions. But it was possible to find examples to the most relevant questions though.

During this organizational and exploratory phase, the topics to be discussed and deeply analyzed emerged. These topics were clearly and abundantly observed in the data collected. From that, a coding frame was constructed. A coding frame in qualitative research is a scheme of concepts and criteria used to classify the data. It contains definitions of concepts and categories used to identify and sort the data. (Benaquisto, 2008). In this research the coding frame is entirely data driven. The data was coded firstly to picture the two main topics: assessment and feedback. Within assessment the data was coded as: role of teacher, role of pupils, assessment tools and self-assessment. Within feedback the data was coded as: oral, written and peer-feedback. The initial coding frame is shown in *Figure 6*.

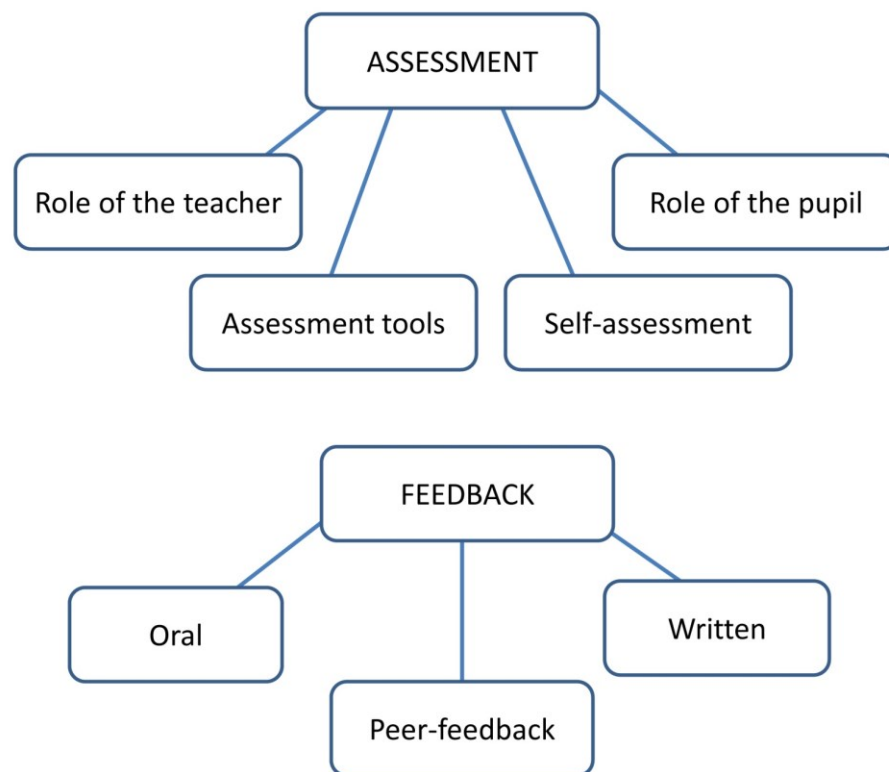


Figure 6 - Data driven initial coding frame.

After the topics were decided upon, a careful coding of data on teachers' interviews was conducted, as well as the feedback given to the case scenarios. The coding was done using the manual folder system, with the printed interviews and feedback to case scenarios, as well as with Excel software which was used to table the data. All teachers' opinions were taken into account and gathered together within the topics, in order to form a general concept of each category. At the same time, examples to confirm or contradict the concepts were also brought together. The examples were taken verbatim, meaning that no changes or corrections were made to the way teachers expressed themselves.

In order to explore teachers' concepts and practices and analyze the data thoroughly and more deeply, the coding frame was developed further, as shown in *Figure 7*. Assessment and feedback were not related in the coding frame but considered individually, due to the fact that teachers did not express making use of feedback when deciding upon the assessment of pupils. A more thorough explanation of the coding frame is in Appendix E

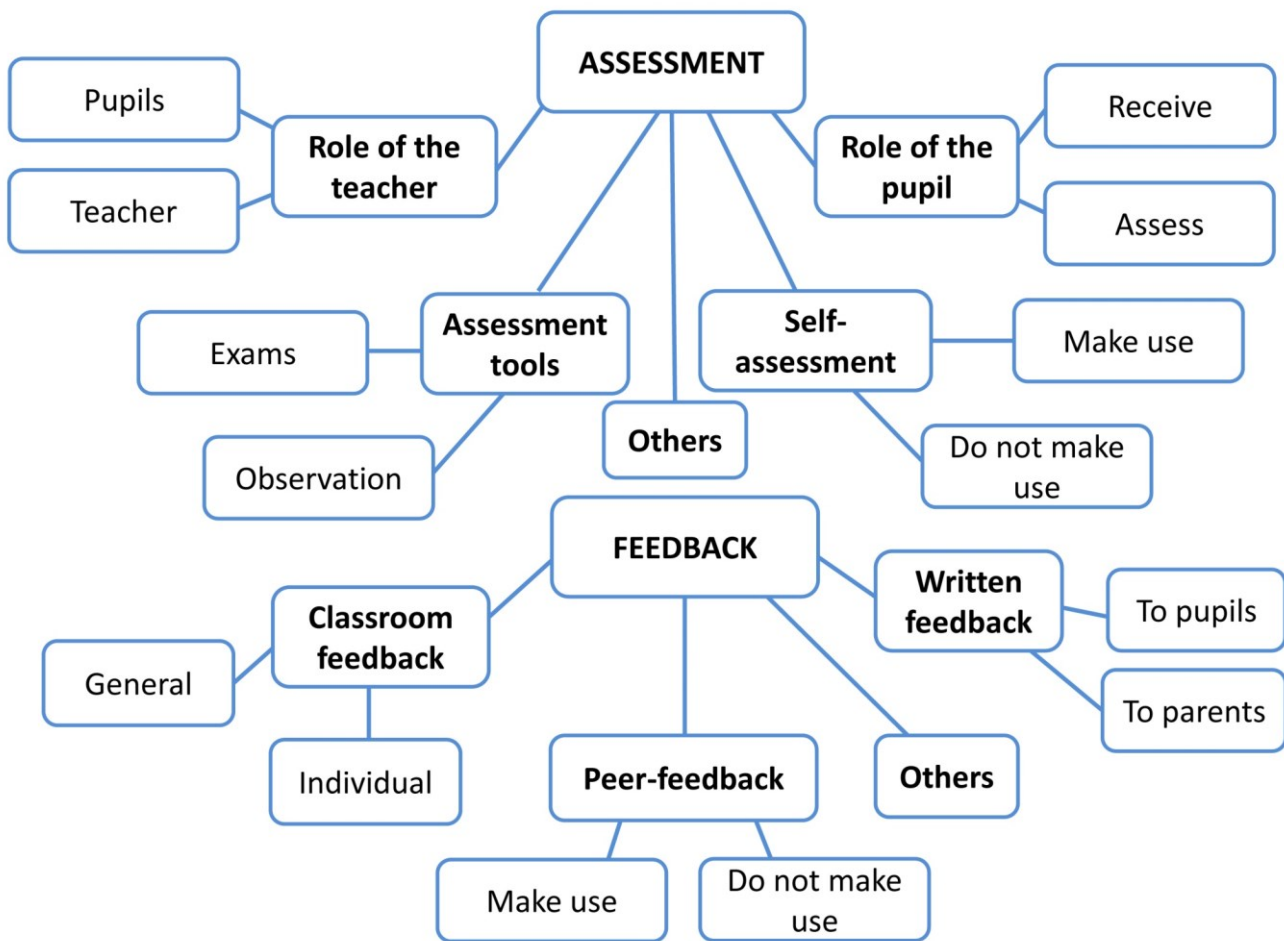


Figure 7 - Data Driven enlarged coding frame.

After the coding frame was developed, the interviews and case scenarios were once more coded according to it. The coding of the whole data was again done using the manual folder system, with the printed interviews and feedback to case scenarios, as well as with the use of Excel software to table the data. All teachers' opinions were taken into account and added to the subtopics, in order to gather all information related to the category. At the same time, examples to confirm or contradict the concepts were taken verbatim, that is, again no changes or corrections were made to the way teachers expressed themselves. All the data was coded using this final coding frame. The same data could be coded in more than one code, if pertinent. In case the data would not fit into the sub categories, it was coded in the bigger categories. If the data could not be placed in any category, it was coded in the category *others*, not much of the data was coded under this category though. The findings for each category and subcategory are shown in the results section.

After the analysis had been concluded and the data been coded. This final coding frame was inserted in Nvivo computer software. Part of the data was coded under this coding frame using Nvivo software. This last step was taken in order to facilitate the interrater process; since the software provides the Kappa statistical coefficient. The coding of part of the data was done by a second coder and the results are demonstrated in the section that deals with validity and reliability of the research.

4 RESULTS

As stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), one of the strengths of qualitative methods is the inductive, naturalistic questioning strategy of getting close to a scenario without predetermined hypotheses; this way, theory emerges from fieldwork experience and is grounded in the data. As a researcher I put efforts in performing the analysis with impartiality and accuracy. It is not possible, however, to expect absence of personal influence. For it is impossible to dissociate a person and their work; but conscious care was taken so that the analysis would be conducted in a trustworthy manner; where my personal opinion would not be input in the analysis phase. As this is an exploratory work, the objective was to know the facts in the classroom in teachers' practices and conceptions on assessment and feedback in order to have a clear picture of happenings. The results were condensed in two tables that are shown and explained below.

4.1 Assessment

Assessment was considered important, in fact, essential. The stress on the reasons why it is important varies, but all teachers consider it necessary for the pupils to be assessed, and they also consider it part of their job to assess, guide and instruct pupils.

Teachers have different perspectives on what pupils expect from them in the assessment process, but two of them mentioned that they believe pupils want teachers to present them with the problem and follow this presentation with a ready-made solution, by telling the pupils what they have to do, or then correcting what was wrong. One teacher mentioned that pupils need to feel safe and that they also have to be trustful; another one mentioned that they expect teachers to be fair.

Teacher 1: "I consider assessment important, fundamental..."

Teacher 4: "Ahmm... it is necessary... it's very important..."

This kind of purpose was not possible to confirm or contradict analyzing the case scenarios as they were not meant as an evaluative instrument; however, I have not detected any contradiction to those sentences when analyzing the whole data.

Table 1 shows the results for assessment subcategories, which are explained subsequently and, whenever possible, examples from the case scenarios that confirm or contradict teachers' assertions are quoted.

Table 1- Results of data analysis on assessment.

Category: Assessment		
Subcategory 1	Subcategory 2	Results
Role of the teacher	Pupils	Teachers see themselves as responsible for assessing pupils and the purpose is to check the work and progress in the contents being taught in class.
	Teacher	Teachers see themselves as responsible for assessing pupils and the purpose is to evaluate the teacher's own work.
Role of pupils	Receiving	Pupils are seen as not having an active role in assessing, their only part in the assessment process is receiving
	Assessing	Their role is to show what they can do so that teachers can assess their own work.
Assessment tools	Exams	Teachers make use of the numbers obtained in tests and exams as the sole base for the grades they give pupils
	Observation	To grade pupils, teachers make use of the numbers obtained in tests and exams and observation of participation in class and teachers' general knowledge of the pupil.
Self-assessment	Make use	Teachers make use of some sort of self-assessment
	Do not make use	Even considering self-assessment important, it is not used.

4.1.1 Role of the teacher

Teachers in their totality consider it to be their role to assess the pupils. They are the main agents in assessing, if not the only ones, and I have found that they have two different purposes in assessing:

Pupils: The purpose of the assessment is to help pupils' learning process: Teachers see themselves as responsible for assessing pupils and for most of them the purpose is to check the work and progress in the contents being taught in class; so that teachers, as well as pupils, are aware of pupils' progress in learning. The purpose of assessing is to give teachers information, so that they can guide and encourage pupils to develop their learning. Its purpose is also to inform teachers if changes need to be done.

Teacher 1: "I ask of myself a lot so that I will not make a test only to know if they can do a division... or if they can interpret a text, but to observe everything, how they do it, how they reached the result, what they wrote..."

Teacher 3: "... so that they could, they could, ah, learn more what we are trying to teach."

Although teachers do not use feedback as ways of assessing pupils, comparing teachers' feedback to the case scenarios, I have found examples that would confirm their mentioned purpose on assessing:

Feedback Teacher 2: "I would ask her own opinion...I'd try to arrange that help."

Feedback Teacher 4: "How do you feel about this solar system task I gave you and the classmates?... Would it be easier if you'd only take one or two?"

Comparing teachers' feedback to the case scenarios, I have also found examples that would contradict their mentioned purposes:

Written feedback Teacher 1: "...he is a bit slow to perform tasks in class that is why he is always behind."; "This quarter she has shown not to care about her studies. She did not finish class activities and did not do her homework."

Teacher: The purpose of assessment is for teachers' own evaluation: In this case, teachers also see themselves as the agents responsible for the assessment and although they want to check pupils' work and progress in the contents taught in class, the purpose of assessing pupils is to evaluate the teachers' own work in order to make changes – if they are considered necessary.

Teacher: “it is through assessment I know what the student has learned...and also it tells me what I should improve, change, if I must change the teaching method.”

This kind of purpose was not possible to confirm or contradict analyzing the case scenarios because they depend on a broader analysis through a longer period of time and classroom observation.

4.1.2 Role of pupils

Teachers consider assessing very important for the pupils’ development in learning. They consider that pupils need to be assessed in order to know how they are developing and also what changes they should make, but they do not see pupils having an active role in their own assessment. I could identify two main roles assigned to pupils in assessing, but in none of them pupils are agents of their own assessment. One of the teachers mentioned that the pupils have responsibilities, but what the responsibility in the assessment process should be was not clear, therefore, I could not consider that as a separate category.

Receiving: Pupils are seen as not having an active role in assessing, their only part in the assessment process is receiving the assessment which is done solely by the teacher.

Teacher 2: “Hum... student’s role... I cannot think of... my head went totally blank... they do nothing; I just give them the numbers. That’s it.”

Teacher 3: “Well, ah, the receiving part.”

Assessing: Pupils are seen as not having an active role in assessing. Their part in the assessment process is to show their skills so that teachers can assess their own work and make changes to their own teaching, according to what they judge necessary.

Teacher: “It is to show what they can do and what they cannot... and unconsciously they end up assessing the teacher.”

4.1.3 Assessment tools

As pupils have no active role in the assessment process, all the tools teachers use for assessing belong to themselves and are originated in themselves. All teachers use tests and

exams as assessment tools. Even when other ways of assessing are mentioned, exams play the main role in coming up with the final grades. Most of them believe that tests grades reflect how well pupils have learned and also how much they have improved in learning. The ones who showed some suspicious about tests it was not due to the use of tests but to the kind of tests used and how they are applied to the pupils – not the instrument in itself.

Although the assessment tools are mostly the same in both cases, I have divided them into two separate assessment tools because of the role they play in assessing, as shown below:

Exams: Teachers make use of the numbers obtained in tests and exams as the sole base for the grades they give pupils in the official assessment periods, which vary between countries, but not among the schools in the same country. Those grades generally are followed by some sort of written feedback.

Teacher 4: “Mostly they get numbers from their tests but ah if you... test them or have exam, it hasn’t to be in a paper form.”

Teacher 3: “I give points from the tests or sometimes I give those ah what is it called? those like bigger numbers that you count the, just points together and give ah this...get 4 to 10.”

Observation: In this case, teachers also make use of the numbers obtained in tests and exams to form the final grades, but the grades pupils get in the official assessment periods are also based on teachers’ observation of their participation in class and the teachers’ general knowledge about the pupils. When making use of this kind of assessment, teachers mentioned having notes on a notebook for each pupil or for each class. Those notes mention pupils’ behavior, difficulties and successes during classes, as well as test grades.

Teacher 2: “...and I try to think about all the, you know, what the pupil was doing in the classroom...”; “I have spoken to the pupils and, and we have interacted in the classroom, I can see for example that sometimes they fail in the exams for some reason, ok, I see that you have not written your vocabulary, for example, and that is why your grade is so bad in this exam, and it should be better. I know that you are better. So in that way I can be merciful and see that.”

Teacher 1: “The grade we give we base on what we... it’s a combination of everything. I do not give grades on each evaluation... I give a fictional grade.”; “I need to know the pupil in order to know how to assess him.”

4.1.4 Self-assessment

All teachers consider self-assessment important but not all of them make use of it on a regular or structured basis. A teacher mentioned making use of self-assessment, but gave as examples of self-assessment activities that were in fact class, content or teacher’s assessments. Another teacher mixed the examples of self-assessment with peer-assessment. Although teachers do not make use of self-assessment, they consider that pupils are able to create their own feedbacks. They affirmed that pupils are smart enough to do so, provided they have instructions and help.

As their concepts were a bit blurred, I could not separate the topics according to their concepts; therefore I divided them using a different criterion. They were divided into two categories: the ones who make use of self-assessment and the ones who do not make use of self-assessment.

As mentioned previously, pupils have no active role in the assessment process, all the tools teachers use for assessing belong to themselves and have their origin in themselves so, even when mentioning making use of self-assessment, it does not mean taking this assessment into consideration. It is used more like an exercise or extra activity and the reason for having this activity does not seem to be made clear to pupils.

Teacher 4: “Very important... every day.... because you know this book thing (reading a book and presenting to the group)”

Teacher 3: “It’s quite good...and I use it quite often... in the beginning of the lesson I told you what we were going to learn and what do you think now, did we reach what we wanted?”

Make use: Most teachers make use of some sort of self-assessment. Some mentioned using it frequently in an oral form and some mentioned making use of it in written form. Even if they mentioned practices of self-assessment, they did not make their purpose clear in doing so. Only one teacher mentioned that pupils would use it for reflection, but reflection on what and to what end was unclear. During the interview, I did not ask other questions to

deepen the subject because the purpose was to acquire knowledge on teachers' opinions and to see what they considered important concepts and practices in self-assessment.

Teacher 1: "... we do it a lot... I also make a free self-assessment, they can draw, write... because some prefer to make a drawing and some writing... they like to express themselves through drawing..."

Teacher 3: "...usually in many subjects there are those ready-made test paper sheets (self-assessment section on the exercise book) at the end. It's one part or one section that does the same that..."

Do not make use: Even stating that they consider self-assessment good and important, one of the teachers mentioned not making use of it. The reason for it is not very clear.

Teacher: "not in sort of a systematic way, but... we talk a lot..."

4.2 Feedback

All teachers mentioned giving some sort of feedback to pupils and parents. The way they do so varies but they all consider it important for pupils to receive feedback. They mentioned that they discuss with pupils the feedback they give, either individually or in group. When questioned about difficulties in giving feedback, they affirmed not having any difficulties. They said they do not have any difficulties in talking to pupils. But a teacher mentioned lack of time and that quiet pupils receive less attention because the lively ones get all attention and time in giving feedback.

When asked about the characteristics of good feedback they found it difficult to answer and mentioned some of their practices, such as saying something positive, being thorough and supportive. One of them mentioned that good feedback is possible when it is built on the pupils' knowledge. The characteristics of bad feedback seemed clearer to teachers: not knowing the pupil or the problem to be addressed, being vague and expressing mixed emotions. All participants mentioned giving feedback on pupils' behavior, but not all of them mentioned some other kind of feedback.

When asked about pupils' reaction to feedback, teachers affirmed that they consider that pupils take what they say into consideration and try the given suggestions. One of them

said they do not care about feedback but are more interested in the exam numbers though, and another said that pupils consider giving feedback part of teachers' job.

Teacher 1: "A pupil told me last year that she had been doing calculations during all night because I explained her that she was having problems and she spent the night... but she felt it was important when I talked to her."

Teacher 3: "... quite often they try to listen and, and try those things I will suggest them so that they will learn better."

Teachers do not seem to take into consideration the learning goals when giving feedback to pupils; in fact, they do not seem to understand the concept of learning goals, because, even if most of them answered that they do encouraged pupils to set their own learning goals, most of them gave examples that were not related to learning goals.

Teacher 1: "I encourage them, firstly valuing each item, each thing they do well... so I am always encouraging them, but it is a great challenge."

Teacher 4: "We discuss lots.. about their hobbies and they can, they have an opportunity here to show what their hobbies are..."; "I think this group is going toward the right goal. I hope that is true."

Table 2 below shows the results for the feedback subcategories, which are explained subsequently and, whenever possible, examples from the case scenarios that confirm or contradict teachers' assertions are quoted.

Table 2 - Results of data analysis on feedback.

Category: Feedback		
Subcategory 1	Subcategory 2	Results
Classroom feedback	General	Oral feedback given to the group when returning exams or correcting tasks
	Individual	Oral feedback given individually in classroom when the teacher notices a pupil needs it.
Written feedback	To pupils	In the official evaluation or notes on pupil's tests and workbooks
	To parents	Feedback given to pupils so that parents see it or direct feedback to parents in official evaluation or through a technological tool.
Peer-feedback	Make use	Teachers make use of peer-feedback but not as an assessing tool.
	Do not make use	Teachers do not make use of it either for lack of knowledge or for considering it unsuitable for elementary school pupils.

4.2.1 Classroom feedback

Most of the feedback teachers give to pupils is oral and happens in the classroom. As a base for the feedback, they generally use pupils' mistakes or correctness on a test or a task. The participants mentioned that they walk through the classroom as a way of being conscious of problems to be addressed and as a way of making themselves available to the pupils. The majority of the feedback given is to pupils who have difficulties or learning problems. Basically, all teachers mentioned that they do not spend much time giving feedback to those pupils who have good grades or who do not seem to have problems in learning. I have detected two main forms of classroom feedback, which are:

General: This is the most common kind of feedback teachers give the pupils. Participants mentioned doing so when returning exams and correcting them with the whole group, highlighting the mistakes made and what the correct answer would be. This kind of feedback lies mostly on pupils' successes or mistakes, their personal characteristics or behavior.

Teacher 4: “Ah, I give lots of immediate feedback. If I see somebody, somebody succeeding, I will say it or... giving signs (thumb up) like that ah... “; “when some “loser” has succeeded well, as one of them did it last week, I told it to everybody that he made it 10, perfect 10...”; “...giving feedback mostly the instrument is me.”

Teacher 2: “... then I say, “ok”,” that is good”, “good”, “almost correct.” And that’s, that is feedback in one way.”; “...my feedback isn’t sort of that systematic in a way, it’s quite spontaneous...”

Individual: This kind of feedback happens mostly orally and in the classroom, but it may happen in other school contexts. Teachers mentioned doing so when noticing that a specific pupil has some sort of difficulty that is not the difficulty of the whole group. They notice the difficulties by walking through the classroom or by mistakes on tests or tasks. This kind of feedback lies mostly on the task. Sometimes the feedback is given when the task is in process, in other occasions, although the task is done, it is still possible to redo it. And sometimes individual feedback it is given when the task is finished and it is not possible to redo it.

Teacher 1: “If we make a math test... and I correct it... they made mistakes and then I call them and we get to work...I call one by one and show them their mistakes and what they have difficulties and from that we talk.”; “... there is not a rule, every week... but I call them... I sit with him to see what he needs to improve.”; “...I consider important to tell them what they follow, the difficulty and how to solve the difficulty...”

Teacher 4: “I’m going to him or her and ah although it happens in the middle of the lesson, it happens ah very privately. I may show the place there is something wrong or “can you improve it?” ... we have a private meeting where we can go and put things on rails.”

Comparing teachers’ concepts to the case scenarios, I have found examples that would confirm some of the mentioned practices in giving feedback:

Feedback Teacher 1: "I asked him to explain his work to me"; "I showed him what parts were missing"; "I asked him to redo the research"; "I asked him if

he was facing any difficulties and I heard him tell some of the stories about his family."

Feedback Teacher 2 "I would talk to her in private and ask her own opinion why the test didn't go so well..."

Comparing teachers' concepts on feedback to the case scenarios, I have also found some examples that would contradict some of the mentioned practices in giving feedback:

Feedback Teacher 3: "...give him a positive comment on that. Doing so I hope he finds strength to do better on the next research"

Feedback Teacher 1 - written: "This quarter she has shown not to care about her studies. She did not finish class activities and did not do her homework"; "I showed her test and said that she made many mistakes on measurements and that we have already seen that in class many times."

As mentioned before, teachers are not consistent when giving feedback focusing on task. Sometimes the feedback is given when the task is in process. In other occasions, it is still possible to redo it. And sometimes it is given when the task is finished and it is not possible to redo it.

Teacher: "I showed him what parts were missing and asked him to redo the research."; "I showed her test and said that she made many mistakes on measurements and that we had already seen that in class many times."

Related to positive feedback, most of the feedback teachers gave to the case scenario portraying a pupil with good achievements focused on praising personal characteristics. This kind of feedback was also found in other case scenarios as well.

Teacher 4: "...as I know how clever you are..."

Teacher 1: "Markus is a lovely student but he is a bit slow..."

Teachers do not seem to clarify to pupils the assessment criteria neither what good performance is, delivering relevant information to pupils about their learning so to encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.

Teacher 1: "I showed her test and said that she made many mistakes..."

Teacher 3: “I would suggest extra tasks”; “I would consider giving her some remedial teaching on the subject.”

Equally, I have not found evidence that teachers provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.

Teacher 1: “I showed him the parts were missing and asked him to redo the research.”

Teachers tend to discuss with pupils around learning. It does not seem difficult for teachers to talk to pupils about their learning and even about topics not directly related to learning.

Teacher: “I would talk to her and ask if...”

Teachers shape their teaching constantly and, according to them, they make use the feedback information to do so. It was observed though by their affirmations that most of the time the shaping of the teaching is based mostly on the numbers pupils receive on test and exams.

Teacher: (Do you use the feedback you give to shape your teaching?) “maybe in a way. I’m not sure if this is totally related to feedback...”

4.2.2 Written feedback

Teachers have also mentioned giving written feedback. In all participants’ school contexts, written feedback is mandatory as part of the policy of the schools that states that pupils should be given certificates with grades and a written feedback. In Finland, they receive it twice a year and in Brazil they receive it three times a year. This kind of written feedback is part of the official assessment. Teachers also mentioned some other forms of written feedback, but not all of them make use of it or have the same practices. I have identified two main types of written feedback. The division in two types was made based on the purpose of the written feedback, as follows.

To pupils: Teachers give pupils written feedback in different ways. The main one is in the official evaluation, but some have also mentioned writing notes on pupils’ tests and workbooks. Some said that they do not write texts to pupils, but they make drawings such as

smiles in order to express their assessment on the exercise, test or task. In all cases, the written feedback is given when the task is finished and it is part of the tasks assessment.

Teacher 2: "I usually write something to the exams, so "you did well on this part" or, or "you should read this part again" and, and "try to remember this and"..."

Teacher 4: "... in their writing books or there I am commenting the writing or the subject they have chosen or sometimes in the other workbooks... I am adding some small comments here "can you do this in a different way?", or "this was really good" or like that, short comments."

To parents: All teachers consider it very important to give feedback to parents and that is generally done in written form, either through a certificate, a note or by technological means. They mentioned giving written feedback to parents, either in a direct or indirect way, which means that sometimes they write to pupils, hoping the parents will see it too and sometimes they write directly to parents. When contacting parents directly, Finnish teachers use the program Wilma, which enables communication between the school, teachers and parents. Brazilian teachers do not communicate with parents by means of technological tools. Instead they make available a written report and parents are supposed to go to school to get it from the teacher. Teachers give parents feedback in order to make them aware of their children's learning progress and also their behavior in the classroom, by doing so, teachers expect parents to cooperate with them.

Teacher 2: "And if necessary I will take contact to the parents, if I am, I have worries about something..."

Teacher 4: "... somehow the feedback I am giving them I hope it goes also to their homes..."

Considering teachers' feedback to the case scenarios, I have found examples that would confirm their mentioned practices in written feedback:

Feedback Teacher 2: "I would contact his parents and check if they are aware of it..."; "I would talk to Joosef and his parents"

Feedback Teacher 1: "As this is an evaluative work I have also written to his parents"

4.2.3 Peer-feedback

Most teachers do not seem to know much about peer-feedback, either in theory or empirically. Some are uncertain about its use and some think it is not suitable for elementary school pupils. One of them affirmed making use of it regularly and systematically, although the feedbacks given by the peers do not seem to be used in assessment process. As their concepts about peer-feedback were not clear enough, I have divided them into two groups: (1) the ones who make use of it and (2) the ones who do not make use of it, as follows.

Do not make use: Most teachers do not make use of peer-feedback in assessing pupils or as a way of giving them feedback. They do not make use of it either for lack of knowledge, empirical or theoretical, or for thinking it is unsuitable for 4th graders or unsuitable to the current group they teach.

Teacher 1: "...this year I must confess that I have not done, not once..."; "I think it is important but we also have to know the pupils..."

Teacher 2: "I don't know, I haven't tried it."; "...I don't know how they would, ah... what sort of feedback it would be..."

Make use: Only one of the interviewed teachers affirmed making use of peer-feedback as a means of assessing pupils and giving them feedback. The teacher seemed aware of the limitations of 4th graders feedback to peers but considered it valuable anyway because in his opinion it is a way for pupils to grow together. Nonetheless, the feedbacks given by the peers were not mentioned as influencing pupils' assessment for final grades or written feedbacks.

Teacher: "...it's amazing that they really give feedback."; "... they are capable in estimating not at that level that adults do, but we don't have to demand that much..."

These results describe the aspects of assessment and feedback found in the data collected for this thesis. They will be discussed further in the discussion section.

5 DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was (1) to explore elementary school teachers' concepts and perception of practices in assessing and giving feedback, and (2) to compare those to their practices in the case scenarios and to the theory of formative assessment and feedback – thus (3) demonstrating the areas related to assessment and feedback in which teachers either have or do not have theoretical or empirical awareness. Therefore the research questions were:

1. What concepts of formative assessment elementary school teachers implement and what they do not implement when assessing pupils?
2. What concepts of formative feedback elementary school teachers implement and what they do not implement when giving feedback to pupils?

Critical and thorough examination of the data was conducted in order to answer the research questions. A qualitative descriptive analysis was performed in order to describe the events, of which the results were shown in the previous section. Even if limited by the number of participants, this research has succeeded to a certain extent in its attempt of portraying a picture of elementary school teachers' concepts and practices on formative assessment and feedback.

5.1 Assessment

According to Irons (2008), there needs to be a change in the culture of assessment, shifting from summative to formative. The teachers, who took part in this research and, according to them, their pupils as well, still put a lot of importance on grades, although research has shown that grades have a negative impact on motivating for learning. Grading learners' performance has less effect on learning than giving feedback comments, because it leads to comparing to others rather than focusing on personal difficulties (Butler, 1987). The teachers taking part in this research do not seem to have knowledge of it and they still put a lot of efforts in grading pupils instead of supporting their learning by other means such as formative assessment and feedback. This way, pupils' motivation and self-esteem are not really affected by the feedbacks they receive, because once a summative grade is involved, the assessment becomes summative, even if it is of formative nature (Irons, 2008). Accord-

ing to Koh and Velayutham (2009), traditional ways of assessing should be complemented or even totally replaced by more authentic assessment methods such as project work and self-assessment.

According to Koh, Lee, Gong and Wong (2006), “it is time that teachers move toward more authentic types of assessment so that learners can engage in higher-order thinking and real world problem solving”. Koh and Velayuthan (2009) say that assessment methods should reflect the changes that are happening in the pedagogical approaches. It is necessary though that this change in assessment happens within the whole educational system, since teachers are not the ones responsible for policies and the application of national tests that mainly aim at pointing who is accountable for the results.

According to the model of self-regulated learning of Zimmerman (2002), the self-judgment derives from a comparison between the self-observed performance and the standard or goal previously established. My data shows that the teachers do not make their own goals clear for pupils and they do not encourage pupils to set their own goals either for learning in general or for specific tasks. They mention establishing class goals on what to learn, according to the textbook or annual program; but it seems that there is not encouragement for the pupils to learn how to set their own goals. It is my understanding that, when pupils establish their own goals, the assessment and feedback they receive become more meaningful to them.

Although the interviews focused on assessment and not on teaching practices, during the discussions with teachers, I noticed that they tend to use traditional ways of teaching, like textbooks, workbooks, ready-made tests and exams. Their way of teaching might be one of the reasons why they do not see the need for another way of assessing pupils and why their feedback tends to focus on the final product and performance. More research is needed in order to make such affirmation, but I consider that it is something worth investigating, because according to Sawyer (2008), it is expected that the shift in education begin with teachers rather than with learners, as it is the teachers’ role to foster authentic learning.

5.1.1 Self-assessment

Self-assessment is an important tool for self-reflection and self-evaluation. Learners who are provided with opportunities to reflect on their own learning process develop their self-

regulatory skills, so teachers should provide learners with chances to self-monitor and judge the progression of their work toward their goals; as good practices of self-assessment can lead to significant improvements in learning and achievement. My data shows that self-assessment does not play an important role in teachers' practices of assessing and giving feedback. Even when teachers affirm that they consider it important, their examples on the practices of self-assessment mostly have to do with content, class, teacher or peer assessment.

As expressed by Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2014), the challenge that teachers face nowadays is how to help learners learn intentionally, autonomously and effectively by means of self-regulation. It is my understanding that this can be achieved also by making use of formative assessment and feedback, especially with reflections on self-assessment and inputs of peer-feedback, for they are especially important tools in formative assessment, which according to Irons (2008), are ways of developing learning and feeding learners forward. Even when teachers mentioned that they do make use of self- and peer-assessment, their practice showed a different reality. Pupils are not directed to reflect on their own learning process; and even when they are encouraged to consider their learning, the meaning of such activity is not clear. One important aspect to consider related to self-assessment is that it can and should be taught. According to Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013, p. 563), "teachers should explicitly teach learners to self-assess so that they all have opportunities to learn."

5.2 Feedback

Based on the theory of formative assessment and feedback, I understand that just telling the pupils if a result is correct or incorrect is not enough. I consider it imperative for teachers to discuss with pupils how the problems may be solved or how to improve or enhance what is already correct. Teachers can do this by different means such as asking questions to make pupils reach to conclusions themselves; or by showing different alternatives and discussing which one would suit the pupil better.

When feedback is given in a group, it must also be considered that the way it is received will vary depending on the individual perception of importance, as well as individual commitment and involvement in the task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). My data showed that oral group feedback is the most common kind of feedback teachers give pupils. This kind

of feedback does not help enhance learning as it is more focused on the result and performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) than on the process and self-regulation.

I have also noticed that teachers find it hard to give feedback to pupils who do not seem to have difficulties in performing the tasks. They have mentioned that they do not give enough time to this kind of pupils because their energy and time go to pupils with learning difficulties. It is my understanding that pupils without learning difficulties also need to receive feedback in order to improve their learning. This aspect is further developed later.

Furthermore follows a more detailed discussion on feedback, taking into consideration the levels of feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and the principles of good feedback by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006).

5.2.1 Peer-feedback

My findings show that most teachers do not make use of peer-feedback, either for lack of knowledge or for lack of experience. They seem to mention that it is important just because it is “common sense” – as opposed to truly believing in it - exception made to one of the teachers that makes use of it and believes in its efficacy. The most common way for the teachers to give feedback is orally and in the classroom, a context in which peer-feedback would be preferable and could be widely used. The dialogue with peers enhances in the learners the feeling of self-control over the learning in different ways. When peer-feedback happens in group discussions, it also gives alternative perspectives on problems and it can work as a motivational factor. Teachers’ lack of knowledge on this matter must be reverted because, according to Dixon and his colleagues (2011), through the evaluation of the work of others, learners can develop evaluative knowledge and expertise and they can better understand external feedback. This correction is also important because teachers’ beliefs about learning and the learning process influence how they see the role of feedback (Price *et al.*, 2010). There is recent research on feedback and teachers should have access to such help as the ones expressed by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006, p.11) that exemplify many strategies for the use of peer-feedback and the ones expressed by Irons (2008, p. 70-86), who gives practical suggestions for applying in classes.

5.2.2 Hattie and Timperley's levels of feedback

Considering the feedback model of Hattie and Timperley (2007) and their levels of feedback, represented in *Figure 8*, teachers taking part in my data collection do not seem to know or empirically apply the most fundamental levels.

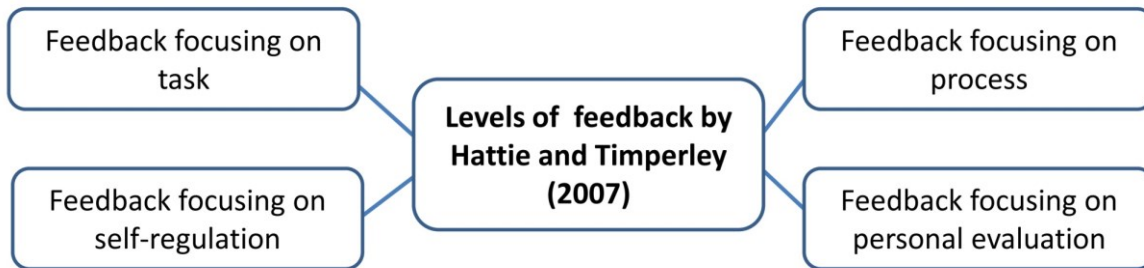


Figure 8 - Representation of the levels of feedback of Hattie and Timperley (2007).

My data shows that teachers tend to focus on tasks when giving feedback; they tell pupils if they have gotten the right or wrong results, but they do not follow it by including directions on how to proceed in order to reach the goal. I have not found enough evidence in my data that teachers aim their feedback on the process. Teachers' feedback observed in the data aims at the final result – the process of performing the task does not seem to be part of the inquiry and therefore no feedback is given on that. Although that was the general picture, I did find in the feedback to one of the case scenarios, a suggestion a teacher gave to the pupil, "What if you'd use Wikipedia instead of our schoolbook?" That was the only sentence focusing on the process and on how the task was performed, and therefore I cannot consider that teachers focus on process, but I could say that at least some of them have the means to do so.

I have not seen any evidence in my data that teachers foster pupils' goals or support pupils in order to foster the achievement of pupils own goals. When asked about encouraging pupils' goals in learning, teachers showed not to understand the importance and role of goal setting in pupils' learning. Most of them mixed encouraging pupils set their own goals with appointing goals for them to follow. Setting goals is of great importance for pupils to become self-regulated learners. I did not deepen the research on this topic; it was addressed though because of the connection between self-regulation and goal setting and feedback. Although not deeply investigated, I believe it is possible to say that data shows that the teachers who took part in this research lack deep knowledge on goal setting and on how to

encourage pupils to set their own goals. Weak or incorrect conceptions of goals influence what learners do and the value they give to external feedback. If learners and teachers do not share the criteria and standards of assessment, even partially, the feedback information received is improbable to relate (Hounsell, 1997). My data shows that in the feedback given to the case scenarios, teachers neither remind pupils nor try to make the assessment criteria clear to them. Likewise, neither do they mention the pupils' or their own goals for the tasks. This indicates that the teachers assume that pupils know what they should do and how they should perform their tasks. Additionally, the feedback given does not help clarify to pupils the established goal for the task or even any other goal related to it that the pupil possibly has.

In giving feedback, teachers must keep in mind that it must be possible for pupils to correctly decode and understand the feedback, while relating to the pupils' own goals, otherwise it will not be effective (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006) or at least not as effective as it could be. Therefore, teachers should provide learners with descriptions of assessment criteria – or the standards that define different levels of achievement – in a simple and understandable way. Some of the means by which the teachers can achieve this is by using certain tools, as for example rubrics, already defined in the theoretical background. As stated by Panadero and Jonsson (2013), the use of rubrics may improve performance by (1) providing clear assessment parameters, (2) reducing learners' anxiety, (3) helping feedback the process, (4) improving learners' self-efficacy and (5) supporting self-regulation. In fact, there are studies showing that learners themselves use rubrics for reflecting on the feedback, planning assignments, checking progress and reviewing work before submitting to teachers.

My data showed that oral feedback on pupils' performance is widely used by teachers. The information became clear in the interviews as well as on the feedback given to the case scenarios. In short, the most common way of giving feedback is orally in class – focusing on personal evaluation – in the final results and on pupils' personal characteristics, which according to Hattie and Timperley (2007) are the less effective kinds of feedback. The authors also argue that the power of feedback lies on the self-regulation and process levels. And related to those levels, my data has shown that none of the feedback given aims on influencing pupil's self-regulatory skills or developing task processes.

Figure 9, shown below, represents the discussions on the levels of feedback presented in the model of feedback by Hattie and Timperley (2007). The levels shown in italic characters are the ones teachers still lack when giving feedback and levels shown in regular characters are the ones teachers already take into consideration when giving pupils feedback.

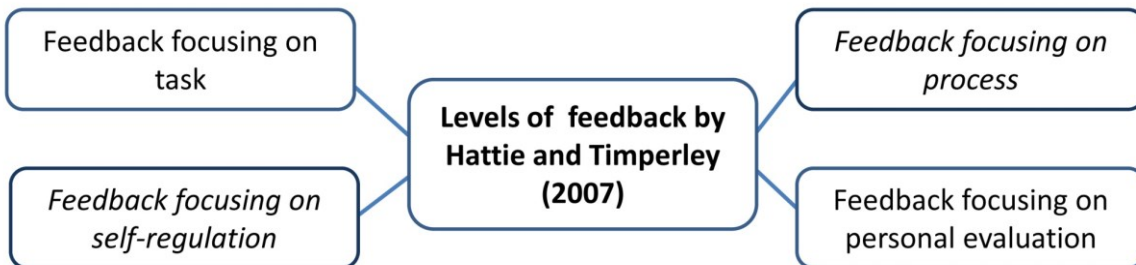


Figure 9 - Representation of the discussion on the levels of feedback of Hattie and Timperley (2007).

5.2.3 Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's principles of good feedback

Considering the model of feedback by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), and their principles of good feedback, represented in Figure 10, teachers in my data do not seem to make use of most of the principles when they give feedback to pupils.

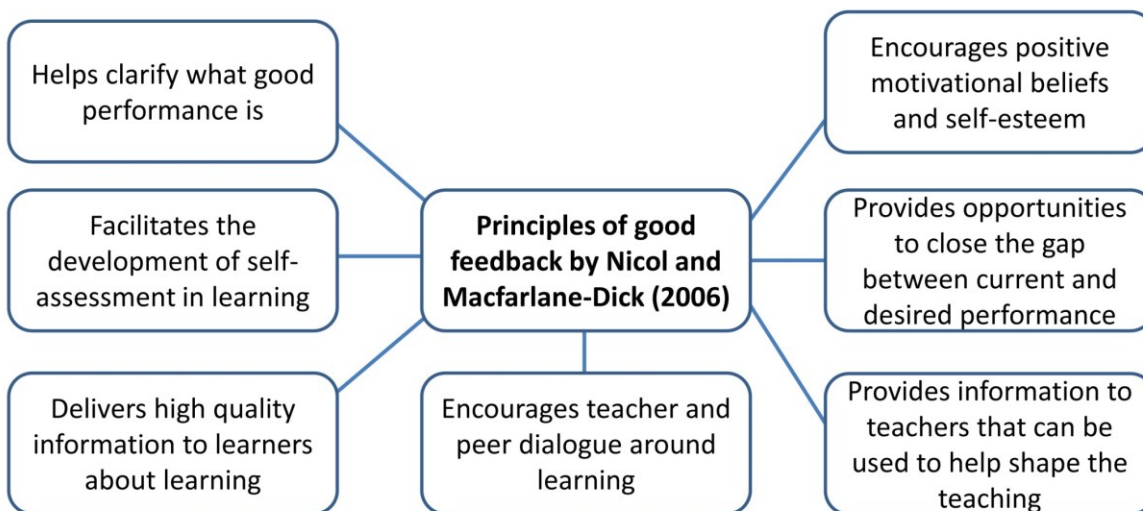


Figure 10 - Representation of the principles of good feedback of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006).

External feedback of good quality should provide learners with information that would help them self-correct and improve their performance. It should also be timely, focusing on strengths and weaknesses and at the same time offering corrective advices that direct the learners toward the goal, standard or criterion, with balanced praise and constructive criticism. The collected data shows that the information given does not provide pupils with information that would help them self-correct and improve their learning process through metacognitive skills, and as a consequence, their final product or future tasks.

My data shows that the feedbacks given by the teachers do not have the quality of information they should have in order to help the pupils' development of learning. They lack clarification of the goals, task requirements and assessment criteria. They also do not relate to the process of performing the task, but instead, to the task result. Research has shown that teachers can influence learners' motivation levels. For that, they should give feedback which focuses on praising pupils' efforts and their strategies on performing the task, when correct, or then by providing possible solutions when their efforts or strategies are incorrect (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). According to Irons (2008), formative assessment and feedback can enhance learning and be used to motivate learners to undertake assessment for learning. Therefore, there should be a shift from grades to mechanisms that improve learning.

My data also shows that the principle of encouraging teacher-pupil dialogue around learning is strongly observed by the elementary school teachers that took part in the research. Having discussions with pupils revolving around their tasks, their learning and even personal life does not seem to be difficult for the teachers. They mentioned having a good relationship with pupils. Besides that they spend many hours a week with them. This is a great advantage for elementary teachers in relation to high school or university level teachers who generally do not know the learners very well and do not spend enough time with them in order for the feedback to be properly discussed (Irons, 2008). Teachers should take more advantage of this benefit they have and direct their conversation with pupils to a more efficient feedback on learning that would at the same time motivate and guide them. The understanding of feedback comes through dialogue and once learners understand the feedback received they will be more likely to act accordingly to it. Feedback should be more like a dialogue than transmission of information – meaning that learners are to receive information and have the opportunity to discuss it, since discussion with the teacher helps learners develop their understanding (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Related to feedback timing, data shows a certain variation: sometimes teachers give feedback on tasks in process or when it is still possible to make changes, but on many occasions, it is given only when the task is completed and pupils do not have the chance to redo the task. Although giving immediate feedback does not seem to be a problem for the teachers and discussing with pupils the feedback given likewise, there should be more consistency on the way it is done. When giving feedback to pupils on a certain task, teachers should always consider that it has to be given either while the task is in progress or when it is possible for pupils to redo the work. Feedback given on the final result is not efficient enough and may unfortunately be a waste of time and energy for teachers and pupils. Another aspect that should be developed is the content of the feedback, which should focus on the process and not on the final outcome.

Another principle that is observed by the elementary school teachers who took part in this research is making use of feedback to shape their own teaching. They have mentioned that they actually make changes to their teaching based on the feedbacks they give to pupils. The collected data also revealed that, in most cases, the numbers pupils get on tests have a major influence on teachers thinking about their teaching process and methods, especially if the majority of pupils get low grades.

One important finding to be considered is that teachers do not seem to be afraid of making changes in their teaching. Even if the participants were mostly experienced teachers, they all have mentioned that they continuously make changes to their teaching and they are not afraid of admitting when they have done something wrong or not so well. This is a very positive aspect because it means that they are not closed to new strategies and ideas, and can therefore embrace the changes that formative assessment and feedback may require in their teaching and assessing. It seems that teachers have the motivation to do so, as expressed in this sentence a teacher said when finishing the interview, "I would like to learn more".

Figure 11 shown below represents the discussion of the principles of good feedback according to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006). The principles shown in italic characters are the ones teachers still lack when giving feedback and principles shown in regular characters are the ones teachers already take into consideration when giving pupils feedback.

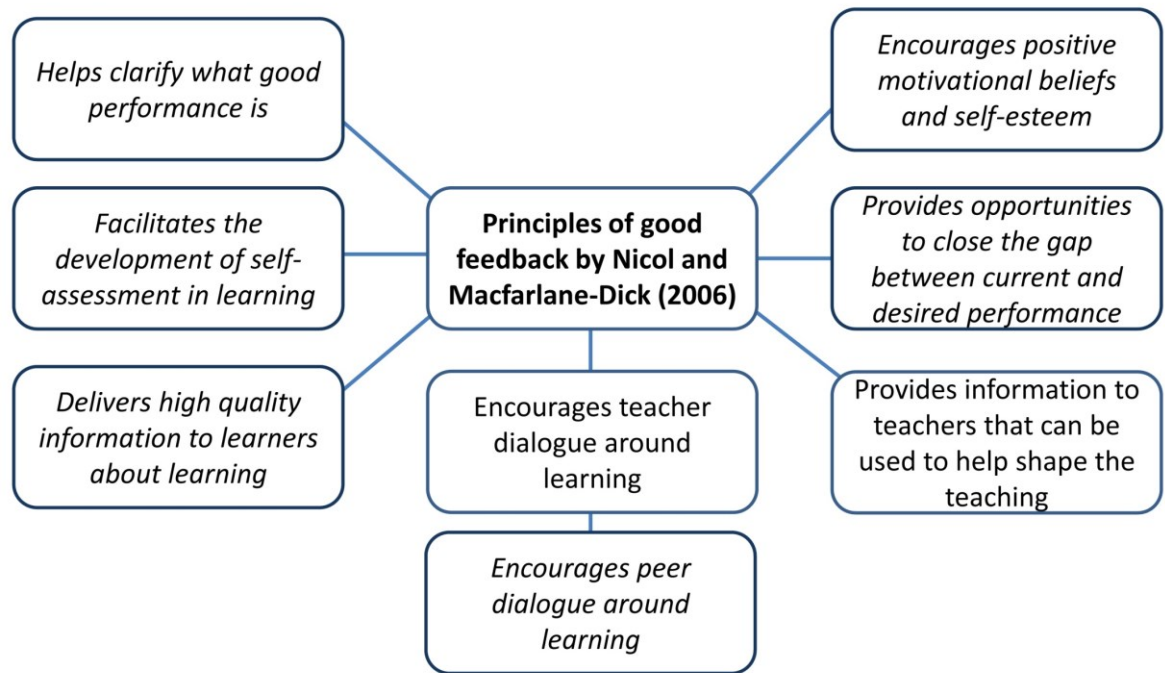


Figure 11 - Representation of the discussion on the principles of good feedback of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006).

Observation: Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's principle of encouraging teacher and peer dialogue around learning was, in this representation, divided in two principles because part of it is applied by teachers and part of it is not, therefore they needed to be differentiated.

5.3 Other aspects of feedback

Even if it was not the aim of this research analyze the content of the theory of formative assessment and feedback, I have found that, although the theory does not address feedback to parents, this kind of feedback was mentioned by the totality of teachers who took part in this research as an important part of the feedback they give. They consider giving feedback to parents as important as giving feedback to pupils for they are not solely responsible for their learning. In the theory, the lack of the implications of feedback to parents is most likely due to the fact that research on formative assessment and feedback is more abundant in contexts of high school and university levels, where this kind of feedback is not as important as it is in the elementary school level.

As previously mentioned, data showed that it is difficult for teachers to give positive feedback to pupils, that is, giving feedback to pupils who do not present learning difficulties. In this kind of situation, the teachers tend to focus on personal characteristics. They do not seem to know how to address to the task and process in order to reinforce what was done

correctly and prompting pupils for greater challenges. This kind of situation might be present because teachers are still focusing their assessment and feedback on summative practices. It seems that, if the grade a pupil gets is good, there is no need for the teacher to take any actions. If the feedback given has summative purposes, it does not prompt to actions of increasing learning when the desired number has been obtained. Giving positive feedback is important for, as stated by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), good feedback encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. It is my understanding that not only pupils with learning difficulties need to have their motivational beliefs and self-esteem increased, since learning can be constant and always be broadened and enhanced.

5.4 Previous research

As mentioned before, there is previous research on assessment for learning by Dixon and his colleagues (2011), where they investigate teachers' beliefs and knowledge about feedback and their perception of practices. Through it, they have affirmed that teachers have different perceptions of their role and pupils' role in the feedback process – and the findings in this research are in accordance with it. Also in accordance with their findings is the fact that, even if teachers express the same beliefs, their practices are different, that is, teachers might make a statement when thinking over their assessing practices, but when compared to a real situation, the practice in itself may differ.

In the investigation of Dixon and his colleagues (2011) about teachers' knowledge and perception of practice about feedback they have divided the teachers into three groups they called the technicians, the pragmatics and the empowerers. The technicians are those who consider being their responsibility the major role in the feedback process, by making qualitative judgments on learners' work. The role of learners in assessment is narrow and passive. They are basically receptacles of information and peer and self-assessment were not mentioned. The pragmatics consider that learners should take a more active role in the learning and assessment process, but they, the teachers, are the controllers of the feedback exchange. In their view, learners expect the teacher to make qualitative judgments and decisions. They mention self- and peer assessment, but do not put those into practice. The empowerers see their role as that of providing help so that learners may enlarge their evaluative knowledge. Peer and self-assessment are key practices. It is the learners' role to make qualitative judgments and self-monitor their learning. Although it is not possible to

relate the participants in this research with the diversity of types described in their study, Teachers interviewed for this research could be placed in the pragmatics group, with one of them presenting characteristics of an empowerer.

My findings are also in accordance with this previous research that concluded that attention must be paid to teachers' development of understanding of feedback interactions, especially concerning self- and peer feedback, so that they can be able to foster students self-monitoring and self-regulatory behavior (Dixon *et al.*, 2011). These two are important areas related to formative assessment and feedback. Nevertheless, teachers do not seem to have enough theoretical or empirical knowledge on self-assessment and peer-feedback in order to foster pupils' self-regulation.

5.5 Review of discussion

The findings of this research are in accordance with the findings of Dixon and his colleagues (2011), related to where teachers' expressed beliefs and real practices are not in total balance. The results of this study suggest that teachers taking part in this research still focus on summative assessment and that this summative assessment depends mostly on numbers pupils get on tests and exams. Data also shows that those teachers do not perform formative assessment. The main difference between formative and summative assessment is that, in the first one, pupils have an active role in the process. The teachers' ways of assessing pupils are summative, even when feedback is given. Teachers do not make use of self- and peer- assessment when assessing pupils, as expressed before, their main instruments are tests and exams. It is the teachers' responsibility to develop the learners' evaluative expertise and that is of major importance since, by doing so, learners will achieve reflective habits (Buhagiar, 2007). It is also important that assessment practices reflect the changes in teaching and learning.

Related to feedback, teachers have plenty of opportunities to give feedback to pupils but in general, the feedback given does not address the core aspects of good feedback. My data shows that the teachers do have knowledge, either theoretical or empirical, on the aspects of formative assessment and feedback related to giving immediate feedback focusing on task, although the timing is not a constant. It is necessary that their practices in giving feedback be consistent. Their feedback should be consistently timely, focused on the process and aiming for self-regulation, this way, teachers would strengthen the important as-

pects of feedback and they would not lose time with the ineffective aspects. Another principle the teachers also apply is discussing with pupils about the feedback given on their learning. They do not have difficulties in either finding a time to talk to pupils or in dialoguing with them. They also apply the principle of changing their teaching according to the feedback they give to pupils.

Related to the aspects teachers still need to develop on formative assessment and feedback, based on the data, limited by its nature, it seems evident that teachers seem not to give feedback on the process or to make the assessment criteria clear for the pupils. And this being the case, these primary school teachers miss the chance to deliver high quality information; clarity what good performance is and help close the gap between current and desired performance. According to Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2014), when learners do not know where their mistake is or how to solve problems they get anxious in situations where they have to perform the task again. Teachers participating in this research also seem not encourage peer dialogue missing the opportunity to develop pupils’ self-esteem. Likewise, these teachers do not encourage positive motivational beliefs and do not develop pupils’ self-assessment skills – at least not through the possibilities of feedback. It is important that teachers guide pupils so that they understand what their mistakes are and how they should proceed to reach the expected results; so that they can self-regulate their learning process as well as their emotions and motivation. Data showed that teachers have difficulties in giving positive feedback and do not make use of peer-feedback to foster learning. It also showed that giving feedback to parents is an important aspect of feedback in elementary school contexts. *Table 3*, shown below, gives a perspective of the discussion section.

Table 3 – Perspective of discussions

Discussions		
Category	Teachers implement	Teachers do not implement
Assessment	Practicing summative assessment - mainly tests and exams	Practicing formative assessment - self-assessment, peer-feedback
	Asking pupils to assess class, content and teacher	Making it clear the assessment criteria

	Having the assessment tools belong to teacher	Making use of self-assessment, as a way of assessing
Category	Teachers implement	Teachers do not implement
Feedback	Giving group and individual feedback focusing on task	Helping pupils set their own goals for learning and giving feedback considering pupils' goals
	Focusing on personal evaluation	Making use of peer-feedback to foster learning
	Giving feedback to parents - mostly in written form	Focusing on self-regulation and on the task process
	Giving immediate oral feedback	Giving the pupils the chance to redo the work or giving feedback during the process
	Discussing with pupils about their learning	Developing self-assessment as a way of fostering learning
	Shaping their teaching according to the feedback they give to pupils and receive from them.	Giving relevant information that helps clarify what good performance is and opportunities to close the gap between desired and present performance
	Encouraging teacher-pupil dialogue	Encouraging positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
		Giving positive feedback without addressing personal characteristics
		Encouraging peer-dialogue around learning

6 EVALUATION

As expected, my role as a researcher has been affected by several factors. Although I made efforts not to let my personal experiences influence the analysis and the results of the data, having been a teacher made me understand better what the participants were trying to say during the interviews and I could relate to their feelings, expressions, joys, doubts and challenges.

On the other hand, the process of deepening my knowledge in the theory of formative assessment and feedback made me look at the school context and teachers' role in a different way, being more critical and daring to challenge the status quo on assessment. It has also been a surprising process in the sense that it was my opinion that there might be a lot of differences between teachers in Brazil and in Finland; but this has not been the case in this research. It makes me wonder if this is really the situation; and moreover, if teachers' views are not that different in assessment and feedback, what other reasons there are for the differences in the educational achievements. Many questions such as these remind me that my positioning in this research is in accordance with its exploratory nature, as mentioned in the title of the research. This has been an exploration in many aspects and it certainly is not the end of the work, but just its beginning.

6.1 Validity and reliability

There is not only one unique set of methods for qualitative research that is applicable in all analysis. On the contrary, there are varied sets of methods and different ways of analyzing human activities. So, to assure validity and reliability, it is necessary to establish the objectivity of the chosen method (Silverman, 1997). Verification is the process of checking, confirming, and being certain. In qualitative research, verification has to do with the mechanisms used during the process of research that contribute to ensuring reliability and validity (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). The definition of validity as the certainty of the assumptions drawn from data has always been a concern in educational research (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992). During the whole process this research has been done with care, external assistance and supervision, from the plan to the final conclusions, precautions were taken so that the data was dealt with trustworthiness.

Efforts were made so that my acts as a researcher would be in accordance with the description of Morse and her colleagues (2002), where a good qualitative researcher moves back and forth between design and implementation to ensure harmonization among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis. Data is to be checked, focus is to be maintained, and data and the conceptual work of analysis and interpretation tracked and confirmed regularly. It is the researcher's creativity, sensitivity, adjustability and aptitude in using the verification strategies that determines the reliability and validity of the research. Aspects to be taken into consideration in order to ensure the validity are: methodological coherence, appropriate sampling, analyzing data all together and thinking theoretically (Morse *et al.*, 2002). All these aspects were taken into consideration in developing this research.

As stated by Morse and her colleagues (2002), the interdependence of qualitative research demands that the questions match the method, which matches the data and the analytic procedures. All these components must be coherent, with each verifying the previous component and the methodological assumptions as a whole. I believe these procedures were followed and that there is coherence between the research questions and the components of the method chosen. Another aspect to consider in this research is that the participants, although a small number, have knowledge on the researched topic and all aspects of the phenomenon have been covered. This fact, according to Morse and her colleagues (2002), establishes effective saturation of categories, with optimal data and minimum impurity. Likewise, the instruments of data collection and the data analysis were thoroughly described in the research or attached to it. The data was analyzed altogether and ideas emerging from the data were confirmed with previous research and the theory of formative assessment and feedback, creating an interaction between what is known and what needed to be discovered (Morse *et al.*, 2002).

Besides the actions mentioned above, the reliability of the coding frame was checked by a second coder. This verification was done by using Nvivo software and the interrater reliability was measured by the Kappa coefficient. The result coefficient was $Kappa = 0.84$. Kappa is a statistical measure of interrater reliability and it ranges from 0 to 1, where zero stands for agreement by chance and 1 to better reliability, since it indicates that the proportion agreement was not by chance (Sim & Wright, 2005). Therefore, there is evidence that the coding of both coders was not obtained by chance and the results of this research can

be considered reliable, since according to Kirk and Miller (1986) reliability is assessed by the degree to which the findings are apart from accidental circumstances.

6.2 Ethical considerations

Generally, in educational settings, ethical issues are not raised before the research is initiated. They are not as present as in a medical field, for example. Frequently ethical decisions do not seem like that during research, they are more like practical, strategic or methodological decisions and only on later reflection they show themselves as ethical choices. Therefore, ethics in qualitative research in education does not resume to a checking list of moral attitudes but behaving in an ethical manner at all circumstances (Deyhle, Jr. Hess & LeCompte, 1992).

In this research, ethical behavior was adopted from the very start of the process of getting teachers to participate in this research. All the participants in the research are adults capable of comprehending the nature of the research and competent to consent to participating. Although participants were chosen based on their availability and the other factors previously described in the methodology section, they were all approached the same way, meaning that I have asked for their voluntary participation individually. Besides that, they were all informed of the purpose of the research and how the information obtained was going to be handled and where it was going to be used. They were assured that their participation would be anonymous and that the data collected for this research would not be used for any other purpose than the original one. After the completion of the work, participants were informed of the final results, discussion and conclusions.

6.3 Limitations

As the data for this research was collected in different contexts and among experts in the field, it might be considered valuable and its findings can be taken into consideration. On the other hand, the data was collected within a small group and the findings cannot be transferred to other contexts. They can, however, be transferred to other contexts similar to the one portrayed in this research. Although the research helps in giving a portrait on formative assessment and feedback in the elementary school context, a broader picture is still needed in order that the findings may be applicable to other conditions.

7 CONCLUSION

As stated before, assessing is part of learning instruction in a learning culture (Shepard, 2000). In current formal learning environments teachers seem to be the main agents responsible for assessing pupils' learning. However, it is important to consider what teachers need in order to perform such activity, which is of major importance, if we consider that assessing and giving feedback are means of enhancing learning. As stated by Sawyer (2008), in the beginning of the 20th century there were not yet enough studies on how people learn and the modeling of schooling built was based on common-sense assumptions that had not yet been tested by scientific means. Much has been researched since then but there is still much to research in the field of education. This thesis has attempted to address one of these needs, which is research on formative assessment and feedback in elementary school contexts. Below further research needs are suggested as well as a conclusion to this study.

7.1 Further research

In the process of preparing to collect data and of preparing the theoretical background and the analysis of the data, I have experienced that much research is still needed in the area of assessment and feedback. Especially researches on the effects of formative assessment and feedback on elementary school pupils – and its relation to pupils' self-regulation – have been missed

Feedback is deeply related to learning goals but my data showed that teachers have great difficulty in discussing about learning goals. When asked if they encouraged pupils to establish their learning goals, teachers affirmed that they did so, but the examples that followed the affirmation confirmed a different reality.

I have also noticed that teachers face problems when giving feedback to pupils who do not seem to have difficulties in performing their tasks. They have mentioned that they do not give enough time to these pupils because their energy and time go to pupils with learning difficulties. It seems to be difficult for teachers to give positive feedback that is not related to personal characteristics. They do not seem to know how to address the task and process in order to reinforce to pupils what was done correctly, while prompting them for greater challenges.

Feedback to parents is an important part of the role of primary school teachers in assessing and giving feedback. This was mentioned by the teachers as a necessity related to elementary school pupils, since these are not solely responsible for their learning. The theory of formative assessment and feedback does not address the feedback given to parents. Research on formative assessment and feedback is more abundant in contexts of high school and university levels and that might be the reason why they do not address it.

Unfortunately, it was not a surprise the findings related to teachers relying almost solely on exams and tests numbers in order to assess pupils. Grading tests and exams has been a summative assessment practice for long and new ways of assessing must be investigated if it is expected this situation to change.

Therefore, considering the above, I would suggest the following lines of future research:

- a. Research on a wider context of elementary school teachers' concepts and practices of formative assessment and feedback.
- b. Research on formative assessment and feedback in the elementary school contexts and its influence on pupils' self-regulation.
- c. Research on goal setting among elementary school pupils. Exploring how they perceive goal setting and how the establishment of goals affects their learning.
- d. Research on teachers' perceptions of learning goals and pupils' goals in the elementary school context.
- e. Research on positive feedback, exploring how it affects pupils with good academic achievements in the elementary school context.
- f. Research on parents' understanding of formative feedback and how parents could support pupils' learning through formative assessment and feedback.
- g. Research on ways of shifting assessment from summative to formative and the repercussion of such changes on pupils' self-regulatory skills.

7.2 Implications and conclusion

Teachers are not to be criticized for not making use of formative assessment and feedback tools in fostering pupils' learning. Instead, if it is expected that assessment practices change, teachers need to receive teaching and training on the importance and practice of self- and peer-assessment, which help to foster pupils' learning and self-regulatory skills. According to Panadero, Brown & Courtney (2014), training in assessment is among the strongest predictors for teachers to make use of self-assessment. Even if teachers are not solely responsible for not making use of formative assessment and feedback; it remains the fact that there should be a shift from grades to other mechanisms that improve learning. It is my understanding that the formative assessment and feedback tools may provide such mechanisms. It is my interest to continue this research for, as research advances, new forms may be found.

Considering the information on the data collected for this thesis, it is my understanding that the teachers show real interest in their pupils' learning. They want to support their learning and progress. This was evident in my data through constant statements such as "I believe that I have a lot of responsibility"; "I need to be there"; "I try to help them in every possible way". Therefore, the fact that they are not yet making full use of formative assessment and feedback in order to develop pupils' learning and self-regulatory skills is due to the fact that they do not have enough theoretical knowledge and that their experience alone is not enough to give them what is needed. This situation needs to be remediated.

The teachers participating in this research do not seem to be aware of the need of helping their pupils self-regulate their learning. Self-regulation is a process that needs to be understood and internalized firstly by the teachers and then by pupils. Teachers need to be able to prepare pupils for the challenges of the 21st century. As stated by Sawyer (2008), our society is being transformed in a learning society, where workers must continue to increase their knowledge throughout their lives. It is the role of the teachers to prepare pupils to be this kind of future workers and to live in this new form of society. A development of teacher training is necessary. Teachers need to be equipped both with the knowledge and with the tools for making pupils reap advantages from formative assessment and feedback in order for them to become self-regulated, while profiting from long-life learning.

I consider more research in this area to be a great need because formative assessment and feedback is a field that has not yet been largely explored. Researches focusing on the ele-

mentary school contexts are especially important – since this is the field where theoretical and empirical studies on formative assessment and feedback are especially rare. It is important to keep in mind that novel ways of assessing pupils need to be developed because the old ways of assessment do not match the demands of the new ways of teaching and the new ways of understanding learning. Civilization is being constantly shaped and the needs of the new society are not the same as of the old. This same way education, including assessment practices, needs to be constantly shaped to address the demands of the society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Questions for the interview:

Appendix B – Case scenarios

Appendix C – Transcript of interviews

Appendix D – Feedback to case scenarios

Appendix E – Coding frame

Appendix A – Questions for the interview:

1. What do you think about assessing and giving feedback?
(Do you consider it necessary? Why / Why not?)
2. How do you see your role in assessing students?
3. How do you give grades to the students? How frequently?
4. Do you think test grades reflect how well students know the topics in class?
5. Do you think test grades reflect how much students have improved in their learning?
6. How do you give feedback to your students? How frequently?
7. In your opinion, what are the elements of good feedback?
8. In your opinion, what are the elements of bad feedback?
9. Do you discuss with your students about the feedback you give them?
10. What do you think they think about the feedback given?
11. What are your practices in assessing and giving feedback to your students?
12. Do you face any difficulties in assessing or giving feedback to students? Which?
13. What do you think students expect from you related to assessment and feedback?
14. What do you think the student's role in assessment is?
15. What is your opinion about self-assessment? Do you use it?
16. Are students able to create their own feedbacks?
17. Do you consider peer-feedback important? Why/Why not?
18. Do you make use of the feedback you give to students in order to shape your own teaching?
19. Do you encourage your students to have their own goals in learning? How?

Appendix B – Case scenarios

Instruction to teachers

Consider that all cases below are students from fourth grade. Give feedback to them as if they were your students. Do it the same way (length, way of writing or talking, etc.) you use to do in your own teaching. Specify if you would give the feedback in written or oral form.

Case scenario 1

Markko is not a brilliant student. He does not have any disability but he is a bit behind his classmates. He does not participate actively in the class activities. It takes him forever to copy from the board. You have tried to encourage him to engage in the activities, but he just does not seem interested. Markko has just finished a research task on the solar system but he did not do it quite well. He has not mentioned all the topics the work should have and in some of them he wrote so short sentences that it is not possible to make sense out of them. Markko is a nice boy and has a good relationship with his classmates.

Case scenario 2

Liisa is a sweet girl. She is friendly and likes to help classmate and the teacher. She actively takes part in the activities in class. She is not very focused on learning though, being distracted many times during the tasks and activities in class. Her grades are generally average though on the latest math test she performed poorly. She either did not answer the questions or answered them wrongly, especially the ones related to measurement. You know that she has other brothers and sisters and that her parents do not pay enough attention to her.

Case scenario 3

Joosef is a very clever boy. His grades in math are always the best and he is very popular too. He does not need to make great efforts in order to get good grades. He is curious and constantly looking for something else to do during teaching hours. In mother tongue

class, he finished a poem writing assignment quite fast and quite well. His ideas were clear and he wrote the sentences correctly and with good rhymes. He is an only child.

Appendix C – Transcript of interviews

Interview 20.10.2013, 17:18 (40 min)

Name: **Teacher 1**

Age: 34

Gender: Female

Work experience as a teacher: 10 years

Class teacher: 16 hours a week with the group

Grade teaching now: 4th grade, 25 pupils

1. What do you think about assessing and giving feedback? (Do you consider it necessary? Why / Why not?)

I consider assessment important, fundamental to know how the student is learning and also to evaluate my own teaching, the way I am teaching, how I am... I am doing, if I am reaching the goals of teaching and feedback in the sense of a having a response, of knowing how it is... it is through assessment I know what the student has learned, how he is following, learning, knowing and also it tells me what I should improve, change, if I must change the teaching method, I think that is it.

2. How do you see your role in assessing students?

The educator must work as a facilitator, help the child to learn, so I must assess thinking in the student's learning, thinking in what he can do to learn, what he can do to reach the goals. I think that the education system still fails in assessing. The school, us teachers, at least here in Brazil at least, we still make some test, evaluations, to see what students know of content. But we try to work so that they can reach the objective, so, I ask of myself a lot so that I will not make a test only to know if they can do a division or multiplication calculation, or if they can interpreter a text, but to observe everything, how they do it, how they reached the result, what they wrote. I believe that I have a lot of responsibility in thinking over the evaluation in the sense of observing every day, every class, everything they do, not just a test.

3. How do you give grades to the students?

I make some works and an individual evaluation. They need to make calculations, solve math problems, math challenges, they need to interpret a text, they need to create, produce a text and considering all these works I see who is following and who has difficulties. The grade we give based on what we... it is a combination of everything. I do not give grades on each evaluation, like this one is 30 and the other is 70. I give a fictional grade, like ah, because this year we still have to give grades but from next year on it will be only feedback, just a concept or better, just feedback. This year we still give the feedback and the grade. He got a 7, but then in the feedback I write what he had difficulties, all he learned. Then on the second quarter I give an 8 if he improved and then I tell that he improved on this and that, how he reached the goals, how he improved and then if he ah...if he got worse, if he knew how to multiply but now with two numbers he cannot do it, so I will give grade 6,5 and tell that he does not know how to multiply with two numbers, he needs to learn it. So, the grade we give just because it is needed. It is not the result of evaluation, if he took 10 and 60. It is a grade because the norm of the school determines that we have to give grades.

How frequently?

Each quarter. Each three months the grade is given. Children still have the need of having it and so do some parents, "Hei, teacher. I made an oral dictation, what is my grade?", "I made a test, what is my grade?" We try to show them, "Look, this and this need to get better, this was very good, congratulations" but the number we are already not giving because next year they will not have them, but they have the need for a grade. Ah, I got a 7. Hei, he got a 7 and I a 5. Why did he get a 9 and I a 7? They still have this emulation, competitiveness, not emulation, related to grade, the number.

4. Do you think test grades reflect how well students know the topics taught in class?

I do not think so because if I give 5 questions and each one is worth 2 points to reach 10 or 100, depending on how. If I give 5 questions, each one worth 2, the student missed something in the first one but he understood or he did not understand he got it right by guessing. The grade will be right, and he got it right because he guessed or then, the grade to me does not say much, no. I have to know all the process; I have to know everything he did. I have to know the student to know why he answered like that and I also have to even question him, why did you write it like that? Many times I question them, why did you write that Mary liked ice-cream if in the text it is said that Mary did not like it. Then he will read it over again and say, wow, I got confused. I just forgot to put a not, something like that, so, I think that grade do not, the test grade does not say much. I need to know the student in order to know how to assess him.

5. Do you think test grades reflect how much students have improved in their learning?

Umm, no. Not because as I said, the grade is like a secret. Teacher's secret or something like that. The grade we give because we have to. We do not evaluate the student with a grade, right? So, the city schools of Novo Hamburgo give a grade to 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students together with a written feedback, so, the written to work with them because in the future there will be no grade, from 2013 on, the 2nd grade on will not get grades, only the written feedback and next year 3rd and so on. They will not have grades, only written feedbacks. So the mother and the father will have to read it to know how it is going, how the student is. They go straight to the grade. They look at the grade, but the grade does not say what the student learned or not. The grade is not the best option.

6. How do you give feedback to your students?

Well, if we make a, let's use the example of a math test with calculation. Ah, division, multiplication, adding and subtraction. They will do it individually and I correct it. Ah, they made mistakes and then I call them and we get to work. Why did you miss this? Then I call one by one and show them their mistakes and what they have difficulties at and from that we talk. If it was a text they wrote. They have to show me the first paragraph. But look here what is it written? Ah, here I wanted to write let's say "corer" but you wrote "corer". Oh, I forgot. So I end up calling them, giving feedback from what they were doing at the time. If I leave it to give later on, sometimes I forget or they do not even remember what they had done, so I try to call them and redo with them what they did wrong. As each quarter there is this assessment to show the family, so they have a case file where I put all the works they did and the written feedback, with everything that happened and

not there. What they did wrong and right, what is going well and as I said, we also put the grade there and the control of presences and absences, but always during the week we assess and talk to them so, I end up walking by the class and I ask them to read what they have done, for example if they have a physical education project, and the teacher also gives the feedback as how they were in class, not just me, the class teacher but also the project teachers. There are five projects and they type and make a written feedback and I give it to them so that they read before we have the quarter assessment. They have to read what the teachers said, but then it is a general, but I know ah, he did not manage to jump the rope; this one cannot interpret a math story, a challenge. Then I call them to talk and work individually with them.

How frequently?

Ah... at least once a week I talk to them about their difficulties. Officially they would receive assessment and feedback each three months. Every other week a teacher comes to the classroom and stays for a period so that I can talk to the students with difficulties. I take them for a review. In this review I end up giving a feedback to those in the group. They are six students. See, you have difficulties in this, let's do that, you have this difficulty, so, but it is each 15 days. But to the whole group I give feedback like, look, many people missed the word "corer" or many people cannot do the division by two numbers, so let's do it again.

But then it is a general feedback, right?

It is a group feedback, but then individually, sometimes, there is no rule, every week. I have to do it every week because, in order not to accumulate, but I call them like, ah, if they are working and I walk through the class and see that a student is not managing to do the work, then I sit with him to see what he needs to improve, then there is not a, a rule ah, every week I will do this. Officially it is each quarter but it is too much time if in, three months is too much time for them ah.. Recognize what they did wrong or for them, or even if it is a student that is following well. I also need to talk to them, I need to call them but we spend more time with the ones who have difficulties because who follows follows, does, then we end up sitting and calling more individually those who have more difficulties, during the classes. On 4th grade the subjects are divided, and then they have Portuguese, math and physical education on Monday and Portuguese, math and science on Tuesday. So I have to ah go through the contents of each subject but then when they are in physical education I call one of them to redo a calculation that he was not able to do or then if he has difficulties in something, I try to call them during those moments when the others are doing something else so that I give, I redo with them something and then he goes back to the activity and calls another student, but I do not have an established frequency, always when something comes up and some difficulty comes I call them soon.

7. In your opinion, what are the elements of good feedback?

I would like to know, I would like to have feedback on my work, to know how I was, thinking of myself, so, I think what I consider important to tell them, what they follow, the difficulty and how to solve the difficulty. Thinking of the students, they have science, social science, arts, but I believe that in our reality here, in some moments, I need to literate students even on 4th grade. I have one student that is illiterate, so what I do with them, the feedback is more related to math and mother tongue. So, I try to tell them what the difficulty is. I know how to subtract, but I cannot divide. I forget to subtract because I

need to know that, so, for me it is important to know the details of what the student have difficulty on. Again, thinking of the students with difficulties, which are the ones we spend more time with. So I need... to know exactly what he did, how he did and how he is going to solve the difficulty. And for the students that are easier, congratulations, keep on like that. That is we spend more time with the others and we do not have much to say to these ones.

8. In your opinion, what are the elements of bad feedback?

Ummm, when I do not... if I do not know my student, I do not have feedback to give and so it is a bad feedback. I will not be able to know where the difficulty is. I have a group and I do not ah... someone asks me, " How is Joaozinho going in math?" Ah, I do not know, then I cannot ... for me bad feedback is not knowing the students. It is not knowing the difficulty or facility of each student. You do not have what to say if you do not know, then bad feedback for me would be like that. Ah, I do not know then I say, Joaozinho, you have to improve your writing, then I check a text he wrote three months later and, oh, he writes well, I gave a bad feedback because I did not know and in fact his difficulty is in math. So, if you do not know your student you do not know what to say.

9. Do you discuss with your students about the feedback you give them?

Yes. Always. Even related to their behavior, how they are. We talk a lot also. Ah, you need... you need to calm down a little. You need to sit. Because some students are too agitated and they end up not paying attention because they are focusing on... the pen of the mate that fell down, paying attention of something, a toy that someone brought or a card. They are on 4th grade but they are now on the card phase, so, they keep playing with or collecting cards and they end up getting distracted a lot. So I have to sit with them and tell, look, you are getting distracted, it cannot be. You have to concentrate so that you can understand that now it is the time for a determined activity. And I also have students, specially one girl, that she stays quiet and looking at me. It seems that she is listening to everything but she is not. She seems focused on what I am telling her, then, many times I have to talk to her, look, you have difficulty on this. You need to call me and ask me for help. She ends up not asking for help but I am always talking to her. See, you could not do this. You have to call me and say. Sometimes I walk through the classroom and I see that she is having problems but I wait for her to ask for help, teacher, I have difficulty on this. Sometimes, then, I am always talking to them. Giving them a feedback on what they are doing, what they have difficulties...

10. What do you think they think about the feedback given?

Well, I think they... some seem not to have maturity of... how important. Ah, how good that the teacher told me this so that I can get better. Some are immature, like, ah, the teacher keeps talking that I have difficulty on this. But in general, most of them I think consider it important because they feel that the teacher cares about them, ah, if I have difficulties on this I will get better, ah, I will get this better. Ah, the teacher told me that I had difficulty on this, look teacher, then they come to say, now I can do it. Once a student, last year, told me that she had been doing calculations during all night because I explained her that she was having problems and she spent the night. then I thought, wow, it was not that much but she felt that it was important when I talked to her. This year, when I am teaching 4th grade, they end up bringing, teacher I had difficulty, then you

explained to me and my uncle helped me too and now I learned how to do it. Then, in general, they take it seriously, except those students who do not, do not, some do not take anything seriously.

11. What are your practices in assessing and giving feedback to your students?

Ah, yes, through everyday activities. I am always assessing, analyzing here and there, ah, this is doing, this is not. This has difficulties, this don't. Once a week, at least, I ask them to write something, ah, we talk ... written... no, free write, now the name does not come to my mind... but kind of write something ah, like a question in and activity, write what you would do if you were in the character's place. Write what you did on the weekend ah, something so that they write about themselves and also, this I assess... what they wrote, how they wrote it, not only the grammar, misspelling, mistakes in concordance, but also what they write, what is important to them. I make activities of... individual, like ah, now you have to make these calculations by yourselves. I am not helping you. I want to see how you do without my help. Then I correct with them, I find the mistakes and we go, then I work with them. Now you need... to play with the multiplication table so that I can see how you are, so, I am always assessing them. Sometimes individually, asking for them to do activities by themselves and also the class in general, even because some students I tell, look you can check the notebook for the answers in social science. They do not know how to look for them. I tell them that they can look by themselves, ah, I do not know, then I sit and help them find. Then I end up sitting with them and assessing everything. I have a notebook and I take notes for each student how it was, ah, this student asked my help. this one said that he did not do because the brother tore his notebook, this one did not do because he slept late because their parents were fighting, I do not know, there are many questions that I evaluate and from that I cannot evaluate only the tests, if they succeed or not, because in many cases the family has a great influence, positive or negative and the great majority is negative, then I evaluate, give feedback based on that, look, you could not do the homework because the family, he ends up telling that, I could not do it because my father and my mother had a fight, then we end up kind of psychologist, listening to them and telling them ah, but study because this way you are not... you are going to make your father and your mother proud and they are not going to fight at least with you, they will be happy. We end up getting involved in the student's life so that we can assess and give feedback. Because I cannot tell them you have to do this. How have you not done it? You get a zero. Then he tells me that he did not do it because of this and this. Then I end up having group activities. They sit in groups so that one helps the other and one talks to the other and in some moments I have them working alone so because I want to see how their learning is going.

12. Do you face any difficulties in assessing or giving feedback to students? Which?

Difficulties... I ask a lot of myself, so, through their assessment I keep thinking, well, I think they did not... I think I could not transmit to them what I wanted. I think they... if they have difficulties in multiplication table and many have this difficulty, like... they understand the process but they end up not managing to use it... because they want to do everything in a hurry. So, this is my difficulty: thinking what I am going to do different so that they can learn and then with that, for me, the difficulty is to think of something else, to do some different way to evaluate. Because if I give them a calculation to use the multiplication table, they are used to do it, then, I think that my difficulty is this: thinking of

something new. I am always looking for something, but, thinking of something new, because through their assessment I assess myself. I think, ah, I think that I could not tell them what I should. And related to giving feedback, unless it is a busy week at school with extra activities and therefore I do not have time to sit with them, talk to them, sometimes there are activities for the children week, multicultural fair, and then we end up getting involved with many other things and I do not have the time, but difficulty in giving feedback I do not have, of telling their difficulty, difficulty in giving feedback I do not have in this sense, but difficulty in assess in the sense of thinking of something new for them to learn, this I think a little.

Just to make it clear, do you give them written feedback only on the trimestral evaluations?

Yeah, on those evaluations, which go to the family. Other feedbacks are oral.

13. What do you think students expect from you related to assessment and feedback?

Hum... What do they expect from me?... I think they expect me, funny thing... I think of assessment... like I said, assessment for myself. I assess them to assess my own work and they seem to expect... they get nervous when there is an official evaluation, like ah, now we are going to do a written test. They expect me to congratulate them for getting answers right, so, and feedback they expect me to do that, that I will tell them what it is. If they do an activity they say, look teacher, did I get it right or not? They expect me to give them feedback. Then, the feedback they expect is that I show them where the difficulty is. Sometimes I give them questions, ok, but why do you think you got this wrong? And they do not want that, they want me to give it ready, no you got this and this wrong. They end up waiting this on feedback. It ends up being an assessment too, they want me to say ah, you got this wrong for this and that reason. I like to ask them questions back. Teacher, why am I not getting this done? Ah, let us look here, why could you not do this? Look again, read again, try and they expect things to come ready, in assessment and in feedback.

14. What do you think the student's role in assessment is?

In assessment? It is to show what they can do and what they cannot do because we assess them in order to know what they follow, if they are learning and, unconsciously, they end up assessing the teacher. They do not know that, but through their evaluation, so, the role of the student is to show their knowledge and evaluate the teacher because through their assessment the teacher will see if he is doing well, if not, if he has difficulties, what I can do to improve it. Because like, if from 25 students 2 did not reach the objective of the evaluation, ah, this evaluation I will make to see if they learned multiplication by two numbers. Then I want to assess that to see what they have learned. If from the 25 only two did not learn well, well, I will work with them because they have difficulties. But now if from 25 only 2 learned, then, I did not explain it right. So I will go and change my way of working. For me, the objective of the student is to show what they did and assess the teacher, without knowing (being conscious of it).

15. What is your opinion about self-assessment?

Well, this is something I did not mention before but we do it a lot. First, as I said, three times a year they have to make a written self-assessment. Then, they have to write how he, we end up asking them some questions. Ah, if he did homework, if he did this or that.

I also like to make a free self-assessment, they can draw, write, because some prefer to make a drawing and some writing, even on 4th grade, they like to express themselves through drawing. So I think it is quite important the self-assessment, like, because then they can say what they have difficulties with. Ah, I think the teacher is too hard. So I try to change. I think that the teacher teaches well, I think the teacher, so, I think that self... oops I am talking about evaluating the teacher. So, I think self-assessment is important, we always do it, like how is my behavior, how I am following the classes. I like to ask them structured questions and also ask them to say freely what they want and we also talk about it. I am always asking them what you think it was. How did you see yourselves in this work? In group work, how did you manage? I think that self-assessment is fundamental.

Do you use it?

As I said, three times a year, nicely done in paper. Each quarter the school requires it, even the small ones do it but I think it is important to do it orally and I do this self-assessment with them, sometimes sitting in circles and asking, what do you think? How did you go?

16. Are students able to create their own feedbacks?

Humm.. I think it would be important. As I said, some students will not do it, because they do not care about anything but it is a good idea. I will test it with them. Because I think some of them can, we are so, we get used to things and we just give them feedback, but I think they are... I think it is important. I think they could, yes.

17. Do you consider peer-feedback important? Why/Why not?

I have already done that in other years, but this year I must confess that I have not done it, nor once. But in fact, we do not assess. .. we make activities and the student has to correct. I think it is important but we also have to know the student. This is something I did not do this year because these students have certain pleasure in, they are early in teenage, with 10, 11 years old, then they mock, gibe of their mates, making fun of them, ah, this one made a mistake and so on. Then I do not think it is a good idea. It is a good try to make it, but you also have to know the group. I get a little afraid of doing it with this group. The group I had last year was fine. They are more... more sensible, wiser, like, ah, I will evaluate my classmate, I will tell them, look, you have difficulties on this. My group now, they are well, they joke, they make fun of each other, then, I would have to see... I think it is possible to do it. I think it would be important, but also knowing the, the reality, the group of students.

So in this group you would not take the risk?

I could. I got curious now to do two things: ask them to make their feedback and for them to assess the classmate. I can try to do it with them but I think that it will be harder, like. They will not recognize the mistakes. They like to point fingers at each other. Complimenting is harder.

18. Do you make use of the feedback you give to students in order to shape your own teaching?

Absolutely. Always. Assessment for me is this: Thinking of how I will, from this moment on, what I will do different.

And do you effectively change your way of teaching?

Yes. Always.

19. Do you encourage your students to have their own goals in learning? How?

If I encourage? Yes...

Researcher: Because let's say that the general goal is to be approved for the next level or to make their parents satisfied, like general, but I mean if you encourage the student to have their own goal in learning?

I encourage them. Firstly valuing each item, each thing they do well. Ah, because, for example, if the student has difficulty in ah, a student has many difficulties in math and mother tongue but... in physical education he stands out, wow, nice, you were so well, now let's see what you want, what can you improve. They need to know they are valued in one area so that they search to learn more, to search for own goals, so, I always encourage them and try to know each one of them, because it is complicated, because most of them do not have goals in life, ah, my father I do not know. My mother does not something... so they do not have goals like, I want to be approved because ah it does not change anything. I like this school because in this school people care for me, because this is the last year of the students in the school, after they will go to a state public school and it is bigger and they do not get so much attention. So, they end up saying, ah, my cousin went to that school and they are not nice. I prefer to stay in this school. We have heard that from students. So, he wants to continue in the school to get food, care. To some of them we say, well, let's give some joy... ah but my mother does not know, she does not care. I still have 7 assessment files, seven files that the parents did not go to take at school because they do not think it is important. And for them it is still important to show to their parents their grade, to show them whatever, the works done. So, I am always encouraging them, but it is a great challenge, like, because they are not much, they do not have many perspectives in life... many objectives in life. Ah, I want to be a football player because they get a lot of money. Yes, but for that you need to study to get money to go to a football school ah, I had not thought of that. Then you will have to study to get better. Ah, but that one was from the slum and now he is a great player, yes, but this... then, it is quite complicated but I am always encouraging them, firstly our reality is quite hard here.

Thank you. It was that.

Personal Interview at school on, Wed 30.10.2013, at 14:00 (38 min)

Name: **Teacher 2**

Age: 41

Gender: Female

Work experience as a teacher: 1 year

English Teacher, two hours a week, 4th grade, 16 pupils

1. What do you think about assessing and giving feedback? (Do you consider it necessary? Why / Why not?)

I think it is very important. I think it is very important in languages in particular, because it's so much about mutual conversation and so, so they need to know how they are progressing, I think yes.

Q: Do you consider it necessary?

Yes.

2. How do you see your role in assessing students?

Well, I think that... if I wasn't, if I wasn't there and I, if I wasn't there giving that feedback then their learning would be like, you know, learning in a vacuum in a way. So I need to be there and I need to give them feedback, how they are doing and so that they, so that they know how they are doing and if they need to develop in some areas and so on.

3. How do you give grades to the students?

Ah, based on the exams. And, and, and sort of not behavior in the classroom but how they interact in the classroom, participation, yes.

Q: How frequently do you give grades to your students?

Do you mean grades in exams or grades to the reports?

Q: All grades.

All grades. Well, we have word tests and then we have the exams and what should I say... maybe something like once in every two weeks or once in every three weeks there is some sort of exam or something that I, that I grade.

Q: And then these certificates?

Yes, certificates. That's twice a year. One for December and one for, for June.

Q: And what do you grade in these certificates?

Well, then that is a combination of all those things that I mentioned earlier about the exams and the participation in the classroom.

Q: And do you have like a certain amount of percentage for the grade, like 50% related to exams and 50% for participation in class or is it more intuitive?

I think it's, well the exams play quite an important role, because there are a lot of them, so but then on the other hand when I have spoken to the pupils and, and we have interacted in the classroom I can see for example that sometimes they fail in the exams for some reason, ok, I see that you have not written your vocabulary, for example, and that is why your grade is so bad in this exam, and it should be better. I know that you are better. So in that way I can be merciful and see that. Yes.

Q: So, you balance it, according to what you feel is right?

Yes, yes, and what I know, what I have seen, for example in previous years.

Q: Not that you have specifically percentages for the grades?

No, no, no. No, no.

4. Do you think test grades reflect how well students know the topics taught in class?

I think they do.

Q: Why?

Well, ha, this is a bit complicated question. I need to think about it for a while... hum.... well, if... hum... I think we cover every, if you're talking about a certain subject, for example in school book. We cover it in so many ways that, that's why I think the grades sort of relate to that quite well.

Q: Just to see if I understood. You think that test grades show how well they have learned the topics, because you have taught the topics in different ways so they should learn and then show it on the test.

Yes, because we talk about them and then I, for example, they have a chance to talk about it with me or with another pupil in the classroom. We talk about the subject itself. And then we have for example written exams, where they write about them and I ask different questions and we translate the texts and so on, so I think that I, I have a quite good picture if they understand or not, if they are totally "xxx" (I did not understand the word)

5. Do you think test grades reflect how much students have improved in their learning?
I think they do, because I think at least for example grammar stuff, like hum ...the tenses for example. They, we talk about them and we, I teach them every year. We start with the basic ones and we go through them every year, 4th, 5th, 6th sometimes I can teach the same thing for 4th graders and for example the 8th graders on the same day, but of course in a bit different way, but still. So they come again and again.

Q: But my question is, one specific student, for example. Do you think based on test grades you can see if the student has learned and improved?

I think so, yes, because, then again those, I can see if they start ma... ah, I can see if they start making the same mistakes, in that sense and I also test the same things from year to year. There are some sorts of things that come again and again. And I can see, ok last year she didn't know this but now I can see that she has learned.

Q: And you are the only English teacher in the whole school? Yes. Yes.

Q: So you get them all? Yes, I do. And actually this is one of the joys of this work because now I have seen with some of the students, you have really progressed. And I can see that you have read in your summer holidays or whatever, ok you have progressed. ... (off topic conversation)

6. How do you give feedback to your students?

Well in the classroom situations, I have, I have noticed. I haven't sort of planned it or anything, but I have noticed that very often for example when we are talking about something and or let's say we are translating something, I noticed that when the right words or getting close or, then I say, ok, that is good, good, almost correct. And that's, that is feedback in one way. Yes. I tend to say good, almost good and nearly there and so on all the time when we interact. That is in classroom situations. Yes.

Q: And in what other situations do you give feedback to your students?

Well I usually write something to the exams, so you did well in this part or, or you should read this part again and, and try to remember this and then I usually also correct the exams so that they see the correct answers that is what it should have been.

How frequently?

Usually to every exam I write something. Something like, ok, you have, sort of general summary, something like that, a few lines. This has been good, and, and, so on.

Q: And do you think the students take into consideration what you have written?

I think so. And I think it's also not just for the student but it's for the parents also. It's good to write there something so that they know how the child is doing and for example if someone is giving me trouble in the classroom I can write in the exam, ok, this was good and this was good and please try to concentrate more in the classroom or something like that and otherwise you are doing just fine and something like that. Yes.

7. In your opinion, what are the elements of good feedback?

I think every feedback should have, if possible, should have something positive. I tend to, if I have something not negative, I try to avoid the word negative, but critical, if I have something critical I want to say, I always try you know to put it so that, something nice first and then there is the critical part and then something positive. I think it's the. I think it's a hamburger model or something like that. You know. There should be something positive too. Because there is something positive in every pupil, so and I try to you know I try to encourage them.

8. In your opinion, what are the elements of bad feedback?

Well, if it's vague. Or if it's something like you know nothing or you always do that or that's sort of hum...

9. Do you discuss with your students about the feedback you give them?

Yes, I do. Usually I do this when I, when I return the exams. I walk around in the classroom. Because I want to make sure that they understand my handwriting. I also want to make sure that they read it so I usually go there. I walk there when they are watching the papers. I walk there, are you happy? Was there something, Do you want to talk about? Are you happy with your number? Do you know why you got this number? And see, this was very good and this you should read again and see what I wrote here and I think you're bla, bla, that sort of thing.

Q: And do you that with all the student?

I tend to do that. I walk around the classroom for a while, yes. But especially if they look me in a way that they want to ask me something or if they shout me, come on this, what's this? Because my handwriting is sometimes... they say something...hum.

Q: Do you have a moment when you call them and tell them how you see them as a student or...?

Ah, sometimes I do. Yes. But I'm such a new teacher that I haven't all these, these systems yet but I have been thinking about that, yes. Especially with the older students, I sometimes you know talk to them after classes or say ok I want a word with you after the class, because they sometimes have these, sort of how should I call them "keskitymishäiriö" (attention problem) or something like that, they have so much on things going on that they think it's so hard to concentrate in the classroom and then they also disturb others so that is one issue that we have been talking about this year. Although if you are not interested then, well, that is your own problem but you mustn't interfere with

others and you mustn't disturb them because then you are maybe, you are spoiling someone's chances. That's it.

10. What do you think they think about the feedback given?

Well, ah... sometimes they are surprised that they have received some sort of feedback, especially when it is positive. Because sometimes they, ah, I didn't think that I've done that well and then I, it's fine. You have done just fine and you have nothing to worry and I know you are going to learn it and so on, so I think the pupils very often say that they sort of think they are much worse than they are actually. And then again, I do not know how many, how many teachers give feedback. I am not sure but we haven't talked about it so I don't know...hum, but sometimes they seem a bit surprised oh, there is something else and not just a number.

Q: You noticed that they react with surprise? yes. yes.

Q: Especially related to elementary students, is it the same reaction?

Maybe, I have to think about it. I don't know... because I think then, then again they understand the number so well that they are not that interested about the written feedback maybe so, they sometimes are maybe like, ok there is something written and we talk about for a while and they go oh what number did you get and I got this number, yes.

Q: They talk among themselves about their numbers?

Yes, they do. Yes, they do. So maybe they don't look so much forward and they don't plan their studying and so on, so much so, maybe. Maybe it's just the numbers the most important thing... hum.

Q: Is it so that they start getting numbers on 4th grade? Yes.

Q: But even though they already grasp this idea of number? Yes, they do. Yes, they do. ... (off topic conversation)

11. What are your practices in assessing and giving feedback to your students?

What exactly do you mean my practices?

Q: It is more or less what I have asked before but I would like you to list things you do to assess your students and list the things you do to give them feedback.

Ok. Ahmm.... well, in a way my feedback isn't sort of that systematic in a way, it's quite spontaneous. So I don't know what to say about that, in a way. I do tend to watch. Especially with the younger students, as I said previously, when I grade their exam for example I always write something, some feedback and I try to make sure that there's always something positive hum.... what else?... And assessing, do you mean like assessing in order to give grades for the certificates for example?

Q: Yes, in assessing, to consider them passing or failing or learning or not learning?

Well, basically I think... (off topic conversation) so, but assessing for the grades, for example, I think I have this book where I write all the numbers that they have received from their exams so I go through them and then I think about their, their participation in the

classroom and is it sort of something that, that raises the overall number or is it something that perhaps lowers it because we have those, those types as well. So I think that is about it. Then I also talk with other teachers about these pupils and not so that behavior elsewhere would interfere or affect my assessment but so that, how would you do in this situation, for example, now I have this student and these and these numbers and he has been this and that in the classroom... hum... what do you think? do you think this is fair or...

Q: Do you have then a notebook where you take notes for each student? Yes, yes I do.

Q: What kind of notes do you write there? Well, I have this sort of booklet or notebook where I write something about every, every lesson and then I write there something if there is something in particular that he did this specifically well today or she wasn't so good today or if there was some disturbance or something else, that sort of thing...

Q: But then, you don't have like let's say one page for each student, then you write everything there? You write more about classes...

No, yes. Particular classes and then I have this one page I have all their numbers in the tests.

12. Do you face any difficulties in assessing or giving feedback to students? Which?

No, I don't think so, because I find it quite easy to communicate with the pupils and I think we have such nice pupils here, so in that sense it is not problematic. And I think we have a good relationship with the pupils and they behave, in general they behave so well and they, and they, they respond to my "orders" very well, so, no, I don't think so. And then again before I was teacher, I was working in IT business and I was, before I got here, I was a manager for over 80 people, all over the world and all over Finland, so I am quite used to in different situations and difficult situations because I had to sometimes deliver quite difficult and sort of challenging tasks and messages and we had to talk about their difficult things and so on, so on.... (off topic conversation)

Q: You said you do not have difficulties in communicating with your student. How well do you think you know your students?

No, no. Ah... well, hum... I think every year and all the time I get surprises, for example so that, ah now that I got this new fourth grade and they are totally different than the one before, yes. So they are individuals and they have, they are different. They have sort of different routines from previous year and then when I, I teach a lot of the older ones (I teach more older students) so in a way I sometimes get surprised I have a class and then I suddenly realize oh they are fourth graders and they understand this in this particular way, and if I say you should do it like this, they will do it like this and there is no other way to do it because it has to be done like this because the teacher said so and then again the older ones, ok, if we can't do it like this we can do it like this and the other way and they are much more flexible in that way... hum... and if I don't say something to the fourth graders, they are not going to do it, if I don't say it. Yes, so. They are very different in that sense.

Q: But then you analyze and know them better as a group, not individually?

Hum... well maybe at this point, maybe yes, because I haven't been with them for more than just a couple of months so, ... but then again I'm looking forward to it, because I know that we are going to be together for a long time, yes.

13. What do you think students expect from you related to assessment and feedback?

They expect me to be fair. That's the main thing. And I think that, that's the main thing I have to be, I have to be fair. I have to treat all of them equally.

Q: And how do you, that is a difficult question, how do you treat them equally if, like you said, they are different individuals?

Hum... I try to... for example, let's say in a classroom situation when I ask something and they all raise their hands. I try to make sure that everybody gets a chance, during one class, for example that or they, for example, when somebody, today when we had lesson with the fourth grade and we were translating a text and it was much more difficult for others than for the others and then the boys were so eager when there was some, one girl and well, it took longer and she was thinking and pondering about the words, is it this or is it that and the boys were, they had their hands up, and I was saying please, put your hands down, there is no need to hurry and take your time so that I want that everybody gets a chance to say, yeah, so in that sense. And I try to think about all the, you know, what the pupil was doing in the classroom, ok has she said anything today? and if she hasn't I can ask even if she hasn't raised her hand ok, what do you think about this. So, I try to get them involved.

Q: What else do you think students expect from you related to assessment and feedback?

Hum... I don't know. I actually don't know because they don't challenge me in that way. Yes. There is hardly ever been a situation when the student got back and asked me why did you give me this number, so, no. They see that ok, this one and this one and this one was not so right and they know ok, then this is the score that I get.

Q: So they generally tend to see as the right score? yes, yes, yes, they do.

14. What do you think the student's role in assessment is?

... hum... student's role... ... now that you asked like this I cannot think of... my head went totally blank like, what? what do they do? they do nothing, I just give them the numbers. That's it. No... hum...

Q: Maybe you can answer later on? Yeah, yes.

15. What is your opinion about self-assessment?

Ah. Now I can think all sorts of things I could have said earlier now... to your previous question. Self-assessment, that's true. I think it is very good. Because then I think it emphasizes for the students that they also have responsibility in their learning process and I think self-assessment helps do that.

Do you use it?

Ah... not in sort of a systematic way. But I remember that at least last year before Christmas I had sort of a short questionnaire for the students, how much time you have for example used for your homework and how do you think you are doing now and, and, what is good in the class that we have had and so on, that sort of things and of course with the

older students we talk a lot because then ah, the classes are small, there are not so many pupils in the classroom so we tend to have quite a lot of time so that we have time to do the, do the ahm... all the exercises and listen the chapters and discuss and talk and so on and then sometimes our conversations go sideways and we talk about like, and school and also a lot of other things so, (...) more with the bigger students.

16. Are students able to create their own feedbacks?

Hum... I have to say that generally speaking yes. Because when I think about for example the situations when I have, I have returned an exam. They aren't that surprised about their numbers. They have some sort of feeling of oh, I did ok, I did it really well, so I think in that way, yes.

17. Do you consider peer-feedback important? Why/Why not?

Well, I have not tried it. I don't know really... The older students I guess it would work, they, I think they have quite good hunch about the other students but the smaller students I don't know, I haven't tried it.

Q: You have never heard of it?

I have heard of it, yes. But I have never tried with the smaller students because I don't know how they would ah... what sort of feedback it would be, sort of free peer feedback or in some way formulated or written or son on. I don't know (...)

18. Do you make use of the feedback you give to students in order to shape your own teaching?

Hum... ... Well, maybe in a way. I'm not sure if this is totally related to feedback but sometimes when I for example correct the exams and I have written some feedback, ok, this part didn't go that well and if I write like three times, I realize, ok, maybe I didn't teach it that well. Maybe we should come back to this again, so maybe in that sense.

Q: And then you come back, you effectively come back and try to do it all over?

Yes. Yes. Because then we, we go through the same things again and again and again. So we have a good chance to do that. And then again, always when we have had exams we go through the entire exam again in the classroom together so that in that situation I always also get the possibility to go and teach same thing again, maybe in a bit different way or then I get the chance to ask, ok, many of you had this one wrong, do you know why? and, and do you understand, if I, I teach the same thing again, do you now understand how it should be and why it should be like this or what went wrong here and so on.

19. Do you encourage your students to have their own goals in learning? How?

Oh, yes. Yes, I do. Well, I know that they all can't be know super, super wonderful and, and they all can't have number 10 in their, in their certificate. So, I try to. Well, the main thing I usually say, which I said today also. They are fourth grades and we were talking about the word exams. And I said that one thing you always have to remember and this is so important that you are not learning and you are not reading those words because of the tests but because you need them; and you are learning for yourself and not for me or because of the exams and so on, so that you are learning a language because you are go-

ing to need it at some point in your life and that is the main thing, so that if you sometimes get a bad number, not so, well, not a bad number, but perhaps not the number you wanted then don't get depressed and so on, the main thing you have learned something, at least you have learned something. And then again in the next exam you have learned something more so that, you know. Yeah.

Q: So you discuss with them about goals, but they don't tell you what their goal is, this was my question, if you encourage them to have their own goals, like if they would tell you?

Ah, ok. Well, I... I have this 9th, grade (...) ok, ok, with the smaller ones, once again, as I said I have been teaching them for such a small time, but I would like to talk with them about their own aims and sort of, but I think they were, the present class they were also good... last year... I think they always had something like nines or tens ...but maybe we have to come back to that, but no, not so actively at least.

Q: But last year, what have you done with the smaller students to set a goal?

Hum... .. I can't think of anything we did last year. Last year was ... ah... maybe we did. We do talk a lot. Seriously we do talk a lot so. And we talk about learning languages and talk about learning other stuff as well, so not just about languages. Not sort of, not in a systematic way we haven't talked about setting goals, no. (...) but then again, because I think they think about goals as numbers, I think they do that a lot so, I would like them to think not so much as numbers but you know, I have learned something and you know then in three months I have learned something more and it's all so precious and important that you learn, hum, so, and, and, they all can't have the same number so, no. In that sense, hum.

Q: Would you like to go to the question again? 14. What do you think the student's role in assessment is?

Yes. They could do some self-assessment. That was the point. I realized immediately when you said, oh, yes, of course, self-assessment is important, yes... hum.... yeah.

Q: Anything else you could think of?

No, I have been thinking half the sentences in Swedish (...) it's so weird. (... off topic conversation)

Thank you very much for the interview.

Interview 1.11.2013, 10:28 (25 min)

Name: **Teacher 3**

Gender: Male

Age: 48

Work experience as a teacher: 30 years

Class teacher, 25 hours a week with the group

Grade teaching now: 4th grade, 19 pupils

1. What do you think about assessing and giving feedback? (Do you consider it necessary? Why / Why not?) That's quite important, really important, because how else would they know what things to improve or something.

Do you consider it necessary? Definitely. (...off topic conversation)

2. How do you see your role in assessing pupils?

Well, of course, I try to help them in every possible way and, and if I see that there are certain children that do not understand some things, I try to ah spend more time with them or maybe have extra lessons if necessary and try to find material more suitable for their needs and, and do my best so that they could, they could ah learn more what we are trying to teach.

3. How do you give grades to the pupils?

Now and then I have tests and, and then sometimes I give points from the tests or sometimes I give those ah what is it called, those like bigger numbers that you count the, just points together and give ah this ... get 4 to 10 in Finland, and sometimes I may have them to evaluate themselves, how they have made, I may ask them or we can fill in papers where they can write their feelings and, there are many sorts of things that I will do and of course I will do, on every lesson I will see how they will managing and I follow that as well. I do not necessary write everything down but overall feeling.

How frequently?

We have two reports, we have this, is it called Christmas report and then one in spring before summer holiday. Those are the main things but then we have ah I think, I don't know what the proper name in English is but just translation could be like, evaluating ah discussion. Evaluation discussion where the parents are involved too, so that child and parents or at least one of the parents is present and we talk together about those.

How frequently is that discussion? It's once a year and then we have another discussion which is not about evaluation, but with the parents as well... children are there.

4. Do you think test grades reflect how well pupils know the topics taught in class?

Again, please. ... It depends. At the moment I have one children, one child who has problems on her writing, so I am going to have to arrange ah oral test with her in history because she, in 45 min she couldn't write anything in a piece of paper so I have to do it orally and well, so she is doing the test with me orally, she will do the test but it's quite different from what the others do, so I would say basically yes, they relate to their skills but there are differences on some cases.

5. Do you think test grades reflect how much pupils have improved in their learning?

Yes.

Q: Why?

Because, well obviously you're referring to the previous test... in Finland we have also a basic that's all the subjects go, add new things like in spiral thing, that, like multiplication starts I think it's year two and then it comes again on year 3 and add small things, and then again grade 4 and more things come to that so, it always comes back what you have

learned and then add something more and that also m... that you really... after a while you know that they have improved in all the sections of learning, I would say.

Q: And, do you follow a group? Are you the teacher of the same group for 2 or 3 years? Yes, and once I've had a class for 6 years. (... off topic) and of course I talk with the previous teachers, if it is possible and I have all the previous reports.

Q: So, you have access to the kid's reports when you start teaching them? Yes.

6. How do you give feedback to your pupils?

... I try to give it all the time. On every lesson, basically orally and, and there are those discussions all the time, I would say.

Q: But do you tell them if they are doing ok or not or do you tell them on what to do, how do you do?

Both, both and, and I try to guide them if there are some things that I know that would help the children I try to tell them to try these different things.

Q: And is it like general feedback or individual feedback?

Both.

How frequently?

Every day, every lesson. All the time. It's my job.

Q: Do you have any other way of giving feedback, written feedback for example, or...?

Well, we have those reports at Christmas and spring and those discussions with parents present. And if necessary I will take contact to the parents if I am, I have worries about something... sort of things for the children, like if they don't learn their multiplication tables and, and I have, and I think that they really should practice it more then I will contact the parents and tell that maybe they should practice it more at home so I guess these are the things.

Q: Do you write something for them on the tests, for example, or on a work they do to you?

Yes, yes and smiles and what's needed, it depends. I try to do different things that I wouldn't repeat myself that much.

Q: Then you give some kind of feedback for them on the tests also writing something?

Yes.

Q: Or just smiles?

Yeah, it depends.

7. In your opinion, what are the elements of good feedback?

Good feedback ah, difficult question, ah. Of course, it must ah, must be built on what the children have done and I have to think about the, what's opetussuunnitelma (curriculum) ... the all the principals what should be, what the children should learn on each year and I

have to think about all those elements and how well they ah learn those things. It's a very big picture. (...off topic conversation)

8. In your opinion, what are the elements of bad feedback?

Bad feedback, well, bad feedback is ... I don't know, it's, it's not feedback at all or it's just saying you are doing fine you are doing bad. It has to be more constructive and I don't know.

9. Do you discuss with your students about the feedback you give them?

Yes, if I have time.

Q: But generally do you have the time or do you find it difficult?

I find it very difficult sometimes with 19 children. Some ah, ah, some more lively or how should I say, some are quiet and quite often those quiet ones get too little attention because all ah, lively ones take all the attention I can give and all the time. That's my, one of my big worries.

10. What do you think pupils think about the feedback given?

I don't know. I guess they think that it's my job to give them feedback and quite often they try to listen and, and try those things I will suggest them so that they will learn better.

Q: So in your opinion they take it into consideration?

Yes, yes and they keep asking how should I do this and how should I do this, I don't understand this, please help me. Of course, I come and help.

11. What are your practices in assessing and giving feedback to your pupils?

Ah...sorry (repeated the question)

So, talking, orally, written things, reports and, and ... it's very difficult to concentrate.... (... off topic conversation)

Ok, I don't know, every day, everything I do somehow relates to those things, it's difficult to list.

And for assessing? Like giving evaluation?

Yeah, yeah... I did not get the question (he was disturbed because of students inside the classroom, he could not concentrate)

12. Do you face any difficulties in assessing or giving feedback to pupils? Which?

No, no problems. That's what I do and if necessary I contact parents and that's the way it goes, it's a cooperation with the parents and other teachers, of course.

13. What do you think pupils expect from you related to assessment and feedback?

I don't know. Probably if they want answers or help that I would give it to them, I think.

14. What do you think the pupil's role in assessment is?

Well, ah, the receiving part. I don't know.

15. What is your opinion about self-assessment?

It's quite good and it's relatively new thing because when I was a child we didn't do that and I use it quite often. I can ask after a lesson, what do you think in the beginning of the lesson I told you what we were going to learn and what do you think now, did we reach what we wanted? and they can show, like thumbs up and thumbs down or some other way that, what they think then I can ask also if it was fun or not fun, if it should be improved on next lesson or...

Q: So you do this self-assessment quite often?

Yes, weekly, almost daily, I think.

Q: And do you have any opportunity where the pupil assesses themselves, like how I am doing, how well...?

Yes, there are, usually in many subjects there are those ready-made test paper sheets at the end of it. It's one part or one section that does the same that...

Q: And do they fill in those?

Yes, yes.

16. Do you think that pupils are able to create their own feedbacks?

Yes.

Q: Why?

Well, at the end they are quite clever and if I, it depends how you point those tasks or questions that you ask, if I would do it on a lesson I guess, like, even write down not just cross or something but write down in sentences what did you think what did you learn, yes, they could do it, I think.

17. Do you consider peer-feedback important? Why/Why not? repeating the question

Yes, yeah. What do I think about that?

Q: If you think that is important or ...

Yes, of course. And that is one thing that we, I don't think not much in the fourth class but later on we tend to do that more and more and when we do group works it comes naturally, earlier also but I think, it's one thing I probably have to concentrate more in the future...

Q: You have not been using it that much or have you?

Not much, not much but I will definitely try it more and more in the future.

18. Do you make use of the feedback you give to the pupils in order to shape your own teaching?

Yes.

Q: How?

It's a subconscious thing. I don't know but it affects, everything affects everything, all the time, like for example if I have two groups in math. And I have half class first I will teach one thing to them then I have the same lesson again to the other half, I always change things, regarding how the first lesson went and that sort of things happens all the time and the lessons are never the same.... it's never the same... and everything as hard you try to plan lessons beforehand it's always goes otherwise in the real life, so you have to be adaptable able to adapt things and change the things on the fly.

Q: And the feedbacks you give to your pupils help you do these changes?

Yes, yes.

19. Do you encourage your students to have their own goals in learning?

Yes.

Q: How?

Hum. It depends on the subject and the lessons but ah like, children ah have different skills on different subjects and I could point different goals or different levels during the same lesson for different children.

Q: But do you point these goals for them or do they, do you ask them to...?

I can point them, if necessary I can point them and like giving homework, some children have different homework than the others, depending of the level of the children and they don't mind, they don't think it's, like ah I'm for some reason I'm not as good as those, those other kids have other homework than me, it doesn't go like that, because everybody knows we are different and children don't mind, they don't tease others and it goes quite natural.

Q: Ok. Those were my questions. Anything else you would like to add?

I don't know.... I have nothing else to add, as far as I know, everything affects everything.

Personal Interview at school 1.11.2013, at 13:05 (45 min)

Name: **Teacher 4**

Age: 55

Gender: Male

Work experience as a teacher: 31

Class Teacher, 15 hours a week per group

4th grade, 17 pupils

1. What do you think about assessing and giving feedback? (Do you consider it necessary? Why / Why not?)

You mean generally? Ahmm. It is necessary and ah I have taught them to think that because I am giving them feedback, it's, it's, very important that they are able to, to give feedback too, to me and each other. I realize that they are kids at the age 9 or 10 but, but my students said that, it was only yesterday they said that, ah... it's amazing that they really give feedback. You know we had this project. They had to build a skyscraper and the students had their shop there. There were things available, scissors and milk cans and juice cans and things like that but they were not free, you had to buy it. So you had to

negotiate with your group members. There were three in each group. And that was the first lesson, at 9 o'clock. At 10 o'clock they finished the work after some arguing, after some happy hours and, ah, but they had to give some feedback also. What you think about this group's work and they had to give points, just as we do normally, in everyday life here and they estimate themselves, the others, the group members and so, and ah, some wise guy, was it as a professor or some... suggested that kids at this age are not capable to do that but I disagree, they are capable in estimating not at that level that adults do, but we don't have to demand that much but ah I think it's really a big step for kid to notice that he or she can look inside and also outside and, and, for example for giving points. I did it for three points, 3 is excellent, 1 is poor and 2 is good. Ah today I made it for three points, like that. This is the fast way we do it all the time, after doing some music, or having some lecture of a book. As we did today, there were some books they had read and the others estimated how they had performed and ah how he expressed himself and was it interesting and so. It's like that.

2. How do you see your role in assessing pupils?

Ok, my role.... I'm somebody who is throwing sparks, trying to put some fire in, in everything, I think. I'm not a boss who is sitting down there, shouting orders but I try to give ideas and I try to push them up.

Q: But specifically in assessing them, in giving grades or feedback, what is your role?

Ah, I'm somebody who is trying to roll them up when I'm, because this is ah, this is kind of ah it's related to what I said before that I'm... (off topic conversation)

What's my role when giving... yeah... ah, still I think that I am somebody who is pushing them on, putting the switch on beca... but if you mean how I do it (no, it is about your role) yeah, yeah, this is, you know, this is almost the only idea I got from opettajankoulutuslaito (teacher training institute), this that you should believe teacher who is somebody in the background... I am not in the background because I've got a big voice and so, but still mentally I want to be a background man and I can succeed if I get a group like this. It happens to be there are all kinds of kids, we have ADHD kids and many types of problems, but they are nice, there are not meanies here. Then it makes it possible still, and ah, this is a new class for me and I was a bit nervous when getting them I had taught music for them last year and I saw how terrible they were but happily I found out that they are a really good-hearted bunch of kids and that makes things possible. If somebody cannot concentrate it's not her or his fault but I have to accept it and ah try to go on with that knowledge but or for that because of that I think that my role as, as, I'm the... I have to be the boss but not in the wrong way, I want to be in the background boss and the best days... are they are operated by me but they are... the best days are performed by them so... yeah, a leader.

3. How do you give grades to the pupils?

You mean... numbers? Yeah. Ah, we have a good system. You know this used to be a city school but and ah we had a very sensitive system here and we had both numbers and ah some sheets we have there or even open sheet and ah papers Christmas time and so, but now, obviously we have to give only numbers and it's I think... this thing has gone the wrong way so... of course we have tests and they... mostly they get numbers from their tests but ah if you.. test them or have exam it hasn't to be in a paper form, you can do it

orally but you know two moths with them and ah there is something wrong with this system we are not able or we are, we don't have any capacity in this house to ah... do let's say do tests or exams in a, in more levels than this general level, for instance in math. We have only one test but we have kids in let's say five or six phases, somebody is there (down) and the top ones are there (up) so...

Q: But do you give the same test to all of them?

We have to. If we have time we would do four or... three or four different tests. Last year, we had a clinic class here, we had much more support here so, we were for instance able to do tests in different forms, somewhere, somebody did it orally and this all happened to my class. The top ones had the hard ones there and ah the general type of math test for instance or science test ah was meant for the most of them and then we had these Asperger kids and others, they got ah ah mixed tests. They were partly orally, partly in printed forms .

Q: But the numbers do they come only from the tests?

Ah... mo... yes, yes.

Q: So you do not evaluate participation in class for example?

I can't say how it is going to be after Christmas, for instance after all things are settled here, you know the building of the school is going on all the time and you know we are not ready and ah but ah I'm hoping that we get more support so that we get more options.

Q: You mean more options in the tests or...

For the tests and for everyday testing ah you know sometimes we would need ah testing or in acute thins if they, if they you know I've got this one girl who is Asperger, one girl that is ADHD and ah every day you don't know what happens and last year we could send her to the clinic and ah if a normal test situation caused a pressure on her ah we could very... rapidly change into a small class and go over the situation or ah mix of tests... it's not very usual in a normal school thing to do that but this clinic system was a normal class, kind of a normal class but ah most of the kids were normal kids but they had some acute problems that ah for instance Matti's class, I don't know if he has mentioned but he has now some, some ah they are actually not trouble-makers but they have their own inner problems and these guys we sent them there and only the existence of a small group or a small class helped them to go over some test situations. That guy I mean for instance we had a music test last year, it was some music history or something ah I was asking for him and they said that he didn't come, where is he? He is in our classroom, I went there he was sitting there and shouting to me things and he was really upset but it was the pressure of the test, he is some, maybe he is some Asperger or something but ah but the pressure was so hard that we, the teacher walked him home and this type of things that's why I am longing for the old times, more flexible system.

How frequently?

Ah... today we had a religion test for instance. It was the first one. It will happen maybe three times a year but in math once a month and English once two months but for in-

stance, word tests every time we get a new lesson so, the last one was last week and next one will be on Monday, so depends on the subject.

4. Do you think test grades reflect how well pupils know the topics taught in class?

Depends on the test and for instance I can show you a bad example of a test that doesn't measure the right things. This book is very good and I think ah it's, it takes care, it ah it's suitable for most of the kids even for the incomers but this is really terrible ah the basic things are ok, everybody sees them, they know what we have been doing, you have to multiply or do whatever you do but when you come here the first one, the first one ah page two, you have to be adult or some professional to understand and ah the first test was a disaster...

Q: Do you generally use the tests from the book?

Yeah, happily we have ah an option I heard it lately that we have an option to do it in the internet and we can alter this but I think, I'm afraid that most of the teachers just go and take this (copy). Test number two it was much more easier for, for the incomers but ah it was because I was translating and I was showing them and drawing them, because the structures in the sentences are, they are impossible...

Q: But then do you think that when the test is well done it reflects?

If it is well done it's worth it. If you know that it measures the main points, whatever it is, if it is an idea or if it is a skill then it is worth it but ah many times I haven't used the test. I don't do them all the time, much now because this is a new system, but ah and the emphasis is different that we had in the city school so I think ah some, maybe I am doing the tests of my own after Christmas but until then I am going to use these because I want to learn the good points and the bad points.

5. Do you think test grades reflect how much pupils have improved in their learning?

Yes, if they have been, if they have been well done.

Q: So you think you can see student's improvement based on test grades?

Yes, because ah for instance, the oral ones here ah here again ah some of the sentences, they are excellent oh let's say most of them are good but, but ah... actually most of these ARE good (oral questions), much better than these ones (written questions). They have time to see and think. These oral ones they have only some seconds, they have 15 seconds to time to think and they hear it again and that is that, then they have to do it.

6. How do you give feedback to your pupils?

Ah, generally? in a normal class, lesson? Ah, I give lots of immediate feedback. If I see somebody, somebody succeeding, I will say it or... one of the students said that he noticed that I touched the kid and he said that you have to be very careful, but it's true that when I'm... when I see that somebody's... I'm doing that with my friends that ah, like that (tapping the back) ah, you are good. I didn't think that I ... I thought that I don't touch kids, but it's true that I'm doing like that

Q: So, you compliment the ones who...

Yeah, yeah and ah sometimes ah giving signs (thumb up) like that ah but ah some people say that when you give the tests back ah it's not very good thing to mention numbers, but sometimes when some "looser" has succeeded well, as one of them did it last time, last

week, I told it to everybody that he made it 10, perfect 10. The first test was 6, so I... I'm not afraid to... ah... I'm not afraid that somebody is accusing me that I am revealing the privacy if I am giving information like that, that this guy has succeeded.

Q: And when you see some problems, how do you give this kind of feedback?

Ah... ... I'm going to him or her and ah although it happens in the middle of the lesson it happens ah very privately. I may show the place, there is something wrong or can you improve it? and ah but ah if somebody is... sometimes I am calling him back to me and ah we have a private meeting where we can go and, and put the things on rails.

Q: And do you give any kind of written feedback?

... ah we are using this Wilma system and ah but ah that feedback is aimed only for the adults but ah almost... hum... well... in their writing books or there I am commenting the writing or the subject they have chosen or sometimes in the other workbooks ah or instance in math ah I am adding some small comments here, can you do this in a different way? or this was really good or like that, short comments.

Q: And do you give any short comments on the tests also?

Yeah. Yeah. I think it is very important to, if somebody has succeeded he's being fighting for, for some math or English or science problem or... then, then he succeeds, I think it is good to put something positive there. But the feedback ah I mentioned that it's almost always positive.

How frequently? Daily.

7. In your opinion, what are the elements of good feedback?

It has to, to support and it has to of course if there is some reason if the main thing is negative, you don't have to be too soft, you have to be straight forward, you have to say if things are going wrong, he, she has to realize that I have to do something because the teacher has noticed that and ah I'm thinking that especially those notes I make in math books or some writing book or some other it mentions also for the adults, they had to see what I am commenting on their kids' work and that is why I am asking for, for their initials and so somehow the feedback I am giving them I hope it goes also to their homes because ah, if I aim to build something, I am not the only one I need their support in the background.

8. In your opinion, what are the elements of bad feedback?

Bad feedback it's there's lots of mixed emotions, negative emotions ah bad feedback tells more or less about the teacher not the problem there so but each of us, everybody ah do that sometimes but ah some teachers do that all the time. I think that in the old times ah it was a trend to ah raise new teachers like that, that ah negative feedback it's as possible means of raising kids than positive; but ah, but I think that ah if I mix my emotions there, I mean negative emotions, it's not so dangerous to put some your positive feelings there, it's good for them too and but ah sometimes it's necessary to show them that you know that hurts me too, we have to solve this.

9. Do you discuss with your students about the feedback you give them? (not asked)

10. What do you think they think about the feedback given? (not asked)

11. What are your practices in assessing and giving feedback to your students?

Using instruments like chalk, projector, and number one my mouth, using symbols, fingers, body language, yes all this but giving feedback mostly the instrument is me.

12. Do you face any difficulties in assessing or giving feedback to pupils? Which?

Mostly not. I think the better I know them the easier it comes but ah I think I'm experienced enough because I have noticed some good points that ah being teacher this long that ah I have ah gone over mix my emotions, I can be cool when they are shouting or doing nasty things I can, I can take it cool. But I lost your questions... (repeat the question) Of course, more or less the problems come when the kids grow up and ah but just now with this group, it's about... more or less it's about their individual skills or their individual problems and these are the biggest problems in my work, I have to... I try to solve them, some of these problems are not solvable and ah I have ah the biggest problems are here in my head I have to, to, be able to accept that I can't do more, I have done what I try and the rest I have to accept, I think most of the problems are here (pointing the head).

13. What do you think pupils expect from you related to assessment and feedback?

They want to feel safe I think it's, it's number one. They have to feel that, they want to feel that they are safe and they can trust on me and ah they know that if I promise something I ah I will keep it and ah if the main line is like that they can understand that things can change, they

(off topic conversation)

I think that that is the main thing, they, if... I don't have to be their father and mother, I have said that but ah I think ah in reality I'm a bit like it, I'm their day time daddy and mommy.

14. What do you think the student's role in assessment is?

... I have to, I have tried to discuss that but it's very hard for them to understand when we discuss about the responsibilities but ah their role in this is ah is that ah you know four graders they are very (did not understand the word), they are not small kids anymore so I have, if they have, if they can trust ah me, I have to, they have to give something back, they have to be ah as trustworthy as me and ah almost the other things I can forget but if they want to cooperate with me they have to give back their, their homework, they are doing their, we have accepted. It's cooperation.

15. What is your opinion about self-assessment? How frequently?

Very important, you know, all these excellent, poor thing (showing thumbs) ah and ah every day, they are they because you know this book thing (reading a book and presenting to the group), they were, many of them were self-estimating because, yes, I have been also, not just that book but that was the other one ah me, I was doing like that and that so it self-estimate in its best so they can reflect... it's not ... it's very difficult for some groups... but this group they are capable.

16. Are pupils able to create their own feedbacks?

Yes, if you but ah you have to help them go to that direction. In, yesterday we saw it when the students had their lesson here with this marketing things, so they were pushed to that direction so they had to negotiate, so what do you think? I think we have to give them 1,5, no I feel like that. It was real feedback they were reflecting and they were arguing and they didn't notice that they were growing all the time.

Q: Do you have any kind of written self-assessment?
... in what meaning?

Q: If the students have any kind of written form where they think about their learning and they self-evaluate...

Yes, sometimes, sometimes ah and it's more or less about äidinkieli (mother tongue) but ah... and ah... if you think the sorties they write, sometimes they tend, they have that tendency.

17. Do you consider peer-feedback important? Why/Why not?
Yes, yes, because it means that they are growing up together.

18. Do you make use of the feedback you give to students in order to shape your own teaching?

Yes in a very cocky way... I think I'm a master in manipulating them. This is my answer.

(Repeat and explain the question)

Yes, of course, I have you know I have to this is the other thing I am proud of myself ah I don't care anymore. I am able to admit that I have mistaken, I, I have to change my direction.

Q: Do you actually change when you notice that...

At least I try, if I, if I'm convinced I did something wrong and got... bad or in or something ... that caused trouble there or some emotions or some wrong behavior or something or the original reason comes from here (pointing at himself) yeah. (off topic conversation)

19. Do you encourage your students to have their own goals in learning? How?

Yes, we discuss lots... about their hobbies and they can, they have an opportunity here to show what their hobbies are and ah if they have a birthday we can for instance today we had some candies here and so, so, because ah, if you know if somebody is willing to show a book or show the pictures from the birthday or Canary island or whatever he is doing, we, we, teachers are trying to push them. They are performing, they are doing, they want to do that and ah they are giving space or round ah I have too... we were there also or I'm riding a horse and I want to show it...

Q. But related to learning goals, like, for example do you incentive them to have like, I want to learn this thing until December or I want to finish fourth grade knowing how to do this in English or...

We, of course we plan things, and ah but ah if I think what I even though we have this oppetussunnitelma or not I would to, my big goal in giving feedback, in, in being their

teacher is that I want to them, that they would be brave enough to perform to be the individuals around the others and ah just now it seems so, that most of them are brave enough, so I think this group is going toward the right goal. I hope that is true.

Q: Thank you. Any comments?

I would like to learn more.

Appendix D – Feedback to case scenarios

Teacher One

Case scenario 1.

As I have already talked to Markko many times, I have called him to talk about the solar system work. I asked him to explain his work to me, and as he got confused, since important information was missing, I showed him what parts were missing and asked him to redo the research. I explained that he did not manage to do the research because due to the time he takes to copy from the board, he did not copy all the topics that should be in the work. As Markko is friendly, his classmates helped him redo the work. As this research is an evaluative work, I have also written to their parents.

Written feedback:

Markko is a lovely student but he is a bit slow to perform tasks in class, that is why he is always behind. Recently he has not been able to perform a research on the solar system because he had not copied all the information from the board. It is important that Markko focus on tasks in class so that he can reach his goals. He has good ideas in writing texts although the texts are a bit confused because of the poor grammar. He reads well but has not been able to interpret the math problems. Due to lack of attention, he is making mistakes in a lot of calculus, even addition but he follows other math topics.

Case scenario 2

After correcting Liisa's math test I called her to talk while others were playing in the playground. I showed her test and said that she made many mistakes on measurements and that we have already seen that in class many times. Liisa did not show any surprise as her classmate Manuela would do, because she gets sad when gets a low grade or makes mistakes in calculus. I explained to Liisa that she should focus more during classes and that she should read the questions with attention before answering them. She said she does not care because all she wants is to be a dancer, like her aunt. As I know that her family does not pay attention to Liisa's notebooks and never sign the notes I send them. I consider Liisa to be a nice girl, taking into account her family. I have tried to make her understand that it is important to study. That we have to make efforts for everything in life, but she seems not to worry. She listens and respects teachers and classmates but she is not dedicated in studying. Here is the report I wrote to Liisa's parents (although I know they are not taking it)

Written feedback

This quarter she has shown not to care about her studies. She did not finish class activities and did not do her homework. She is helpful in class and respects teachers and classmates. She writes interesting texts but she needs to improve the punctuation and structure. In math she follows the calculations of adding and subtracting but has problems in the table and multiplication and division calculations. Her reading is good but she does not interpret the math problems, firstly related to measurements. It is imperative that she studies at home and that she knows the math table to overcome her difficulties. She needs to do her homework and bring the notes signed by the parents.

Case scenario 3

As I have many students with difficulties in learning and some other behavioral problems, I must confess that sometimes I leave the good students a bit aside. This week as Joosef had already finished his task I called him for a talk while the classmates were finishing their texts about the tour we had done in the touristic sites of Porto Alegre last week. I asked him if he was facing any difficulties and I heard him tell some of the stories about his family. I highlighted to him that he is a good classmate and complimented him for his participation in class and his good reading.

I thank him because when somebody needs help he is patient enough to explain to them. See the report I wrote to Joosef's family that will certainly read it all with dedication and talk to him at home.

Written feedback

He is an active student and always contributes in class. His texts have interesting subjects and he develops them in good structure, observing the punctuation. He reads fluently and with good intonation, respecting the punctuation signs, because of it he is able to interpret the texts as well as math problems. He is able to perform calculations in all basic operations. Keep on making efforts the way you are so that you enlarge your knowledge.

Teacher Two

Case scenario 1

I would talk to him in private. I would ask his opinions about the subject and if he finds it too difficult, since that can be reason why he is so slow and not interested at all. I would check his exercise book to see how he has managed to do his homework and try to find out if he has understood the topics that have been handled so far. If everything seems to be in order there, I'd then try to encourage him to take more part in classroom activities. We could e.g. agree that he must participate at least once every lesson and increase it from there on. About the slow handwriting and short incoherent sentences I would contact his parents and check if they are aware of it and if something has been/should be done about it.

Case scenario 2

I would talk to Liisa in private and ask her own opinion why the test didn't go so well as usually. Perhaps she needs some extra help with the topics that were in the test and I'd try to arrange that help to her either by a) contacting her parents and checking if they can provide it or b) extra tutoring by the teacher. I would also give her credit from her active and positive behaviour in the classroom and make sure that her table and chair are located in the classroom so that she's given as peaceful a place as possible.

Case scenario 3

I would talk with Joosef (and his parents) about what sort of expectations they have about school and lessons. Obviously Joosef would benefit from more challenging tasks, so I'd try to organize them for him. As an only child, I'd expect classroom situations and cooperating with his peers are important and useful to him, so the tasks should be of the kind that he can do in the classroom while others are there. Being a popular boy he could also sometimes assist the teacher and help other children with their problems.

Teacher Three

Case scenario 1

"Hello. What do think about your work? Are you happy with it? What was the part in the task you preferred?" I would try to find something good from what he has done, no matter what, and give him a positive comment on that. Doing so I hope he finds strength to do better on the next research.

Case scenario 2

Probably I would talk with her and ask if she has other things in her mind or home situation distracting her concentration. If the test result is exceptionally poor I might suggest another try on the test. Also I would consider giving her some remedial teaching on the subject.

Case scenario 3

Of course, I would thank him for the good grades. If he's very fast I would suggest extra tasks, especially if the reason for his restlessness during lessons seems to be lack of sensible work.

Teacher Four

Case scenario 1

*How do you feel about this solar system task I gave you and the classmates? Boring? Why? You find it difficult? You feel that you don't get it done? Too many topics? Would it be easier if you'd only take one or two? What if you'd use Wikipedia instead of our schoolbook? You can choose pictures and tell what's inside them.

Case scenario 2

*It seems that it's difficult for you to concentrate. Would you like that we'd move your desk here in front of the class? Or would it be more comfortable to sit back there in behind the class, so that nobody disturbs you? Maybe it would be a good idea to have a remedial instruction in the morning, so we can go through the difficult points you seem to have? We can discuss in peace and quiet and also exercise a bit by using ruler, scales and other measurement instruments. Although I know your parents are busy with your sisters and brothers I'll inform them what we are going to do in the morning and also ask for their support for you and me with your math. I'm sure it'll be easier to go on with all of us supporting you.

Case scenario 3

I would like to give you a task. I want you to prepare some questions for your classmates for the next math lesson. One or two of them would be straight questions but as I know how clever you are, at least one of the tasks would be performed on the blackboard or by using computer and projector or multi-media camera, so you can use graphics or a drawing, too. If you like, you can work with Liisa.

Appendix E – Coding frame

Coding Frame			
Category	Subcategory 1	Subcategory 2	Definition
Assessment			It was coded in this category everything that was related to assessment but did not fit in any of the subcategories.
	Role of the teacher		It was coded in this category everything that was related to the role of the teacher but did not fit in subcategories 2.
		Pupils	It was coded in this category everything that stated that teachers' role in assessment has to do with pupils' learning.
		Teacher	It was coded in this category everything that stated that teachers' role in assessment has to do with assessing teachers' work.
	Role of pupils		It was coded in this category everything that was related to the role of the pupils in assessment but did not fit in subcategories 2.
		Receiving	It was coded in this category everything that stated that pupils' role in assessment was only receiving.
		Assessing	It was coded in this category everything that stated that pupils' role in assessment was assessing teachers' work.
	Assessment tools		It was coded in this category everything that was related to the tools used for assessing but did not fit in subcategories 2.
		Exams	It was coded in this category everything that stated that teachers assessment tool was only tests or exams.
		Observation	It was coded in this category everything that stated other assessment tool than tests or exams.
Self-assessment			It was coded in this category everything that was related to self-assessment but did not fit in subcategories 2.
		Make use	It was coded in this category everything that stated that teachers make use of self-assessment
		Do not make use	It was coded in this category everything that stated that teachers do not make use of self-assessment
Others			It was coded in this category everything that was asked in the questions related to assessment but did not fit in any of the subcategories.

Coding Frame

Category	Subcategory 1	Subcategory 2	Definition
Feedback			It was coded in this category everything that was related to feedback but did not fit in any of the subcategories.
	Classroom feedback		It was coded in this category everything that was related to the feedback given in classroom but did not fit in subcategories 2.
		General	It was coded in this category everything that had to do with feedback given to the whole group in the classroom.
		Individual	It was coded in this category everything that had to do with feedback given individually in the classroom or outside the classroom
	Written feedback		It was coded in this category everything that was related to the feedback given in the written form but did not fit in subcategories 2.
		To pupils	It was coded in this category everything that had to do with written feedback given to pupils and aiming at the pupils
		To parents	It was coded in this category everything that had to do with written feedback given to parents, directly or otherwise.
	Peer-feedback		It was coded in this category everything that was related to peer-feedback but did not fit in subcategories 2.
		Make use	It was coded in this category everything that stated that teachers make use of peer-feedback
		Do not make use	It was coded in this category everything that stated that teachers do not make use of peer- feedback.
Others		It was coded in this category everything that was asked in the questions related to feedback but did not fit in any of the subcategories.	

