

## Cultural Sensitivity of the Education Quality Card

A Qualitative study to the Ethiopian stakeholders views on the Edu-Q Card approach and tasks,  
and to the users skills, obstacles, challenges and needs.

Master thesis

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to gain insight in the cultural sensitivity of the EduQ-Card, a tool developed by Edukans. Looking from the Emic-approach, cultural-specific contexts and aspects should be taken into account in the development, to make a tool more sensitive to the culture where it is in use. In this study is investigated if the EduQ-Card takes cultural-specific aspects into account in its approach and if the intended consequences are achieved in Ethiopia. This is done by gaining insight in the assessment executions, and by measuring the consequential validity on three aspects: fair, meaningful and transparent. In in-depth interviews respondents (10 internals from schools and 6 external experts) were asked about their view on the approach and tasks and about the skills, obstacles, challenges and needs. Those results were analyzed qualitatively and revealed that there is inexperience with the approaches and there are obstacles experienced while executing the tool. It seems that the consequential validity is low and that adaptation to the Emic-aspects of Ethiopia is needed to make the EduQ-Card cultural appropriate for this context. Nevertheless, users attach value to the EduQ-Card and its approaches and seem willing to implement it in their context. Based on these results implications have been made.

*Key words:* cultural sensitivity - emic approach - consequential validity

### Samenvatting

Het doel van deze studie was om inzicht te krijgen in de culturele gevoeligheid van de EduQ-Card, een tool ontwikkeld door Edukans. Vanuit de Emic-benadering moeten cultuurspecifieke contexten en aspecten meegenomen worden in de ontwikkeling van een tool om deze cultuurgevoelig te maken naar de context waar het gebruikt wordt. In dit onderzoek werd onderzocht of de EduQ-Card rekening houdt met cultuurspecifieke aspecten in de werkwijze en of de beoogde consequenties worden behaald in Ethiopië. Dit is gedaan door inzicht te verkrijgen in de uitvoering en door de consequentie validiteit te meten op drie aspecten, eerlijk, zinvol en transparant. In diepte-interviews werden respondenten (10 internals van scholen en 6 externe experts) gevraagd naar hun kijk op de werkwijze en taken en naar hun vaardigheden, obstakels, uitdagingen en behoeften. De resultaten zijn kwalitatief geanalyseerd en toonden aan dat er onervarenheid is met de benaderingen en dat er obstakels worden ervaren tijdens het uitvoeren van de tool. Het lijkt erop dat de consequentie-validiteit laag is en dat aanpassing naar de Emic-aspecten van Ethiopië nodig zijn om de EduQ-Card cultureel geschikt te maken voor deze context. Desalniettemin, hechten gebruikers waarde aan de EduQ-Card en de benaderingen en

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lijken ze bereid om dit in hun context te implementeren. Op basis van deze resultaten zijn er implicaties gemaakt.

*Trefwoorden:* culturele sensitiviteit - emic-benadering - consequentie validiteit

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### Cultural Sensitivity of the Education Quality Card

The last two decades, the Ethiopian education system has endured an enormous growth (Mitchell, 2014). In 2008, the education for all global monitoring report has identified Ethiopia as country with the most rapid enrolment progress. Due to this expansion, there are concerns towards the quality that primary schools can offer (Woodhead, Ames, Vennam, Abebe, & Streuli, 2009). To address these concerns, tools for schools' self-evaluation and development planning have been introduced by the Ethiopian government (Mitchell, 2014). Furthermore, the Education For All debate made a shift from prioritizing enrollment to reflecting quality. To provide quality improvement evidence, instruments to measure quality of education were developed (Courtney, 2008).

### **Cultural-sensitive instruments**

Courtney (2008) argues that the debate about quality education should consider how instruments actually reflect the culture, educational values and pedagogies of the country where it is in use. Abubakar (2015) mentions that it is possible that instruments developed and standardized among white middle class groups are not culturally appropriate to be used by other groups that were not included in the development and standardization procedures. This can indicate problems in transferring instruments across cultural contexts. However, some aspects of behavior, values and pedagogies do not require modification because they can be seen as universal aspects, called Etic (Abubakar, 2015; Niblo, & Jackson, 2014). Working from an Etic-approach it is possible to get an understanding of patterns between cultural aspects and behavior and to make cross-cultural comparisons (Berry, 1989; Davidson, Jaccard, Triandis, Morales, & Diaz-Guerrero, 1976). Criticism towards this approach is that it does not deal with contextual influences (Abubakar & van de Vijver, 2017). An approach that takes cultural-specific contexts and aspects of behavior into account is called Emic (Niblo & Jackson, 2004). In order to collect and add cultural-specific aspects it is important to involve the local community in the development of an instrument. This makes it more sensitive to the culture where it is in use (Abubakar, 2015). However, an instrument created from the Emic-approach may remain too context specific and may not be appropriate for another population (Abubakar & van de Vijver, 2017; Triandis, 1992). Together this indicates that during the development of an instrument, both Etic and Emic-approaches should be taken into account.

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### **The Edu-Q Card**

Edukans, a Dutch non-profit organization that works international, strives to achieve sustainable development goal number 4: Quality education (Edukans, n.d.b). They created the STAR-School Model which shows that quality education consists of five domains: A safe learning environment, good guidance during the learning process, good educated and motivated teachers, organized school management and involvement of parents and the community (Edukans, n.d.b). Based on this model, the Education Quality Card (EduQ-Card) is developed. The EduQ-Card is an assessment tool that uses a participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) and self-reflection approach, to achieve the main goal to promote continuous improvement (Edukans, n.d.a). The teachers and school management (internal assessors) do a self-assessment by scoring the schools quality based on the five STAR-School domains. Also external assessors score the schools quality. Those results are entered in an online application and the reports are delivered instantly. The reports will be compared and stakeholders are involved in the discussion to prioritize the improvement points and the step to set up an action plan (Edukans, n.d.a). Since this instrument is developed based on the worldwide goal to achieve quality education and the content of the domains stays the same in every context, this implies an Etic-approach. However, in this instrument effort is made to provide the possibility to adjust the instrument to the local situation (Ünal, 2019), which implies an Emic-approach.

### **The aim**

The aim of this study is to gain insight in the cultural sensitivity of the EduQ-Card approach. In October 2018, the Ethiopian external-assessors received a training and they practiced in the field. However, some steps of the assessment were not executed. Therefore, Edukans wanted to gain insight in the execution and consequential validity of the EduQ-Card in Ethiopia. Consequential validity is about achieving the consequence of the assessment that is intended to achieve (Hublely & Zumbo, 2011). The intended consequence of the EduQ-Card is that assessment results will be used for continuous improvement of quality. To measure this, the following concepts are taken into account: “The consequences of an assessment procedure should be the same for everyone (i.e., fair); the assessment tasks should have noticeable value for those being assessed (i.e., meaningful); and the assessment tasks should be formulated and communicated clearly (i.e., transparent)” (Admiraal, Hoeksma, van de Kamp, & van Duin, 2011, p. 1025). It seems interesting to find out if Emic-aspects of Ethiopia are taken into account in the

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EduQ-Card, since this might have influence on the consequential validity and cultural sensitivity of the tool.

In 2018, Ünal examined the content and face validity of the EduQ-Card by focusing on the clarity and relevance of the content of the domains (Ünal, 2019). The following research will give a qualitative addition to this study with focus on the approaches of the EduQ-Card and the consequential validity. The participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) approach is quite new in the field of quality education (Estrella et al., 2000) and very few studies conducted research on this (Miller & Campbell, in Kathongo, 2018). Moreover, there are no studies conducted yet about the stakeholders' participation in the processes of school evaluation in the Ethiopian context (Mitchell, 2017a). Therefore, this study can add new insights on this topic and the results can provide Edukans with recommendations to further develop the tool.

### **View**

The first research question of this study is: What is the view of Ethiopian stakeholders on the approaches of the EduQ-Card and their tasks? For this research question the focus is on the transparent and meaningful aspect of consequential validity. The transparency will be measured by asking the Ethiopian stakeholders about their view on tasks that they execute during the assessment and if those tasks are clear for them. It is expected that the tasks for the external-assessors are clear because of the received training but there might be unclearness for the internal-assessors since they did not receive this training. The meaningful aspect will be measured by asking the Ethiopian stakeholders about their view towards the approaches, which includes the value they attach to it. Background characteristics such as age, education and residence might have influence on experiences of individuals and therefore can also affect their values (Smith & Schwartz, 1997). This implies the possibility that the users value attached to the instrument varies from the value that the developers of the instrument attach to it. However, it is expected that the Ethiopian stakeholders view to the approaches is that they see it as valuable. In the instituted policies the Ethiopian Government aims to increase stakeholder participation and continue doing self-evaluation to work on the improvement-planning (Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE), 2015; Mitchell, 2017b). Also, a literature study of Mitchell (2014) shows that a principle which may underpin the basis of school improvement in Ethiopia is promoting the participation and “facilitating community-wide engagement with school-evaluation and decision-making” (p. 14). However, the vice-director of the MoE of Ethiopia once said that

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bringing important stakeholders on board of transformation is challenging. The major challenge refers to leadership and management that lack in using the transparency and participatory-approach (Yizengaw, 2003). Moreover, a study in Ethiopia explained that peer observation and reflection is totally new in the context of the Ethiopian schools. Teachers are suspicious about reflection (Desta, Chalchisa, Mulat, Berihun, & Tesera, 2009). Looking at the Ethiopian collectivistic culture, it is possible that Ethiopian people want to keep group harmony and thus do not like to be critical to each other. Also problem solving and critical thinking is practiced less in a collectivistic culture. Additionally, in a high-context culture as Ethiopia, open communication and being direct does not fit. Lastly there exists a high power-distance culture in Ethiopia which creates the possibility that teachers or stakeholders feel uncomfortable to ask questions to the leaders let alone to give feedback in a group where they are mixed with people of different status (Baker & Campbell, 2016). Based on this information it is expected that in Ethiopia they are known with the participatory and self-reflection approach and they see value in it, but possibly it does not fit in their culture.

### **Skills**

The second research question is: Do the assessors feel skilled to execute the EduQ-Card? A way to gain insight in the execution of the assessments and to gather improvement points for the EduQ-Card is to ask about the skills of the assessors. A skill can be defined as “the ability to do something” (Attewell, 1990). As mentioned by Yizengaw (2003) there is inadequate capacity of the leadership to bring important stakeholders on board of a transformation. Besides, an evaluation of a national intervention program run by the MoE and six European countries that wanted to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teachers’ education, shows the lack of coordination and the communication gap among the stakeholders (Chalchisa, 2010; Desta, Chalchisa, & Lemma, 2013). Furthermore, reflection seems new for the Ethiopian stakeholders referring back to the study of Desta et al. (2009). Based on above mentioned literature it is expected that the assessors might feel unknown with or unskilled in how to involve stakeholders, how to coordinate and how to reflect. Also because of the high-context culture the assessors might not feel skilled to communicate open and directly (Baker & Campbell, 2016).

### **Obstacles & Challenges**

The third research question is: What obstacles and challenges do the EduQ-Card assessors face while executing the assessment? Skills might not be the only possible cause of the

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unfinished assessments. Brug, Assema, and Lechner (2012) mention environmental determinants that can influence the practice, such as the availability of materials. One of the developers of the EduQ-Card said that time management and experienced pressure of assessors in Ethiopia is an issue. Also the bad or not working internet connection might play a role in the assessments executions (D. Verboom, personal communication, February 2, 2019). In addition, the execution of the distribution and adaptation phases of the implementation process might play part in the stagnation of the intended innovation process. There are several factors that can influence this process (Brug, Assema, & Lechner, 2012). Right now, only the external assessors received a training about the Edu-Q Card. This can cause problems for the internal assessors to understand the assessment. When the internal interpreted the aim of the assessment differently, the consequences might become unequal, which relates to the fairness aspect of consequential validity. The expectation is that there is a combination of causes that might influence the EduQ-Card execution in Ethiopia.

### **Needs**

The fourth research question is: What are the needs of the EduQ-Card assessors in order to execute the assessment? Based on the above mentioned literature it is expected that needs can be centered around role clarification, approach practicing, skills enhancement or obstacles and challenges tackling. In an evaluation of a school report card, developed via the participatory approach in Uganda, stakeholders understand their role better when they equally participate in a discussion about the results. Gathering the stakeholders all at one time, helps to directly establish roles and responsibilities (Cheng & Moses, 2016). Next to the role clarification there also might be need for more information spreading. The FMoE of Ethiopia (2015) states that providing face-to-face information helps to encourage community members to engage with education and to increase the community participation in decision making. This might also be needed for the EduQ-Card users since policies with similar approaches as the EduQ-Card, for example School Improvement Plan (SIP), cause confusion and anxiety at many teachers and directors in Ethiopia. SIP involves foreign concepts such as self-evaluation and action research, that are unknown at some places in Ethiopia. It seems that these new policies are not based on the perspectives and activities of people working in schools. They are implemented based on Western school improvement research without being tested in the Ethiopian context (Mitchell, 2017a). This together creates the expectation that the internal-assessors need more meetings with all



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stakeholders to clarify their role. Also there might be need for more information spreading and need for more support to the teachers and directors in how to practice the approaches.

### **Method**

#### **Type of research**

In this study the research questions were examined in a qualitative way. Qualitative research is describing and interpreting situations or events by using an open approach, and focusing on the nature and characteristics (Baar, 2002). To measure consequential validity different stakeholder views must be included to present a convincing validity argument (Lane & Stone, 2002). Also while working from an Emic-approach it is needed to take an insider's view and collect data from the perspectives and words of the participants (Abubakar & van de Vijver, 2017). Therefore this method was considered appropriate for this study and it gives a qualitative addition to the study of Ünal (2019).

#### **Participants**

In this research sixteen participants participated. In total, two STAR-schools and one non-STAR school in Addis Ababa and two STAR-schools and one non-STAR school in Jima took part. Six interviews were carried out with external-assessors. Two of them were District Education Officer in Addis Ababa, three were employees at the Development Expertise Centre in Addis Ababa and one of them was a tutor in Jima. Also six interviews with internal-assessors were executed, whereof three teachers and three school directors. The four participants from non-STAR schools that were unfamiliar with the EduQ-Card consisted of one teacher and three (vice)school directors. The external-assessors were selected based on a participants list from the EduQ-Card training in October 2018. The internal-assessors were selected because they were already using the EduQ-Card. The purposive sampling was used because these participants could provide information for this research by their virtue of qualities, knowledge or experience (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). After this purposive sample, the supervisors in Addis Ababa and Jima selected people from these groups based on their contact. The participants unfamiliar with the EduQ-Card, were selected by the supervisor based on the contacts. Here it was useful to use the convenience sample technique, due to the limited time (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Koerber & McMichael, 2008). For the results to be generalizable to a population, a sample should be representative for the population (Baarda, 2014). The sample of this study was not diverse in sex since 15 men and one woman participated. However, there was a variety of the

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participants role and involvement with the tool and also people from non-star schools and people from two different places took part in this study. This gives a representative view of the approach use in the Ethiopian education branch.

### **Interviews**

Donk & Lanen (2013) speak about the research method ‘questioning’, whereof interviewing is one type. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to be flexible in the formulation and order of questions. This also helped to obtain detailed information about the experiences and meanings of participants towards a topic (Boeije, 2010). The following topic-list was used to interview the respondents: (1) Respondents view towards the tool and it’s approaches and the value attached to it; (2) Respondents view on the tasks and it’s clarity (e.g. the tasks and role description); (3) Respondents skills (e.g. the practiced skills during the training and ability to work with the approaches); (4) Respondents obstacles and challenges during the execution (e.g. regarding the skills, environmental determinants and implementation process); (5) Respondents needs to execute the assessment (e.g. needs regarding the missing skills or obstacles/challenges faced). Some examples of questions that are asked are (1) ‘How do you experience the method of the Edu-Q Card to include all stakeholders in the process?’; (2) ‘How would you describe your role and task during the implementation of the assessment?’; and (4) ‘What obstacles do you face while executing the internal Edu-Q Card assessment?’.

### **Procedure**

The data collection took place within one month, starting in Addis Ababa and ending in Jima. For each participant group an interview structure was created. In the introduction the participants were informed about the organization, the aim of the study and the structure of the interview. Also space for questions before the interview started was created. In this way the participants’ right to be informed about the study is recognized, which is linked to the informed consent (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). After the introduction all the participants were asked for permission to record the interview. The records gave the ability to listen back to the interviews which increased the reliability (Baarda, De Goede, & Teunissen, 2013). The recordings also gave the interviewer the possibility to focus on the questions and answers, instead of focusing on the notes. This benefits the quality of the data (Boeije, 2010). In the end there was space for the participant to give suggestions or ask questions. The average length of the interviews was 70 minutes. With the presence of two researchers at each interview the

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internal validity and reliability was taken into account since this helped making notes during the interview. Moreover, using the techniques to ask for more explanation and summarizing the answers the reliability was taken into account (Baarda et al., 2013).

### **Data analysis**

The collected data was transcribed, analyzed and labeled via the qualitative analysis methods of Baar (2002) and Baarda et al. (2013). In order to find possible missing topics, to adjust them or to finalize the interview questions, one data-analysis was conducted during the data collecting period. This inductive coding technique resulted that the research questions which first consisted of two, were split up into four questions. To result in higher reliability and internal validity all the labels were formulated based on the participant's own quotes to stay closely to the meaning of the data (Baar, 2002). A code has been placed behind each label, to be able to control the analysis and to guarantee the anonymity of the participants. Ensuring anonymity contributes to the validity and reliability of the data (Baar & Wubbels, 2013).

### **Results**

In this section the main findings for each research question will be discussed. The categories that were developed out of the qualitative analysis can be recognized by the bold text. They are supported by the dimensions and quotes of the respondents that are presented in italic. After each quote the code In (internal-assessors), Ex (external-assessors) or Un (unfamiliar with the EduQ-Card) plus the respondent number is mentioned. Although the qualitative nature of this study and the small amount of interviews, the amount of participants is sometimes added to show the prevalence of the mentioned aspects.

### **View**

The assessors of the tool mention that *“This tool is a good measurement to improve the quality education”* (13, in) and that *“This assessment, the education quality assessment is the most important for enhancing the quality of education”* (3, ex). Nine out of twelve assessors said that this tool can contribute to quality improvement which is important for them. Furthermore the appreciation towards the tool is noted. One Ex-assessor explains that the tool should be used in more schools:

*“This package STAR-school or the five pillars are very important for us and we need, it is some challenge, but we need to scale up. Really continue for working on this as Edukans, to scale up, and even to work more with other schools”* (1, ex).

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In addition, there is appointed that the EduQ-Card *shows the process of a school, identifies the gaps and strengths* and gives *direct clear results*. This together shows that the respondents see this tool as valuable. The overall view of the assessors is that the **EduQ-Card contributes to quality education improvement**, which is important for the respondents.

**Stakeholders involvement important to improve quality education.** The stakeholders involvement is related to the participatory approach. One of the respondents quotes: “*Quality of education is no compromise, it is the backbone of a country. So every community should devoted to ensure quality of education*” (5, ex). This indicates that *community and stakeholder involvement is important*, which it substantiated by six other respondents. Next to this, ten respondents addressed that *stakeholders must be involved in the process*. Nine respondents mentioned that the reason for this is that *stakeholders involvement improves quality education*. These results show that next to the EduQ-Card as a tool, the participatory approach is also seen as important because it contributes to the improvement of quality of education.

**Stakeholder involvement is not organized or in the culture.** While asking about the respondents view towards the approach, the inexperience with this approach is shown by some Ex, In and Un-respondents: “*We are told, these people are important, but in practical, in practice, we, I have never seen. I have only seen with Edukans*” (12, ex). This indicates that Edukans started applying this approach. Next to Edukans influence on the use of this approach, is mentioned the following: “*By default they involve it. By default means, there is no structure like this ones. For example there is a classroom, a school management and a parent and teacher association, but that is not well organized I think*” (3, ex). This can indicate that in Ethiopia they know about different stakeholders but they do not organize it or they do not see it as an approach. So even though the respondents see the participatory approach as important, they mentioned that *stakeholder involvement is not in the culture*. Moreover is mentioned that *some stakeholders cannot be involved because of the situation/environment*. Sometimes the life situation of the parents make it impossible for them to be present at a meeting because they have to make money for their family. This raises the question whether the Ethiopian context is taken into account while developing and implementing this tool.

**Self-reflection is important to identify and improve weaknesses.** Self-reflection is also a used approach in the EduQ-Card. A quote that indicates the importance of self-reflection is: “*Everybody must accept his weakness. Because knowing your weakness is filling the gaps for the*

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*future I think*” (3, ex). This Ex-respondent shows that *self-reflection shows and improves weakness/gaps*, which is also indicated by seven other respondents. The importance of self-reflection without a reason is named by six respondents. The importance they see in self-reflection is probably linked to the importance they see in the improvement of quality education. When a school reflects on itself, it can improve the weak parts and eventually achieve quality education.

**Not enough self-reflection experience.** Even though the respondents addressed the importance of self-reflection, they also mentioned that: *“This is not common to do. Only mostly when our, when the STAR-school implement, they start self-assessment”* (1, ex). The analysis shows that 10 respondents said that there is *no practice with self-reflection in Ethiopia* and they have *not enough experience with self-reflection*. Both Ex, In and Un-respondents mentioned that they are inexperienced with the self-reflection approach. It seems that when Edukans implemented the STAR-school, the schools started with self-reflection. Since Ethiopia has a collectivistic culture where the group goes before the individual, this might be a reason for the inexperience with self-reflection. This raises the question whether the culture where the tool will be used, is taken into account.

**Important but not usual to make improvement points in Ethiopia.** Another part of the EduQ-Card approach, which is less cited in the introduction, is prioritizing improvement points to set up an action plan. Five respondents noted that *improvement points are important*. It is *“Very important, because we are identifying all our crucial things, immediate solution needing problems”* (4, ex). Four other respondents said that writing down improvement points helps to *create future plans*. However, three respondents said that this is not in the Ethiopian culture: *“No no.. that type is not in Ethiopian culture. We are doing in Ethiopia all the problems”* (4, ex) and *“We are starting now, but fully to talk our improvement is not, not the culture”* (13, in). The above mentioned results show that the approaches of the EduQ-Card might be unpracticed by (some of) the Ethiopian stakeholders. However, the importance of the approaches is mentioned a lot.

**Externals role is to be involved with internal.** All the six Ex-respondents mentioned that they are involved with the internal assessors: *“We are trying to remind them what we have planned, what we have identified”* (2, ex). They know that they can help the internals by reminding them and discussing the problems with them. Furthermore their role is explained as:

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*“Just simply observing and identifying the other gaps and to tell the improvement area of them”* (3, ex). Those results show that the transparency of the tasks of the Ex-respondents is good, since they are clearly described by them. However, In-respondents described the role of the school management as to *gather information, prioritize the problems and evaluate the process*. From the participatory approach point of view, the school management should not be the only one that prioritize the problems, but looking from the high power-distance culture, the school management might be expected to decide these things. This raises the question if Emic-aspects are taken into account.

### Skills

**Training helped with practicing skills.** For this research question the Ex-assessors are asked about their developed skills during the training. They all said that the use of the tool is a skill they had practiced during the training. Also they *“Had time to practice how the data could be collected, how it is transferred into dashboard, also how it is submitted and how we can access it using the tablet”* (2, ex). Thus, especially the skill in using the tool during the data collection is practiced during the training. In order to feel skilled, one respondent mentioned practice as important: *“Actually for me I upgraded myself. Since I am education specialist I am familiar with the theory. But I make the practice. Practice make perfect”* (1, ex). Four of the Ex-respondents mentioned that the *training upgraded their skills* or that they feel *competent to do the assessment*. Striking of those results is that the respondents do not mention practiced skills that are related to the approaches, for example how to lead a conversation with all stakeholders.

### Obstacles & Challenges

**Network and use of tablet is a challenge.** Overall the analysis shows that there are two challenges that stand out, namely the network and tablet use which is mentioned multiple times by five respondents. A example of a problem that arose while the network was not working is:

*“Practically we went to a school... We did the activities and we fill it in and we tried to send, but there was no internet, that was the problem.. We couldn’t, we couldn’t send it. The results were not visible simply because of the internet”* (12, ex).

Some of the Ex-respondents apparently are still lacking the skill to use the table, since four Ex-respondents have mentioned that the *tablet is difficult to understand and use*. Since the execution of the assessment is obstructed by the network and the understanding of the tool, there can be questioned if the cultural-specific context is taken into account.

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**Internal not good informed.** One of the In-respondent noted a few times that the *internals are not good informed:*

*“I didn’t have a training, I didn’t have an information, a good information before... You are coming, bring your mobile at that time and starting to request me about the Akvo flow. Before that you didn’t inform us the information, the good information, or training before” (13, in).*

It is of importance for them to early receive information to be able to understand the assessment and to collect the real data. Moreover, one Ex-respondent mentioned multiple times that *obtaining real data was hard* and that sometimes there is *no real data collected because the objective was not clear*: *“In schools, assessment might be fake sometimes... Ethiopian people think those who come from the external, like the Woredas [District], like the zone, people in educational structure, might have an impact on them, a negative impact on them” (3, ex)*. This argument seems logical looking at the high power-distance culture in Ethiopia, were people with higher status (external assessors) have more authority or influence. Right now some schools obtain real results and are able to improve their quality, while other schools think that the assessment is about ranking or rewarding and thus deliver too high scores. This creates demand whether the consequences of the assessment are the same for every school.

### Needs

**More awareness and explanation about assessment and objective.** Three of the six In-respondents addressed their need for more awareness and explanation about the assessment and its objective. They appointed that they *need knowledge of questions* before the assessment is executed. To solve this, they want to receive the hard copy of this questionnaire (and the results of the assessment) on paper. Next to this solution, an In-respondents mentioned that: *“If the training is also provided we are interesting to... Maybe for the representative of the school, for the vice or the director of the schools, the whole STAR-school” (13, in)*. This solution might address the need for more *awareness of the objective*. Next to the information sharing with internal, also Ex-respondent mentioned that *Edukans should share the training material and module with participants*. With those solutions it is more likely that the data will be collected and used as it is intended to, namely to improve the quality of the school.

**Continuous practicing with the assessment.** One of the needs said by four Ex-respondents is to practice more with the tool. One said:

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*“If I get addition training, it will be, it will help me practice more, and then I will be perfect and the training is not bad because it will give me more perfection... So I think additional support, additional training will be required” (12, ex).*

They stated that repeating the assessment over and over will help to get what they need, namely quality improvement. Besides that they want to practice it themselves and require another training, they also said that *continuous process is needed* to achieve continuous improvement. This is in line with the need from three Ex-assessors to have *more follow-up*. It is seen as a weakness that there is no evaluation or follow-up. With follow-up is meant that the organization need to help with the continuous assessment, monitoring the Edu-Q Card process and to give feedback. Concluding, the most salient need is to receive explanation about the assessment and its objective, to practice continuously with the tool and to have more follow-up.

### Discussion

The aim of this study was to gain insight in the cultural sensitivity of the EduQ-Card. Therefore the consequential validity and the assessment executions are investigated through research questions about the respondents view on the approaches and tasks, and their skills, obstacles, challenges and needs.

### View

The first research question was: What is the view of Ethiopian stakeholders on the approaches of the EduQ-Card and their tasks? The expectation was that respondents view the tool and its approaches as meaningful because the policies from the Ethiopian Government and the plan of the MoE both address the aim to increase the use of those approaches (FMoE, 2015; Mitchell, 2017b). This expectation is confirmed in the results. The overall view of the respondents towards the EduQ-Card is that it contributes to quality education improvement. Respondents view the stakeholders involvement as important to improve quality education. Also self-reflection is viewed as important to identify and improve weaknesses and writing down improvement points helps to create future plans. This indicates the possibility to achieve the intended consequence. Despite the importance that is indicated, the expectation was that the approaches possibly did not fit in the collectivistic, high-context and high-power distance culture (Baker & Campbell, 2016). Also because they struggle with the participatory approach and reflection was totally new in the Ethiopian context (Desta et al., 2009; Yizengaw, 2003). The results are in line with this expectation and show that the approaches and prioritizing



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improvement points are not practiced in the Ethiopian culture. As mentioned by Abubakar (2015), to make an instrument culturally appropriate for a group, Emic-aspects should be included in the tool. The inexperience of the Ethiopian stakeholders in these approaches might imply that Ethiopian Emic-aspects from the high power-distance, high-context and collectivistic culture are not included. This might make it harder to achieve the intended consequence. However, the results of this study show the importance of the approaches and even the MoE of Ethiopia is starting to apply them. Throughout 2013-2014 a School Self-Assessment Form is developed where schools follow the exact same steps and approaches as the EduQ-Card. Until now, more than 80% of schools in Ethiopia are trained in applying this approach and already have a school improvement plan (MoE, 2015). This gives the indication that the participatory and self-reflection approach are practiced in Ethiopia.

The expectation towards the transparent aspect of the consequential validity was that the external assessors view their tasks as clear and they can clearly describe them because of the received training. Expected was unclarity for the internal assessors since they did not receive this training. The results support this expectation. The view of the Ex-respondents towards the tasks they execute during the assessment, show that they have a clear indication of it. The role of the school management described by the In-respondents is less clear and it does not match with the idea of the participatory approach. The EduQ-Card strives for equal participation which seems not in line with the Ethiopian power-distance culture. In this culture there less powerful members of institutions who expect to be told what to do, and they rather accept than doubt or challenge the ideas of the more powerful members (Baker & Campbell, 2016). Thus, there can be expected that the school management is expected to prioritize improvement points alone. Concluding that the tasks are not clear enough for the In-respondents or do not fit the culture, it seems hard to achieve the intended consequences of the EduQ-Card.

### **Skills**

Secondly the assessors have been asked if they feel skilled to execute the EduQ-Card assessment. Expected was that assessors might feel unskilled to involve the stakeholders or to coordinate. Also the skill to open communicate between stakeholders and reflect on themselves expected more need for practice (Baker & Campbell, 2016; Chalchisa, 2010; Desta, Chalchisa, & Lemma, 2013; Desta et al., 2009; Yizengaw, 2003). The results are not in line with this expectation. The skills mentioned by the Ex-assessors are not linked with the approaches of the

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EduQ-Card but are more practical, such as data collection, data submission and the use of the tablet. A possible explanation for this difference in expectation and outcome might be that it was hard for respondents to talk about their feelings of being skilled. Especially about skills that are not in their culture. In collectivistic cultures it is less common to reflect on the individual development of competences because they attach more value to interpersonal competencies (Hofstede, 1986; Killen & Wainryb, 2000). This might explain why the respondents did not mention any skill that completely relates to their competence, but why they mentioned the more practical skills.

### **Obstacles & Challenges**

The third research question was about the obstacles and challenges that the EduQ-Card assessors faced during the assessment execution. Expected was a combination of obstacles related to the skills, environmental determinants and to the implementation process (Brug, Assema, & Lechner (2012). The results fit with this expectation. The network and the use of the tablet are both seen as obstacles and are reasons for the assessments to not being executed as the way it should. The network obstacle seems to be linked to a lack of taking the context into account. Additionally, the obstacles about too less information distribution about the assessment and its aim can be seen as obstacles which are caused by the way the implementation process is executed. This obstacle probably arose during the information distribution phase where the users should become known with the tool and where they take note of the presence and content of the tool (Stals, 2012). Because of the misinformation some schools saw the assessment as a rewarding. Above mentioned obstacles affected the results of the assessments which caused that some schools were not able to improve themselves. Taken together, it seems that the consequences of the assessment are not the same for everyone and the intended consequences are not able to achieve.

### **Needs**

Related to the other research questions, the assessors of the EduQ-Card have been asked what they need in order to execute the assessment. The results support all the expectations, but not in every detail. It was expected that there was need for more information spreading and to receive more support in the use of the approaches (FMoE, 2015; Mitchell, 2017a). This is supported with the results that the respondents need more information about the content and aim of the tool, more practice and follow-up and help with the continuous assessment and monitoring

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of the process. Follow-up and coaching in this implementation process is needed to be able to achieve sustainability in the use of the tool (Brug, Assema, & Lechner, 2012). Out of all these needs it might be indicated that the intended consequences are not yet achieved. However, these needs seem logical hearing from the director of Edukans in Ethiopia that they are in the starting phase of the implementation in schools. Therefore it is recommended to organize a follow up study later in the implementation process in Ethiopia to get a more clear idea about the needs.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the intended consequences seem difficult to achieve since the outcome of the assessment is not the same for everyone (fair) and the tasks are not clear for some of the users (transparent). Also the respondents inexperience with the approaches might result in a low consequential validity. Together this implies that the approaches are not in the Ethiopian culture what gives the indication that adaptation to the Emic-aspects is needed to make the EduQ-Card cultural appropriate for this context (Abubakar, 2015). Nevertheless, the value that the Ethiopian users attach to the EduQ-Card and its approaches (meaningful) indicates a possibility to be able to achieve the intended consequences. The respondents seem willing to implement the EduQ-Card in their context and to use the assessment results to reach the overall goal, which is to improve the quality of education. The MoE of Ethiopia is also working towards increasement of stakeholders participation and self-reflection of schools, which creates the idea that in the end these approaches are applicable in the Ethiopian culture. Those results correspond to the results of a similar study in Surinam, that is conducted by van Zijverden (2019).

### **Limitations**

Several limitations of this study need to be taken into account. Due to time limit, instead of ten schools six schools participated in this study. Moreover the planning was to hand out four interviews with external-assessors in Addis Ababa, and three in Jima. However, due to sickness in Jima, only one interview was conducted there. After this incident, there has been decided to execute one more interview in Addis Ababa.

In addition to time limit, also language is a limitation. During some of the interviews there was no translator involved, which made it difficult to know if the respondent understood the question and when not, maybe the intended message was not delivered. This might have affected the results of this study. However, when a translator was present that was known with the EduQ-Card, this may have caused socially desirable answers due to the high-power distance

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culture. This might have influenced the reliability. To cover this limitation the researchers have stated clearly that they were doing research for Edukans and that they were not a professional. Also to increase this influence, the labels are kept closely to the given answers of the respondents.

A limitation regarding the interviews is that the respondents did not really mention skills related closely to themselves. This might have to do with the fact that in a collectivistic culture, people are less familiar with reflection on individual competences. Additionally, the results might be influenced because in a collectivistic culture, people sometimes feel uncomfortable to be critical (Hofstede, 1986). Therefore it is recommended for further research to pay attention to these cultural differences in the interviews.

Another limitation is that it is unclear whether all the internal respondents participated in the practice with the Edu-Q Card, since they also participated in a similar program from Edukans. This causes that the results might be based on misinformation. However, in this study three different groups participated and there are answers given related to the EduQ-Card execution and use of the approach. This gives new insights since there were no studies conducted yet about the stakeholders' participation in school evaluation processes in Ethiopia.

Concerning the timing of the study, a limitation arose since some of the respondents seemed quite unknown with the intervention. Recommended is to execute another study when the EduQ-Card is further implemented. Then systematical observations can be executed during the assessment and more respondents can participate. This will allow more firm conclusions about the actual execution of the EduQ-Card and its approaches and the cultural sensitivity of the tool. However, this qualitative research is a good addition to the study of Ünal on the content validity. Now there is a first impression of the usability of the EduQ-Card approaches and the consequential validity is measured.

### **Implications**

The results of this study has led to some recommendations to contextualize and adapt the EduQ-Card to the Ethiopian culture. Concluding from the results, the most salient needs are to receive information about the assessment and its objective and approaches. Also more practice with the tool and follow-up is needed. Therefore the following implications are formulated.

**Information distribution.** For an intervention to be effective it should be executed as intended, it should achieve the expected results and the intervention should become a permanent

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part of the daily routine (Stals, Yperen, Reith, & Stams, 2008). To achieve this, there are several steps that are important to hand out carefully during an implementation process, such as information distribution. As the developer of the tool, Edukans is responsible for a cultural sensitive structure and content to make it possible for the new users to use the tool. To improve the usability of the tool, insights in the theories and approaches of the tool should be provided in the distribution phase (Brug, Assema, & Lechner, 2012). It is also required to hand out a hard copy of the questionnaire and the results to the participants. This together will provide that all assessors are on the same information level and the intended consequences will be achievable.

**Training.** Information can also be distributed in a training. Therefore it is recommended for Edukans to develop a training that can also be followed by internal assessors to make sure that they all know their role in the assessment and the aim of the tool. An effective training consists of elements such as information transfer, demonstrating the use, practicing the tool and coaching while applying the tool in real life (Brug, Assema, & Lechner, 2012). This study showed the obstacle in the use of the tablet which indicates that the element of demonstration and practicing the use, are in need of more attention. Other effective strategies to achieve change are interaction in the training and reminding the executors of what they have to do (Stals et al., 2008). Regarding the conclusion of inexperience with the approaches it seems required to also practice with skills such as reflection and stakeholder involvement. They should pay attention in how to critical reflect on situations and how to solve problems (Baker & Campbell, 2016). Through this, the inexperience with the approaches will decrease. The coaching element of the implementation is also mentioned by respondents as a need. They need more follow-up and help with monitoring the whole process. The Western trainers or coaches working in other cultures should be aware of the Emic-aspects, in Ethiopia aspects of the collectivistic, high-context and high power-distance culture. For example the open, direct and structured communication of the Western low-context culture, does not match with the high-context culture where they tend to communicate more implicitly and more nonverbally (Baker & Campbell, 2016).

**Adjust tool to the context.** To achieve the intended consequences and apply a tool in another context, a critical view on the context where it will be in use is needed. In this way Edukans can create a user-centered design. In such design, attention is paid to needs and limitations of the users (Brug, Assema, & Lechner, 2012). The reinvention of a tool to adjust it to the users is experienced positively since it contributes to the ownership and commitment of users

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towards the tool (Brug, Assema, & Lechner, 2012). For this situation a reinvention is needed to be able to execute the tool without network since that was a big obstacle. To be able to apply the EduQ-Card in other countries, it is recommended to make it possible to organize more research on these contexts and to find out if changes are needed in order to apply the tool in that context.

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