Chapter 15
Cultural Antecedents in Multisectoral Collaboration Promoting the Well-Being of School-Aged Children

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Abstract This study focuses on the antecedents of collaborative culture in multisectoral collaboration promoting school-aged children's well-being in Finnish municipalities. The purpose of this study is to understand the role of cultural conditions in collaboration by examining the 'voices' of principals and heads of local educational departments in local collaborative structures and practices. This work is an interpretive qualitative study, and the empirical data consist of 20 thematic interviews collected from principals and heads of local educational departments. The data were analysed using a qualitative content analysis method. The findings show that legislative, strategic, structural and physical frameworks create visible frames and artefacts that enhance collaborative culture. At the level of espoused beliefs and values, the systematic methods of collaboration and the development of collaborative practices support collaboration, whereas the discontinuity of collaborative practices limits it. At the level of basic assumptions, multisectoral collaboration can be strengthened through shared values, recognising the importance of principals' and heads of local educational departments' role as constructors of collaborative culture, understanding of well-being promotion as a common task, knowledge about other sectors, shared understanding of needs associated with well-being promotion and familiarity with other sectors. Multisectoral collaboration can also be supported through workable group dynamics, respect, trust in collaborators and personal positive attitudes, willingness to collaborate and collaborative skills. Old traditions usually hinder collaboration.

Keywords Collaborative culture · Content analysis · Governance · Multisectoral collaboration · School-aged children's well-being · School leadership

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Introduction

The main task of schools is to support pupils' growth into humanity, equality and ethically responsible membership in society. It is the school's duty to provide pupils with different kinds of knowledge and skills (Basic Education Act 628/1998). Education promotes the idea of continuous learning, which refers to maintaining skills throughout a person's life (Finnish Government, 2021). The principals and heads of local educational departments hold a key position to promote these goals (e.g. Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Moreover, cross-sectoral collaboration with professionals from other sectors is important when supporting pupils' learning and well-being.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, collaboration gained popularity in the governance of welfare services and structures (Christensen, 2012). That is, multiple organisations and stakeholders across diverse sectors in society come together and collaborate to achieve shared outcomes and common goals. This kind of horizontal collaboration usually concerns so-called wicked problems, and its purpose is to address complex societal problems (Crosby et al., 2017). The idea is that collaborative forms produce synergistic outcomes that amount to more than what can be achieved by an individual institution, sector or department, or a single collaborator working on its own (Jones & Barry, 2011). For example, to increase the capacity to address the diverse needs of school-aged children, the entire community's involvement and multisectoral collaboration are required. This view is associated with the philosophy of John Dewey, who stressed that communication and collaboration are desirable traits in society. Dewey considered social capital a critical component of social welfare policy and democracy and believed in a comprehensive approach to understanding social problems. He emphasised collaboration's crucial role in promoting public and civic interdependency in socially and economically healthy communities. Thus, he saw joint activity as a necessary condition for the creation of the community (Schultz, 1969; Tracy & Tracy, 2000).

Furthermore, collaboration is promoted by the ideology of *new public governance*, which emphasises networks and is considered a reaction to the siloisation and fragmentation of the public sector resulting from traditional administrative structures. The slogan 'whole-of-government' emphasises the purpose of working across administrative boundaries and levels to achieve shared goals and to build an integrated government to respond to complex issues (Christensen, 2012). Researchers have emphasised the positive effects of collaboration (e.g. Butterfoss, 2007), and scientists have tried to understand the principles that lead to successful collaboration and introduce conceptual frameworks to reveal insights into the prerequisites and conditions for optimal collaborative arrangements (e.g. Corbin et al., 2018).

Several aims have been proposed to develop deeper collaboration between schools, other municipal sectors and the local community. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009), collaboration and a collaborative work culture at the municipal level are a necessity for principals

in today's changing and complex landscape. Ainscow (2016) stress collaboration within schools, between schools and beyond schools, while Moos et al. (2011) considers 'leading the environment' as an essential category in school leadership. As schools are deeply dependent on their administrative, cultural and political environments, principals should manage and lead relationships beyond the physical boundaries of their schools (Moos et al., 2011).

The importance of multisectoral collaboration is emphasised in Finnish educational policy and legislation. The education policy report (Finnish Government, 2021) stresses cross-administrative collaboration to promote children's well-being and collaboration between professions from different sectors (educational, social and health, youth, cultural, etc.). The Finnish Pupil and Student Welfare Act (1287/2013) requires planning, developing, implementing and evaluating student well-being in multisectoral student welfare groups, while the Finnish Youth Act (1285/2016) requires multisectoral collaboration when implementing youth policies and activities in local networks. The Finnish Healthcare Act (1326/2010) states that the promotion of health and well-being should emphasise collaboration aimed at building community structures with various potential collaborators.

Culture has a significant effect on organisational performance (e.g. Langer & LeRoux, 2017), and cultural conditions shape the success of multisectoral collaboration (e.g. Valaitis et al., 2018; Collins, 2013). However, cultural conditions in collaborative contexts are often underestimated and less discussed. Studies (e.g. Collins, 2013; Chow, 2012) on collaborative culture have shown that knowledge sharing, trust-based relationships, an understanding of mutual benefits and the recognition of common accomplishments are necessary cultural elements for successful collaboration. These conditions may be difficult to achieve due to institutional, socioeconomic, cultural and psychological differences among collaborators representing different professions, sectors or organisations (Aveling & Jovchelovitch, 2014).

Although the collaborative perspective on health and well-being promotion has gained attention among researchers (e.g. Corbin et al., 2018; Crosby et al., 2017), the cultural and educational perspectives on multisectoral collaboration in studying school-aged children's well-being promotion have mostly remained unexplored. Thus, this study examines the educational perspective on the role and significance of culture in local municipal multisectoral collaboration that promotes school-aged children's well-being. We aim to create awareness of the importance and necessity of understanding how cultural conditions affect the success and outcomes of collaboration. The purpose of this study is to identify cultural antecedents in this context.

Heads of the local educational departments carry considerable responsibility in outlining the collaborative actions from a strategic perspective and in developing municipal-level collaborative actions to promote school-aged children's well-being. Conversely, principals are identified as gatekeepers and the 'driving force' of the initiation and intervention of well-being promotion in schools (e.g. Adamowitsch et al., 2017) and the key actors in developing and implementing collaborative actions at the school and community levels (e.g. Ainscow 2016). Thus, it is essential

to study how both actors view multisectoral municipal collaboration in promoting school-aged children's well-being and how they perceive cultural conditions in these collaborative structures and practices. A deeper understanding of the aspects of culture in these contexts may lead to an understanding of the elements necessary for successful collaboration and how cultural aspects may affect the development and evolution of collaboration. When culture is perceived, it helps collaborators to assess, develop and transform it in a certain manner (e.g. Armenakis et al., 2011).

Our study is an interpretive qualitative study, and we are interested in how heads of local educational departments and principals make sense of their subjective reality and attach meaning to it. We intend to address the following research question:

What are the antecedents of a collaborative culture in multisectoral collaboration that promotes the wellbeing of school-aged children?

We approach culture using Schein's (1985) framework for cultural levels. Following Thomson et al.'s (2009) definition, we define collaboration as a recognised relationship and a process between certain sectors, groups and people that has been developed to take action towards achieving the well-being outcomes for citizens. In addition, we view collaborative culture as a phenomenon operating in the arena and boundaries between participants from different sectors. In this context, we use Beyerlein et al.'s (2005) definition of collaborative culture as shared values, beliefs and behaviours that facilitate working together towards a common goal. Finally, we understand school-aged children's well-being as a comprehensive construct that incorporates physical, psychological and social dimensions and environmental conditions, such as services and community actions (e.g. Pollard & Lee, 2003).

Multisectoral Collaboration and Collaborative Culture

Multisectoral Collaboration in the Educational Local Governance Context

Traditionally, school health and well-being comprise three cornerstones: health education, health services and a healthy school environment (Rasberry et al., 2015). These cornerstones are based on a narrow concept of health, and health education in schools, for example, has focused on providing knowledge about diseases and healthy behaviours (Turunen et al., 2017). Therefore, there is a need to develop a more holistic view of and interventions in school-aged children's well-being, and schools are viewed as valuable and appropriate venues for children's well-being promotion. Schools are part of their surrounding community and are one of the main contributors to reducing inequalities among children from different social and socio-economic backgrounds (Finnish Government, 2021; Turunen et al., 2017).

In recent decades, several international programmes have been launched and implemented to enhance the roles and collaboration of schools and the local community in promoting school-aged children's well-being. Instead of simply aiming to change and affect children's health behaviour, the emphasis has been on changing the entire school system to strengthen the children's physical and social environments, develop policy structures and interpersonal and multisectoral relationships and the role of the local community in contributing to children's well-being (Dadaczynski et al., 2020). For example, the Coordinated School Health Programme and Health Promoting School Programmes, developed in the 1980s and 1990s, have specifically incorporated school actions and the local community's contributions into well-being promotion efforts (Dadaczynski et al., 2020; Rasberry et al., 2015). These programmes stress the importance of engaging with families, stakeholders, other relevant policy areas and the wider community. They also show a holistic view of health and well-being and children's involvement in defining and promoting their well-being. In the twenty-first century, programmes have acquired new insights (e.g. Rooney et al., 2015; Rasberry et al., 2015), and the fundamental ideas of collaboration have even strengthened. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2016) has demanded coherence between actions at the national, regional and municipal levels, stronger mechanisms to enhance the capacity for trust and collaboration building and wider intersectoral action (i.e. education, health, social and other sectors) promoting children's well-being.

Collaboration produces synergistic outcomes that amount to more than can be achieved by individual institutions, sectors, departments or individuals working on their own (e.g. WHO, 2016; Rantala et al., 2014; Jones & Barry, 2011). Collaboration may achieve synergy through the combination of resources and competences, and views about collaborations are usually positive (Jones & Barry, 2011). According to Parker (2016), multisectoral collaboration has an important place in public services and is highly valued by administrators, but only if it is carried out correctly and purposefully.

In collaboration, participants interact through formal and informal negotiations, create rules and structures that govern their relationships and share mutual goals, norms and assumptions (Thomson et al., 2009). Structures and rules create frames for collaborations that promote children's well-being, but it is important to acknowledge collaboration as a social action with the conditions of interaction, shared leadership, common responsibilities and feelings of togetherness (Eriksson et al., 2020; Corbin et al., 2018). According to Jones and Barry (2011), the key factors influencing synergy and positive results in the promotion of health and well-being collaboration are trust, leadership and the exchange of diverse views and perspectives. Some authors have addressed the need for clear responsibilities among participants, shared resources, common interests and objectives for collaboration, and continuous interaction and commitment (e.g. Corbin et al., 2018; Valaitis et al., 2018). To create a common shared understanding, the purpose of the collaboration should be discussed, and professionals from various municipal sectors and schools should understand the factors that can impede and promote collaboration and the possible risks involved in collaboration (Widmark et al., 2011). Participants should

not only share information about matters that are important to each sector but also about their own orientations and aspirations, thus allowing the development of shared knowledge and shared goals (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2006).

Nevertheless, collaborations are not considered self-evident, and they often involve serious challenges or fade before the goals are met (Corbin & Mittelmark, 2008). For example, previous research has shown structural and cultural challenges to collaboration between professionals from different sectors. The structural obstacles to collaboration are related to regulatory and financial issues and administrative boundaries, or so-called siloes (de Waal et al., 2019). De Montigny et al. (2019) highlight the challenges in collaboration originating from traditions and found that deeply rooted and inflexible administrative structures are difficult to break.

The other common barriers to collaboration are lack of clarity (e.g. lack of understanding of other professionals' roles), lack of mutual confidence, unclear allocation of responsibilities and conflicting ideologies (Widmark et al., 2011). Collaboration participants may experience collaborative action as draining their resources, become frustrated with time-consuming discussions and consensus-building processes without concrete actions, not be convinced of the value of the collaboration, experience loss of control or feel that they do not have enough influence over the decided-upon solutions. Additionally, problems in collaboration may stem from participants' inability to understand one another's opinions, views and cultural and professional backgrounds. That is, participants may create a cultural 'silo mentality' according to which groups, sectors or departments do not want to share their skills, knowledge or information (de Waal et al., 2019).

Dimensions of Collaborative Culture

The definition of culture is not straightforward and can be explained in a myriad of ways. Schein and Schein (2017) describe culture in evolutionary terms as what 'the group has learned in its efforts to survive, grow, deal with its external environment, and organise itself' (pp. 14–15). An organisation's culture can be seen as the organisation's personality, as comprising artefacts, creations, shared values and basic assumptions, as creating a unique organisational membership and as guiding people's behaviour by showing the members what behaviours are important and generally appropriate (Schein & Schein, 2017). These artefacts, underlying values and assumptions influence the behaviour of organisational members, as people rely on these values to guide their decisions and actions (Schein, 1985). Generally, organisational culture is seen as deeply embedded, stable and enduring. Akanji et al. (2020) state that culture is something that can be transferred socially and generationally and something that can advance, mature, improve or preserve itself. It is important to remember that organisational culture is not straightforward but multidimensional, and it cannot be defined in just a few words (Schein & Schein, 2017; O'Reilly et al., 2014).

According to Schein (1985; see also Schein & Schein, 2017), the structure of culture is formed on three different levels of cultural analysis. The first level comprises artefacts that are the visible products of the group: architecture, physical environment, language, technology, myths and stories about the organisation and its published list of values. These artefacts can also be seen as the group's climate and behaviour routines. One of the most important points about the artefact level is that the culture is easy to see but difficult to interpret. The second level comprises espoused beliefs and values. All group learning is derived from someone's original beliefs and values. The espoused beliefs and values remain in the group's consciousness because they are vital in guiding the training process of, for example, new employees. These values and beliefs become embodied in an ideology and culture that work as a guide when an organisation faces uncertainty or something new. The third and final levels comprise the taken-for-granted underlying basic assumptions. When the same solution for a problem is used again and again, people start taking the solution for granted, and there is little to no variation within a group or unit. 'Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations' (Schein & Schein, 2017, p. 22). When people grasp the idea of culture, what it is and how it is embedded in a group's subconscious, it is possible to understand its effects on human behaviour (Schein & Schein, 2017).

Culture creates an essential context for social interaction, knowledge creation, dissemination and utilisation, and it shapes actual collaboration practices (Chow, 2012). All social groups that work together form a culture due to the learning process that the group undergoes. These cultures can vary in strength depending on the time group members have spent together, how sustainable the group is and what kind of learning has actually taken place (Schein & Schein, 2017). Typically, a successful collaborative culture is characterised by a shared long-term vision, teamwork, active communication, mutual respect and empowerment (López et al., 2004). In an advanced collaborative culture, participants are encouraged to offer different views, discuss problems openly and work together by sharing information and learning (Yang et al., 2018). According to Collins (2013), the factors that are linked to influencing the building of a collaborative culture are leadership, feelings of mutual respect and trust among collaborators and an open transfer of knowledge.

Culture can influence either by integrating people, sectors and organisations or by dividing people and threatening collaboration. Collins (2013) reveals several barriers to collaboration (e.g. role conflicts, power struggles or unsupportive management) that may prevent the formation of a collaborative culture. When culture is taken into consideration and the antecedents of the collaborative culture are discussed and acknowledged among the collaborative stakeholders, it is possible to avoid cultural pitfalls and problems. This includes, for example, making concrete plans about how to manage and share information and knowledge (e.g. Al Saifi, 2015) and a discussion on how to support stakeholders' engagement. Therefore, a positive collaborative culture is not an autonomous phenomenon, and cultural dimensions should be taken into consideration when forming and developing intersectoral collaborative structures and practices.

Data and Method

This empirical study was produced as part of the School Leadership in the Arctic 2018–2022 (ArkTORI) regional project, which was implemented in 21 municipalities in Lapland, Finland. The data of this study were gathered from 20 informants who served as principals ($N = 12$), heads of the local education department ($N = 6$), or both principals and heads of the local education department ($N = 2$). The informants represented 11 municipalities selected using purposive sampling. The informants represented small or rural municipalities (less than 10,000 inhabitants) and medium-sized municipalities (10,001–65,000 inhabitants). The data were collected from autumn 2019 to spring 2020.

Our study was guided by the social constructivist methodology paradigm, according to which an understanding of collaborative culture was developed through interactive research data and the interpretation of their meanings (Kvale, 1996, p. 46). This approach guides the exploration of organisational cultures using interviews (Gaus et al., 2017). The data were gathered through thematic individual interviews, with some of them having the characteristics of in-depth interviews. Interviewing was previously used to reveal interviewees' interpretations and experiences of collaborative cultures (Driskill & Brenton, 2005; Gaus et al., 2017). Previous studies have targeted the construction of the interview framework (e.g. Tuurnas et al., 2019; Mitchell & Pattison, 2012; Schein & Schein, 2017).

The main interview themes were (1) schools' roles and practices in the promotion of school-aged children's well-being and (2) multisectoral collaboration. The first interview theme focused on the schools' roles in municipal well-being promotion and strategy work, while the second theme focused on collaborative practices, interactions, conflicts, dominations, commitment to collaboration and what is needed for the development of multisectoral collaboration. The interviews ended with the question of what elements support or create collaborative culture and how the interviewees, which were the principals or heads of local educational departments, could support collaborative culture. The interviews lasted 45–120 min, and they were recorded, transcribed and anonymised. The transcribed data covered 197 pages (pt. 8 Verdana font). The transcribed data were in Finnish. The samples presented in this chapter have been translated into English.

Although interviews are a method for discussing interviewees' experiences, the interview situation and interviewees' awareness of the practices and values of their organisation may determine how deeply interviewees can discuss collaborative culture. In this study, the interviewer was an outsider to the organisations, and this required the researchers to work harder to obtain the interviewees' trust and to attain the same cultural interpretation as the interviewees (Driskill & Brenton, 2005). There was also a risk that the interviewees would narrate in a socially desirable way. During the qualitative research process, it is important to recognise the significance of the researcher's role in constructing knowledge. In this study, internal validity was increased using multiple theories, interviews and transcripts as research data, thematic and in-depth interviews as data gathering methods, and qualitative content

analysis as the analysis method (Gaus et al., 2017; Driskill & Brenton, 2005). The extent of the research data strengthens reliability and ensures a diverse perception of a collaborative culture.

The data were analysed using a qualitative content analysis method that combined data-driven and concept-driven methods to ensure that all research data were noted (Schreier, 2014). First, the data were categorised in a data-driven manner to reveal the strengthening and limiting factors of multisectoral collaboration. Second, the data were restructured using Schein and Schein's (2017) framework of cultural levels: (1) artefacts, (2) espoused beliefs and values and (3) taken-for-granted underlying basic assumptions. Armenakis et al. (2011) also used this framework in their content analysis study. For example, the statements that indicated legislative or strategic frameworks that strengthen or limit collaborative culture were categorised under the first category (artefacts), the statements that indicated practices of multisectoral collaboration were coded under the second level (espoused beliefs and values), and the statements that discussed traditions that guide collaboration were coded under the third category (taken-for-granted underlying assumptions) (Schein & Schein, 2017). NVivo 12 was used to code the data. Previous studies were used to support interpretation during the abstracting phase. The following chapter describes the results of the study, including the data samples.

Cultural Elements of Multisectoral Collaboration Promoting School-Aged Children's Well-Being

Artefacts in a Collaborative Culture

Artefacts are a cultural level comprising the visible structures and processes of collaboration (Schein, 1985; Schein & Schein, 2017). Our analysis shows that the key artefacts shaping collaborative culture are the legislative, strategic, structural and physical frameworks. The first artefact is the legislative framework, which regulates multisectoral collaboration. Several interviewees noted that the purpose of legislation is to obligate sectors to take collaborative action and to ensure that they engage in at least a minimum amount of collaboration. The legislative framework can be described as a guiding frame, an obligation or a trigger for collaboration. The following quote shows how legislation is obligated to develop multisectoral collaboration.

> The Pupil and Student Welfare Act obligates us to develop collaborative student welfare services (Interview 3, head of local educational department)

The second artefact of collaborative culture is the strategic framework, which encourages collaboration by defining the common vision, goals, values and collaboration patterns. Strategies (e.g. municipal health and well-being promotion strategy documents, welfare reports and strategic plans for the children's well-being) can reveal the perspectives to be considered when determining collaboration

practices. Strategies determine, standardise and promote engagement in multisectoral collaboration. Visible processes, such as planning and structuring strategies for well-being promotion, can also lead to collaboration among collaborators. However, strategy structuring processes are often kept in the hands of a closed group (e.g. a municipal management team), and different groups can do overlapping work. Alternatively, participants could find that this strategy does not work or meet the school's needs. Some interviewees argued that the existence of a strategic framework still fails to ensure workable collaboration. For example, strategies may focus on wide-scale targets and may not promote concrete collaborative practices.

> It is a very small working group that has worked on the municipal welfare report, so they have probably included the things that they believe to be important. … I think that the report doesn't allow our school to effectively plan our work (Interview 6, head of local educational department and principal)
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> The strategy process of municipal welfare reporting has strengthened our understanding of what kind of activity we have in our municipality. So we shouldn't just think that we do everything alone here in our school. Instead, we should collaborate boldly with other sectors (Interview 7, principal)

The third artefact is the structural framework, which supports the representatives of the sectors working together. An interviewee pointed out the idea of 'team organisation' or 'cooperative organisation', which supports the emergence of a collaborative culture. The data showed that a flexible, not-too-bureaucratic organisational structure supports collaboration. Some interviewees argued that bureaucratic structures could cause 'silos' and that this kind of stiff structure should be dismantled if the municipality is trying to encourage collaboration. Departments are sometimes integrated due to organisational reforms. However, some interviewees considered that, when certain sectors are integrated, there is a risk that the rest of the sectors would feel that they are not included in collaboration. The interviewees also emphasised that a lack of resources could limit collaboration. For example, collaborators may not have enough time to collaborate or may experience difficulties in coordinating their schedules. Several interviewees asserted that they did not have enough of the necessary professionals or services or that the sectors' own budgets could limit collaboration, causing conflicts between sectors over who should be responsible for costs. These findings are consistent with those of de Waal et al. (2019), who also find that financial issues can cause silos between sectors.

> We have debated over who pays for the client's services. My opinion is that as long as departments draw up their own budgets and their own goals, we will continue to have these debates (Interview 1, head of local educational department)
>
> Several municipalities have integrated education services and social and health services, which they say constitute wellbeing services. I am a little critical of that because I think that every sector promotes wellbeing (Interview 12, head of local educational department)

The fourth artefact is the physical framework, which supports collaboration by joining collaborators together in the same location, such as by collaborating in a school building, or limits collaboration when it allows collaborators to work apart from each other. Several interviewees stated that collaborations work better when collaborators work in the same building and near the everyday goings-on of schools.

Valaitis et al. (2018) argue for the significance of physical proximity in supporting or limiting collaboration. Physical proximity can enable encounters by creating familiarisation and a sense of community. Collaborators can also act as links to other sectors when they are located in the same physical environment. The data showed that multisectoral collaboration is usually assumed to be in-school collaboration. The interviewees discussed collaborators who come to school or work at school. Moreover, several interviewees argued that the school is a natural physical environment in which to collaborate, as school is part of children's everyday lives. However, it is not possible to locate every collaborator in the same physical location. The data indicated that when municipalities integrated departments from the same building, the collaborators that could not move to the same building feared that they could diverge from collaboration.

Espoused Beliefs and Values in Collaborative Culture

The second cultural level is espoused beliefs and values, which can be observed in the practices and efforts towards collaboration (Schein, 1985; Schein & Schein, 2017). The data included information about both formal and informal collaborative practices. Formal collaborative practices, such as agreed-upon meetings or events organised with collaborators, can drive multisectoral collaboration. For example, formal collaboration meetings are organised through strategic planning, constructing a common understanding about children's well-being or organising activities. Formal work groups, such as student welfare groups in schools and municipalities, can be considered formal collaborative practices. Informal meetings and gatherings are also seen as possible ways to develop collaborative arrangements. Informal meetings are the result of casual encounters, and these encounters in everyday work life are considered important for sharing information.

> We have had all sorts of meetings in which we have sat down and thought, for example, about the possibilities of improving health through nutrition. We have planned at the grassroots level what we could do and how we could do those things (Interview 7, principal)

Systematic methods (e.g. standardised collaborative models and planned, continuous and regular collaborative practices) strengthen multisectoral collaboration. In these situations, collaborators work together to determine collaboration practices, goals and responsibilities. However, our results showed that formal and informal multisectoral collaborations are usually tied to short-term contracts or projects, although several interviewees pointed out the importance of regular long-term collaboration. In some cases, personnel turnover negatively influenced the possibility of collaborating in a long-term manner. Widmark et al. (2011) find that staff turnover breaks the continuity of collaboration. Moreover, incomplete collaboration practices (e.g. a lack of common meetings or unofficial encounters) limit opportunities to collaborate. The interviewees valued regular collaboration and a suitable number of participants in collaborative groups. When the number of collaborators is

too high, a consensus may be difficult to reach, and the participants may interpret that the group cannot achieve its goals and that the collaboration may dissolve.

> I think that we need an annual clock or some other model in which we construct a schedule, and we should plan who we would collaborate with and what we would collaborate on in this period (Interview 1, head of local educational department)
>
> The more often we meet each other, the more our common understanding increases, and it is then possible to begin developing a common language (Interview 15, principal)

Several interviewees considered the need to find new collaborators (e.g. local companies) to work with them to promote the well-being of school-aged children. Involving new professionals, such as well-being coaches or psychiatric nurses, could fill in the grey areas of well-being promotion. The data addressed the need to think innovatively to develop new practices for collaboration. The principals and heads of local educational departments should recognise their own role in supporting collaboration by networking, bringing collaborators together and leading by example. Tuurnas et al. (2019) point out the significant role of managers in fostering a collaborative development culture. Principals and heads of local educational departments play an important role in promoting an innovative atmosphere and supporting the implementation of ideas. The development of collaboration may include risks (e.g. unworkable new collaborative practices), but there is always the possibility of returning to previously implemented practices.

Taken-for-Granted Underlying Basic Assumptions in Collaborative Culture

The deepest cultural level, taken-for-granted underlying basic assumptions, comprises unconscious beliefs and values (Schein, 1985; Schein & Schein, 2017). The data showed that 'the best interests of the child' is a reason to collaborate. A sense of community was also described as an important value to uphold in collaboration. Promoting this value in the context of ensuring children's well-being means that the municipal sectors and the broader community are committed to promoting school-aged children's well-being. One interviewee asserted that collaborators should think of well-being as a value more often.

> A sense of community is, of course, an important matter, as is caring for fellow human beings and caring generally for everyone's wellbeing (Interview 4, head of local educational department and principal)

The deepest cultural level also involves administrative municipal traditions, such as communication and mutual appreciation, which have a huge influence on the success of multisectoral collaboration. Sometimes, old traditions are seen as valuable, such as a sense of community. However, most of the interviewees felt that deeply rooted traditions cause barriers to collaboration. Moreover, the data showed a lack of a collaborative culture in their municipality due to these traditions. For example, one interviewee pointed out that, traditionally, a school could be seen as a

rigid collaborator with a specific status and level of authority, which could lead to potential collaborators approaching them tentatively, 'hat in hand'. Another interviewee explained that they had challenges in developing team–organisation models because it was a tradition in their municipality to have certain professionals work only at a specific physical location and that this order was difficult to break. The data showed that openness and the ability to learn new ways of acting are essential elements to support multisectoral collaboration and abolish old traditions.

> There is a specific status there, and some of the collaborators approach us hat in hand (Interview 9, principal)

An essential antecedent at the deepest level of collaborative culture is interaction, which comprises workable group dynamics and an atmosphere of respect and trust. Several interviewees mentioned 'human chemistry' and noted that it is sometimes easier to find common ground with one person than with others. However, choosing collaborators based on human chemistry was identified as a problematic way of working because the existing assumption is that collaborators should have the ability to work with everyone. The interviewees also pointed out the significance of respect and trust in collaboration. The data showed that some interviewees were sometimes faced with disparagement due to their own or their subordinates' professional backgrounds. Widmark et al. (2011) examine the significance of trust in collaboration and the problem of not taking other professionals' assessments seriously.

To increase the commitment to collaboration, principals and heads of local educational departments should recognise their own important roles as constructors of collaborative culture. The interviewees described their role as an important part of the promotion of school-aged children's well-being. However, several interviewees stated that some sectors play a more important role in this task than others (e.g. some interviewees pointed out the strong role of health, social services and education). Some interviewees also mentioned that technical service professionals could feel that they did not have a significant role in well-being promotion, thus making it difficult to get them to participate in multisectoral collaboration.

Understanding well-being promotion as a common task supports multisectoral collaboration. The data showed the importance of realising the synergistic advantages of collaboration because they could strengthen the motivation to collaborate. Several interviewees mentioned that common goals could also support multisectoral collaboration, whereas group meetings without focus could lead to an atrophy of collaboration. These findings are similar to those of Valaitis et al. (2018), who find that common goals strengthen the readiness for collaboration.

The data addressed the problems of turf protection (e.g. some collaborators fearing that other sectors would interfere with their duties). Valaitis et al. (2018) examine the phenomenon of turf protection in situations in which sectors want to maintain their own responsibilities or fear that they could lose their resources. The data showed another problem: nobody seems to take responsibility for issues, or attempts are made to offload responsibilities onto other sectors. Widmark et al. (2011) find that the allocation of responsibilities is a problem in multisectoral collaboration.

> Many of the collaborators think that it is the school's duty to do things instead of seeing that it is our common duty to care for children's wellbeing. They assign the responsibility to the school because the child is a pupil there (Interview 18, principal)

Knowledge about other sectors, a shared understanding of the needs associated with well-being promotion and familiarity with other sectors can support multisectoral collaboration. Another problem with collaboration that some interviewees noted was that they did not always know who or when they needed to contact them. The principals in particular stated that they did not have enough knowledge about other sectors' regulations or possibilities for action. Valaitis et al. (2018) find that the condition of valuing the other sectors is fulfilled when different sectors have an understanding of the other sectors' responsibilities. Several interviewees emphasised the importance of attaining a shared understanding of needs in children's well-being promotion. For example, one interviewee explained that sectors could have different opinions or even conflicts of interest regarding the 'best' solutions and investments that support well-being. The problems with collaboration seem to stem from a lack of a mutually shared understanding of the purpose and content of children's well-being promotion. These findings are in accordance with those of Leinonen and Syväjärvi (2022), who emphasise the importance of understanding well-being promotion as a common task shared by all sectors.

> A route for snowmobiles versus a kindergarten with good indoor air: This is a clear conflict of interest regarding which should we invest in next year and which promotes more health and wellbeing (Interview 1, head of local educational department)

The interviewees mentioned the importance of familiarity in facilitating contact with collaborators from other sectors. Especially in small towns, smooth collaboration has been connected with familiar collaborators who have worked in the municipality for a long time. The data showed that familiarisation should be promoted during the recruitment process so that new workers could become part of networks. The interviewees proposed the need for meetings in which potential collaborators from different sectors could introduce themselves.

> I hope that we will get to know each other and our respective departments better (Interview 17, principal)

The results showed that personal attitudes, willingness to collaborate and collaborative skills influence multisectoral collaboration. Several interviewees pointed out the significance of knowing data protection laws to avoid misunderstandings regarding professional secrecy. They noted a problem in which the misunderstanding of professional secrecy could lead to information-sharing problems in multisectoral collaboration. The data revealed that multisectoral collaboration could be supported by education targeted at different sectors (e.g. courses and training activities in which the representatives of different sectors can meet and learn from one another). Individual attitudes and willingness to collaborate support multisectoral collaboration. However, some informants considered that this could be a threat to

the equal treatment of all children if the strength of the collaboration depended exclusively on personal willingness to collaborate.

Conclusion

In this study, we examine the antecedents of collaborative culture in multisectoral collaboration promoting school-aged children's well-being by utilising Schein's (1985) framework of cultural levels. Legislative, strategic, structural and physical frameworks create the artefacts—the visible elements—of collaborative culture. Previous studies have shown that open, adaptive and not-too-siloed structures support collaboration (e.g. Tuurnas et al., 2019; de Waal et al., 2019). Our study maintains these results, as flexible arrangements in collaborations seem to support workable collaboration. In addition, we suggest that legislative and strategic frameworks are important elements in guaranteeing long-term commitments and that collaboration does not depend on participants' personal desires and interest to collaborate.

There is a tendency to integrate schools, early childhood education centres, youth communities and other social and healthcare communities together in Finland. These community centres are multi-professional work communities in which teachers of early childhood education and comprehensive school, nurses, youth workers, assistants, social services employees, healthcare employees and administration work together. This is a new possibility for a novel collaboration, but it is also a challenge. The data showed that physical proximity is usually a supporting element of multisectoral collaboration and that it can strengthen the sense of community. However, the data also indicated that when municipalities integrated departments from the same building, the collaborators that could not move to the same building feared that they could diverge from collaboration. We suggest that building physical frameworks cannot be the only method for developing a collaborative culture.

The level of espoused beliefs and values is noticeable in the practices of multisectoral collaboration. Our results showed that various formal or informal collaborative practices are used in multisectoral collaboration. Moreover, the principals and heads of local educational departments valued systematic methods of collaboration, which means a standardised collaboration model and regular, planned and continuous collaboration. However, multisectoral collaboration could face the problem of short-term or discontinuous collaboration or the holding of only a few meetings.

At the deepest cultural level, shared values (e.g. the best interests of the child and a sense of community) are at the centre of multisectoral collaboration. Valaitis et al. (2018) highlight the importance of community- and client-centred approaches to the success of collaboration. Mitchell and Pattison (2012) suggest that values should be congruent between all levels of an organisation and the wider environment so that organisational culture could positively affect intersectoral collaboration. The data showed that traditional ways of thinking usually limit collaborative culture.

Our study emphasises the important role of principals and heads of local educational departments as constructors and enablers of a developed collaborative culture. The research results highlight the significance of enabling leadership to strengthen a collaborative culture. Principals and heads of local educational departments can strengthen multisectoral collaboration by instructing and encouraging subordinates to collaborate and bringing collaborators together. These findings are similar to the results of Tuurnas et al. (2019), who stress the significance of enabling and supporting management in strengthening collaborative culture. Leinonen and Syväjärvi (2022) also assert that managers should take a stronger responsibility in raising cross-sectoral awareness of collaboration and suggest the need for boundary-spanning leadership, which breaks attitudinal and structural boundaries, creates future direction and unites actors through mutual interaction. We suggest that principals and heads of local educational departments should act as collaborative examples through mutual networking and collaboration. This may also support the development of an existing and future collaboration between various sectors. Principals and heads of local educational departments play an important role in promoting an innovative and open-minded atmosphere for new initiatives.

Our study showed that collaboration is supported by workable group dynamics, respect and trust. However, the data revealed difficulties in turf protection and the allocation of responsibilities (see also Valaitis et al., 2018; Widmark et al., 2011). The data showed that some collaborators lacked respect for other professionals' expertise. We suggest adopting the notion of an appreciative culture in which the expertise of each collaborator is valued. A workable collaborative culture requires knowledge about the other sectors' activities and responsibilities, a shared understanding of the needs of well-being promotion and familiarity with other sectors. The results also indicated that personal factors (e.g. attitudes, willingness to collaborate and collaborative skills) can support multisectoral collaboration. We suggest that workable collaboration requires collaborators to develop their collaboration skills and practices. The results of the study are summarised in Fig. 15.1.

This study offers a new perspective on the research theme by giving voice to principals and heads of local educational departments. Strengthening multisectoral collaboration is vital, especially in the societal context in which children's well-being faces many threats (e.g. school-aged children's social exclusion). Furthermore, the cultural and even deep-rooted antecedents affecting the success of collaboration should be recognised and discussed.

This study offers knowledge of the practices and critical factors for collaborative culture. However, this study has certain limitations in terms of the research design and data that must be recognised. We examined the critical perspectives on Schein and Schein's (2017) framework, according to which the idea of culture was simplified to the causal link between culture and organisational performance (e.g. Gajendran et al., 2012). A typical criticism of the qualitative approach is that its

Fig. 15.1 Elements of collaborative culture in promoting school-aged children's well-being

findings cannot be extended to wider populations (Krippendorff, 2004). The purpose of our study is not to generalise the findings but to gain an extensive understanding of the cultural antecedents and conditions in multisectoral collaboration experienced by principals and heads of the local educational departments. The empirical material of this study was collected from municipalities representing rural areas and small- and medium-sized municipalities. Our findings may be useful in municipalities in similar areas. In future research, first, we suggest strengthening the understanding of collaborative culture in multisectoral collaboration by gathering data from more diverse professional groups utilising a quantitative approach. Second, we suggest deepening the understanding of multisectoral collaboration by comparing the perspectives of principals and heads of local educational departments.

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