Cultural Sensitivity of the Education Quality Intervention

A Qualitative Study Providing Insight Into Elements Contributing to Cultural Sensitivity of the Edu-q intervention at Primary and Secondary schools (Paramaribo and Saramacca)

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Abstract

The Edu-q intervention has been implemented in Surinam in March 2019. This intervention is developed by Edukans, an international NGO with head quarters in the Netherlands. The intervention makes use of the Edu-q card assessment tool. With this intervention Edukans strives for good quality of education on a global scale, taking a participatory and monitoring evaluation (PM&E) approach. The participatory stakeholders are: inspectors, school leaders, teachers and parents. This qualitative study has provided insight into the elements contributing to cultural sensitivity of the Edu-q intervention in Surinam at primary and secondary schools (Paramaribo and Saramacca). An answer has been formulated on the basis of 21 semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders. It has appeared that the content of the Edu-q card can remain the same, but formulations should be adapted to their culture in order to reach the intended consequences of Edukans. Futhermore, in terms of their approach; hierarchy, socioeconomic status and language, seemed to be the most important elements to take into account in order to achieve cultural sensitivity of the Edu-q intervention.

Keywords: cultural sensitivity, quality assessment tool, PM&E approach, Surinam

Samenvatting

De Edu-q interventie is geïmplementeerd in Suriname in maart 2019. De interventie is ontwikkeld door Edukans, een internationale NGO, met hun hoofdkantoor in Nederland. De interventie maakt gebruik van een beoordelingsintstrument, genaamd Edu-q card. Met deze interventie streeft Edukans naar kwalitatief goed onderwijs wereldwijd, door een participatorische, monitorende evaluatie (PM&E) methode te hanteren. De participerende stakeholders zijn: consulenten, school leiders, leerkrachten en ouders. Deze kwalitatieve studie heeft inzicht gegeven in de elementen die bijdragen aan de culturele sensitiviteit van de edu-q interventie in Suriname (Paramaribo en Saramacca). Een antwoord is geformuleerd aan de hand van 21 semi-gestructureerde interviews met stakeholders. Er is gebleken dat de inhoud van de Edu-q card hetzelfde kan blijven, maar formuleringen aangepast zouden moeten worden om de gewenste uitkomsten van Edukans te bereiken. Hiernaast, met betrekking tot de aanpak zijn de elementen; hierarchy, sociaaleconomische status en taal, als meest belangrijk gebleken om in beschouwing te nemen in het bereiken van culturele sensitiviteit van de Edu-q interventie.

Sleutelwoorden: culturele sensitiviteit, kwaliteit beoordelingsinstrument, PM&E aanpak, Suriname

Cultural sensitivity of the Edu-q intervention

Multiple global frameworks for quality of education have been set up throughout the years by powerful NGO's. These frameworks are mostly based on dominant approaches, like the human capital and the human rights approach. The human capital approach uses the process model to provide an understanding on quality of education. This model places importance on standardized measurements, like: learning time, teaching methods, class size, school governance, learning and teaching material and assessment/feedback (Alexander, 2008). The human capital approach aims for economic growth and alleviating poverty (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). On the other hand, the human rights approach is interested in how education secures the right to education, rights in education and rights through education. Frameworks based on this approach place the learner at the centre of the framework, recognizing five dimensions of quality: learners (what do students bring to learning), environments (healthy, safe, protective, gender-sensitive), content (are curricula and materials relevant), processes and outcomes (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). Even though, different frameworks take different approaches in what good quality of education means, in general the realization of the importance for good quality of education has grown. A shift has taken place from placing emphasis on access and availability of education to quality of education (Courtney, 2008).

Surinam also experienced a shift in focusing on quality of education, rather than on access and availability of education. Surinam currently faces many difficulties in their education system on dimensions relating to either the human capital and human rights approach. Challenges Surinam encounters, is the struggle to provide well-equipped teachers [human rights], inadequate teacher trainings and traditional methods of instruction [human capital], which do not stimulate students' active learning (Ori & Blanchard, 2015; Veny & De Graav, 2011). Besides this, there is still limited access to education [human capital] and low quality of education [human rights] in Surinam, which results into shortages in skilled labor (Khadan, 2018). Therefore, improvement is much needed.

Edukans, an international non-profit organization (NGO), works together with partner organisations throughout the world on improving quality of education. They have developed the Education Quality Intervention (Edu-q intervention), which aims to achieve good quality of education in multiple contexts across the world, including Surinam (Verboom, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The intervention makes use of an online assessment (the

Edu-q card), which is based on the Edu STAR model. This model is mostly based on the human rights approach, but also incorporated aspects of the human capital approach. The model aims for children to acquire knowledge and skills needed for decision-making, academic success, healthy socialization, and promote community improvements, enabling them to reach their full potential (Ünal, 2019). Thereby, it highlights five pillars: 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.). The intervention takes a participatory, monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) approach, which includes multiple stakeholders and aims for improvement by self-reflection (Estrella et al., 2006). Internal assessors (school leaders, teachers and parents) and external assessors (inspectors) will fill in the questions of the Edu-q card. These results will be directly generated and compared. Then a dialogue will be created between the external assessor (inspector) and internal assessors, guided by the inspector. The goal is to set up 3 action points for the school and make an improvement plan on the basis of these points. In the past, the intervention has been pilot tested in countries like Ghana and Ethiopia, but Surinam is the first country where it will be final tested. Edukans' goal is to transfer the intervention to several contexts on a global scale. The Surinamese schools which are joined under the Stichting Onderwijs Broeder Gemeente Suriname (SOEBGS), started with the intervention in March 2019.

For Edukans to be able to work towards its goal of improving quality of education in multiple contexts across the world, they have to stay critical and continuously aim for improvement of its products. Despite the fact that Edukans recognizes that quality of education is always dependent on the context (Edukans, n.d.), it is important to take into account that the intervention is still based on some of the global frameworks of quality of education (Verboom, 2018), which are criticized for not taking into account the local context enough and should be re-designed to be able to apply them on specific local contexts (Courtney, 2008; Tikly & Barrett, 2007). It appeared that for cross-cultural interventions to work effectively, it is essential to be cultural sensitive towards the country it is applied on, meaning to take into account their local context (Foronda, 2008; Tikly & Barrett, 2007). According to Birchler & Michaelowa (2013), educational help from external organisations has even led to a decrease of quality of education in some cases. Also, the PM&E approach used by the edu-q intervention, is based on global ideas on how to strengthen performance, efficiency and sustainability of interventions (Hilhorst &

Guijt, 2006). Edukans wants to know whether the intervention they have developed in the Netherlands fits in non-western contexts, like Surinam (van Straaten, personal communication, February 6, 2019).

The aim of this research will be to identify which elements contribute to cultural sensitivity of the Edu-q intervention in Surinam at primary and secondary schools (Paramaribo and Saramacca). Both the content of the intervention (Edu-q card) and the approach of the intervention will be reviewed. *Cultural sensitivity* is being aware of self and others and recognize/detect a diverse group or individual (Foronda, 2008). Some of the elements that achieve cultural sensitivity are: 1. Knowledge of cultural differences, values, beliefs and practices, 2. Consider one's background, language, and beliefs, 3. Understanding practices that are different or unfamiliar (Foronda, 2008).

Working elements of the PM&E method appeared to be: trust and an open relationship between stakeholders, which helps to create a dialogue (Estrella et al., 2006). However, challenges during PM&E interventions were to be clear on responsibilities of stakeholders (Estrella et al., 2006; Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006). Also, specifically within the Edu-q intervention challenges have occurred. In Ethiopia during the pilot version, no improvement points were made. A possible explanation for this, is that in the Ethiopian culture it is not common to take time for reflection (Verboom, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Since the inspector should guide the discussion within the Edu-q intervention in which it is important that stakeholders will come to a consensus and will reflect on each other (Verboom, 2018), this study will also gain insight in the competency and needs of the inspectors for feeling competent to guide the assessment.

Edukans has to be open to apply adaptations to the Edu-q intervention in order to be cultural sensitive. In other words, taking an emic approach (Abubakar, 2015). On the other hand, an etic approach is needed for universal application, meaning that no changes are acquired across different contexts (Abubakar, 2015). Though, the danger with etic interventions is that they are often designed by western scientists who apply their standards to other cultures (Courtney, 2008). This can result in incorrectly minimizing group differences, resulting in stereotypes based on inappropriate western interpretations (Gil & Bob, 1999). On the one hand, the Edu-q intervention is an etic intervention, because the process consists of different steps (e.g. training inspectors, informing stakeholders, filling in the edu-q card questionnaire, having a discussion),

that should be followed to reach the goal. On the other hand there is flexibility in the way this is carried out, which relates to the emic approach. The Edu-q card also has both an emic and etic side. On the one hand, Edukans is open to apply changes in formulations of the items to make it culturally applicable (emic approach), but on the other hand there is a certain standardization, since the content of the items and dimensions should stay the same in every context to secure universal application (etic approach).

In terms of societal relevance; identifying how the intervention actually works in the context of Surinam, can contribute to the further development of the Edu-q intervention Thereby, the elements achieving cultural senstivity can also be taken into account while implementing the edu-q intervention in other contexts. Furthermore, this qualitative research builds upon the quantative research of Ünal (2019) towards the Edu-q card.

In terms of scientific relevance; for Edukans and other organizations working with similar interventions, it is interesting to discover how the Edu-q card, but also the PM&E working method of the Edu-q intervention, is translated in the context of Surinam and if it works. This can also contribute to the needs of the follow-up training at the end of April, but also to future trainings in different countries. In November 2018 the inspectors had their first edu-q training in Surinam. In the follow-up training in April, the inspectors will among others receive extra tools for leading the assessments on the basis of past assessments. Lastly, mainly quantitative research has been done in general towards strategies to enhance educational development, based on global quality frameworks, while qualitative research can contribute to really gaining insight into how these strategies are fleshed out in local contexts (Jerrard, 2016). Furthermore, growing importance is placed on the procedures and processes that take place in improving quality of education, instead of just looking at the learning outcomes (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2015).

Quality of education

The first question of this study is: *'Do the conceptualizations on quality of education of the external (inspectors) and internal assessors (school leaders, teachers and parents) align with the pillars of the Edu-q card?* Since the goal of the intervention is to improve quality of education, it is important to research whether Edukans' view on what quality of education entails collides with what the Surinamese stakeholders understand by quality of education. Exploring the conceptualizations on quality of education will also gain insight into whether the intervention

measures what it is supposed to measure (Van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996). This is also called construct validity (Messick, 1995; 1998). Thus, does the Edu-q intervention in fact measure quality of education? The danger when constructs, in this case quality of education, are based on global models, is that underrepresentation of the construct can occur. For example, intelligence tests are mostly based on global models and when transferred across countries, it appears that the conceptualization of intelligence is often broader in the received countries than what the global model focuses on (Van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996). On the other hand, an instrument can also be too broad, in this case that would mean including irrelevant dimensions of quality of education (Admiraal, Hoeksma, Van de Kamp, & Van Duin, 2011). To prevent this from happening, the intervention should be cultural sensitive (Foronda, 2008).

To gain insight into how Surinamese stakeholders will conceptualize quality of education, it is important to truly try to understand how they value education, so why they think it is important. Next to this, it is crucial to see how they believe good education can be reached (Foronda, 2008). It is expected that the conceptualizations of Edukans and the Surinamese stakeholders on quality of education will partly overlap and partly not. Surinamese stakeholders will probably attach more value to the human capital approach, since human capital constraints seems to be one of the biggest development challenges of Surinam (Khadan, 2018). Besides this, it can be expected that most importance will be placed on the pillars: Teaching and Learning, because of the lack of well-equipped teachers and the traditional way of teaching (Ori & Blanchard, 2015; Veny & De Graav, 2011). As a consequence, there is a chance that the other pillars will be seen as less important at this moment. In their eyes, the Edu-q card therefore can be seen as too broad.

Consequential validity

The second question of this research is: *Does the Edu-q intervention meet the intended consequences in terms of fairness, meaningfulness and transparency from the perspectives of internal and external assessors?* Meaningfulness, fairness and transparency all belong to the consequential validity (Admiraal et al., 2011). Consequential validity focuses on the positive and negative consequences and both the intended and unintended consequences of an intervention (Shepard, 1997). Like Courtney (2008) describes, monitoring tools may determine the intended outcomes for an intervention, but can fail to determine unintended consequences. Edukans' intentions are to improve quality of education on a global scale (Ünal, 2019) and it is essential to

see whether these intentions are met. Thus; does the Edu-q intervention achieve what it is supposed to achieve in the context of Surinam according to Edukans? Research shows that an intervention will be effective whenever cultural sensitivity will be reached (Foronda, 2008). Admiraal et al. (2011) have operationalized consequential validity in terms of fairness, meaningfulness, and transparency, towards an educational assessment tool. Edukans can only meet their intended consequences whenever the intervention is fair, meaningful and transparent.

Meaningful is conceptualized by Admiraal et al. (2011) as whenever the procedure is considered valuable by the involved stakeholders. Edukans views the Edu-q intervention as meaningful to improve quality of education, and believes the PM&E approach is the way to achieve their goal. Edukans believes that by taking such an approach in which a discussion will be held between these external and internal stakeholders, insight can be given into an underlying framework, which provides structure and insight into the points of improvements for the schools (van Straaten, personal communication, February 6). But do the Surinamese stakeholders also believe that the intervention contributes to good quality of education and if not, why not? And what is their vision on the PM&E approach?

Fairness means to what extent the consequences of the assessment are the same for everyone (Admiraal et al., 2011). In case of the Edu-q intervention, this refers to whether the consequences of conducting the assessments at the schools, are the same for every school (Shepard, 1997). So the goal is for every school to make action points and be able to realize these points in about a year time. The intervention can be considered fair whenever there are equal chances for setting up action points on the basis of honest results and equal chances for realizing these points (Hoeksma, personal communication, 28 May). If this is not the case, the intervention should be considered unfair.

Transparency can be understood by whether there is clear communication on assessment tasks and responsibilities (Admiraal et al., 2011; Cheng & Moses, 2016). In order to reach the desirable intentions of the Edu-q intervention, everyone's tasks and roles should be clear. Edukans' idea is that the inspector has more of a guiding role, and together with the school leader takes its responsibility to realize the action points. Moreover, they are hoping all the stakeholders will view their role as being open and give their honest opinion and act upon this (van Straaten, personal communication, February 6, 2019). Whenever the intervention will be considered unfair at points, or whenever Surinamese stakeholders might have different views on

the meaningfulness of the intervention and/or the intervention will not be transparent at points, it will be interesting to see whether this can be related to Surinam having another background, beliefs, values, language and practices.

The difference in culture between the Netherlands and Surinam will most likely have effect on the consequential validity of the intervention. Regarding fairness; since the questions of the Edu-q card are developed by Dutch experts, there is a possibility that questions can be difficult to understand for Surinamese lower educated parents (Sitaldin, Watkin, Vis, & Smits, 2011), which could hinder an honest discussion and action points. In terms of meaningfulness, in Surinam a lot of emphasis seems to be placed on having respect for one another (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Mingoen, personal communication; 22 february, 2019), which could lead to Surinamese stakeholders having another view on the participatory approach in which giving feedback and reflecting on each other is important. Looking at transparency, considering the fact that transparency appeared to be a challenge in PM&E interventions, it is expected that being clear on tasks and responsibilities can be difficult (Estrella et al., 2006; Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006).

Competency and needs inspectors

The last question of this study is: *Are the inspectors competent in guiding the intervention and what are the needs of the inspectors (regarding future trainings) in order to feel competent, based on perspectives of external (inspectors) and internal assessors?* The inspector is an important actor in the process as he or she is guiding the intervention. For him or her to be able to do this, he/she should feel competent. Competency can be defined as skills, knowledge and abilities to perform a specific task (Jones & Voorhees, 2002). Competency in this study can be seen as what skills, knowledge and abilities the inspectors already contain. Needs can be seen as the skills, knowledge and abilities the inspector still needs to acquire.

As creating an honest discussion leading to improvement points is the core of the intervention, competent leadership from the inspector is needed (Verboom, 2018). This appeared to be essential for making a change (in the case of Edu-q intervention, making points of improvement) (Jones & Voorhees, 2002). Furthermore, for an intervention to be cultural sensitive it is important to take a look at possible barriers they experience/expect (Foronda, 2008). Perspectives from both external (inspectors) and internal assessors regarding barriers can provide insight into the needs of the inspectors for future assessments to feel more competent.

On the other hand, positive aspects provide insight into which competencies the inspectors already contain and do not need improvement.

It is expected that it will differ to what extent inspectors will feel competent in leading the assessments. The trainer from Edukans who gave training to the inspectors in Surinam in November 2018 stated that even though some inspectors probably will be competent in terms of coming to an agreement with the school leader, others might feel more difficulties in standing up for themselves (van Straaten, personal communication, February 6, 2019). A possible explanation for this is the importance of showing respect to each other in Surinam that comes with the power distance and hierarchy, which seems to be highly present in Surinam (Hofstede et al., 2010). This could mean that inspectors would need to learn skills on how to deal with stakeholders with higher positions. Another expected barrier is that giving feedback to each other could be difficult. Apparently in the first training it became clear that in Surinam they are not used to give feedback (van Straaten, personal communication, February 6, 2019). This would ask for an inspector to have the skills to trigger a discussion in which honest feedback is given to each other.

Method

Type of research

This study has taken a qualitative approach, in which experiences, situations, interactions and persons are interpreted and described to their nature or characteristics (Baar, 2002). Thereby, it was an open, flexible and interpretative type of study focussing on the subjective sensemaking of the participants in order to place the strength of their story central. Athe same time, an holistic approach was taken. Besides conducting interviews, observations were held as field orientation and support for the interviews and interpretation of the results. For both the interviews and observations, topics have been set up (see Appendix A, B, C) guiding the researcher in what to look at during observations.

Participants

The researcher made use of a purposive sample, meaning that particular stakeholders were deliberately selected (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). During the interviews, the stakeholders either already conducted the assessments or were still going to conduct the assessments. The researcher had an observing role during these assessments. In total 6 schools have been visited: 5 primary schools, and one secondary school. Two of the schools were situated in the district of Saramacca

and 4 of them in Paramaribo. In total 21 interviews have been conducted, including 6 school leaders, 5 inspectors, 5 teachers, 4 parents and the head of the inspectors of the SOEBGS. This research strived for the content of the results to be generalisable to similar or corresponding situations (Boeije, 2010). Because understanding the background, beliefs, values and practices of the other culture are important in achieving cultural sensitivity, before starting the interview, the participants were asked to tell something about their backgrounds.

Instrument

The researcher set up different topics per research question (see Appendix A), which formed a basis for the asked questions: (1) Beliefs (What do you believe is needed in order to achieve good quality of education?) Values (Why do you think education is important?) (2) Fairness (To what extent could you fill in the questions; if not, what did you do?), Meaningfulness (To what extent do you think the assessment will contribute to the improvement of quality of education in Surinam?) Transparency (Do you feel like your responsibilities/tasks are clearly defined?) (3) Competency (To inspectors: Do you feel competent in carrying out the intervention? If not, what skills would you need in order to feel competent? – To internal assessors: What kind of atmosphere did you experience during the assessment?) Obstacles (Did you experience any obstacles during the assessment procedure? If yes, which?) Positive aspects (Did you experience positive aspects during the assessment? If yes, which?)

These topics and questions offered the researcher guidance during the interviews, but the researcher could deviate from these. The researcher has chosen to make use of semi-structured interviews. The reason for this is that this provided a clear picture on the attitudes, values, experiences and beliefs of different stakeholders, which was were very important in this research (Boeije, 2010). Furthermore, the researcher has adapted questions throughout the process. After the first few interviews, the researcher noticed that some questions seemed to lead to socially desirable answers. To prevent this from happening again, questions were asked in a more open and less steering way. This contributed to the internal validity of the study (Baarda et al., 2013).

Procedure

Before going to Surinam, the researcher has spoken to several informants at the headquarter of Edukans in the Netherlands, namely 2 project leaders on the Edu-q intervention, and an edu-q trainer. Then at SOEBGS in Surinam, a conversation has taken place with the head of administration and the head of facilities and finance before going into the field. Talking to

these different informants was to gain more insight into the use of the Edu-q intervention in several contexts and get an idea on how this research could be of added value to Edukans. In the first week in Surinam, the researcher conducted observations at 5 information sessions in which the school leaders were informed on the Edu-q intervention for the first time. The following five weeks the observations and interviews were conducted. The average duration of the interviews is 36 minutes. The interviews were recorded to make sure the answers of the respondents could be literally translated in the results, which contributes to the reliability of the study (Baarda, De Goede, & Teunissen, 2013). Making use of topics and making notes during the interviews to be able to ask the right follow-up questions, both helped to secure the internal validity (Baarda et al., 2013).

To secure the reliability and validity of the researcher, anonymity was ensured to respondents (Baarda et al., 2013). The anonimity was secured by using numbers in the verbatim transcripts and analysis. Furthermore, every respondent was informed they would have the chance to get insight into their transcribed script. Moreover, the researcher positioned herself as a student who is there to do research and not as an expert. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher already met with the inspectors and school leaders she wanted to interview. She introduced herself and asked them if they would agree to being interviewed. In some cases whenever meeting beforehand was not possible, the researcher sent an e-mail to each inspector and school leader to personally ask for consent to be interviewed. All inspectors and school leaders gave consent either via e-mail or verbally. The parents and teachers were informed beforehand by the school leaders and gave consent either via written notes or verbally. The goal of the interview was explained to every respondent before starting the interview.

Analysis

The interviews have been analyzed with the qualitative inductive methods of Baar (2002) and Baarda et al. (2013). Analytical induction has been used for answering the research questions. By first labeling the interviews and then working towards core labels, each research question could be answered. The core labels derive from constant comparing of respondents' statements. This systematic way of analyzing increases the reliability. Next to this, the observation data has been analyzed on the basis of the corresponding topics and highlighting the parts that are aligned with these topics. Also the internal validity has been secured by labeling

and remaining close to the spoken words of the interviewees (Baar & Wubbels, 2013). In order to control the analysis, a code is placed behind each label.

<div align="center">**Results**</div>

In this section, the most important results will be discussed per operationalized research question. The core labels, developed from the qualitative analysis, are italicized and illustrated with quotations from the interviews. At some points these quotations are supported or contradicted with observations during assessments. The different stakeholders are represented as follows: Inspectors (I), School leaders (S), Teachers (T), Parents (P), Researcher (R) and at last the head of the inspectors is also regarded as (I) to secure anonimity. It should be noted that whenever the amount of replies are explicitly mentioned, this is just an indication. For example if 2 out of 5 inspectors mentioned something, it does not immediately mean that the other 3 have a different opinion on this. The quotes are in Dutch to secure connotation and sensemaking. The cultural sensitive elements are indicated in bold.

Quality of education

Conceptualizations on quality of education from internal and external stakeholders will be revealed. First, the value placed on education will be reviewed, which will be linked to the Surinamese background and values. Second, it will be displayed how stakeholders believe good quality of education can be reached. These will be linked to the pillars of the Edu-q card and to the elements achieving cultural sensitivity.

The most common reasons for why education is considered to be important are: *stimulating children to reach far*, *good citizenship* and *teach children to have respect.* The first two reasons especially seem to be important in Surinam, because of the *bad connection from studies to the job market* and their low **socioeconomic status**. As a consequence, students will work in a different sector or leave the country. Besides, not everyone is given access to education: ''Wat je ook merkt is dat hierdoor ook de sociale economische situatie zorgen baart waardoor niet iedereen toegang heeft tot onderwijs'' (I2). *Teach children to have respect* is something that appeared to be very important in Surinam and relates to the **hierarchy**, which appeared to be present in their culture:

> Het meest belangrijke is dat je kind een volwaardige burger wordt. Een burger van het land. Iemand met iets in zijn bagage. Dat is ons streven. Hij moet een basis hebben daarom sturen we dat kind toch naar school zodat die een basis heeft. . . . Om het land te

helpen vooruit te brengen. Dat is wat ik van mijn kind wil. . . . Volwaardig is niet

eigenlijk alleen een diploma die je hebt en het werk dat je doet. Salaris, al heb je 1000 srd

in de maand, dat is niks als je geen respect hebt voor je medemens. (P3)

Looking at stakeholders' beliefs on how to achieve quality of education, it seemed that 6

stakeholders mentioned the importance of all the pillars for quality of education. More explicitly,

active learning (pillar 2, Learning), *differentiated teaching, qualified teachers* (pillar 3,

Teaching), *good leadership* and *cooperation within schools* (pillar 4, School management) have

been mentioned as important in achieving good quality of education. Pillar 1 (Learning

environment) has not been mentioned very often, but the observations showed that often the

action points were related to the learning environment, like improving sanitary facilities. Most

emphasis has been placed on the last pillar (Parents & Community). Three school leaders, 2

teachers and 1 parent placed high value on *parent participation* and having a *triangle between*

parents, school and the child: ''Ja dan kunnen we zelfs die kinderen samen opvoeden bij de

school. dan kunnen wij als ouders die leerkrachten helpen met die kinderen thuis ook'' (P4).

The importance placed on involving parents in school could be due to challenges

Surinam is facing in their education system, like: *truancy, students repeating a year*, and *low*

parental involvement. Three inspectors, 2 parents, 3 teachers and 1 school leader mentioned

either a high rate of broken families, children being raised by familymembers other than their

parents and parents who accidentally get children. This appeared to occur often in their culture.

Consequential validity

Meaningfulness. Looking at meaningfulness, a considerable amount of stakeholders that

different opinions are valuable for schools to improve, because the *triangle between parents,*

school and the child is emphasized:

Prachtig. . . Want je weet het is een driehoek toch. Ouders, school, kind. We hebben de

ouders nodig. Zij mogen ook hun zegje doen. We weten het niet. We kunnen ook fouten

maken en we weten het niet. Daarvoor zijn zij er toch. (T1)

Evaluating with all the different stakeholders together also appeared to be new for all the

participating schools. Thereby, one teacher explicitly mentioned the usefulness of the discussion

between the different stakeholders: ''Zinvol. . . . En inhoudelijk goed. Het was niet zomaar een

discussie. . . . En we zijn eruit gekomen, dat is ook belangrijk'' (T1). Though, the observations

sometimes showed that, especially teachers and parents could be very quiet and struggled to give

their opinion. This most likely relates to the value placed on **hierarchy**. Also in terms of meaningfulness; 5 inspectors, 3 school leaders and 1 teacher responded that this intervention gives them *insight into points for improvement* and that it is a *transparent* instrument which provides a certain structure:

> Het is goed, ze kunnen zo makkelijker en niet dat de ene cluster het op zo een manier doet en de ander op zo een manier, maar iedereen werkt met hetzelfde, met dezelfde app, en het is transparant, en ze kunnen makkelijker zien van oke, hier op moet ik nog bijsturen en dat gaat nog niet zo goed. Dus het is wel goed. (I1)

Fairness. Regarding fairness, the most important obstacle appeared to be that in fact 11 stakeholders, both external and internal, were *not able to fill in certain questions*. The reasons for this were: 1. The questions were too complicated, especially for parents 2. The parents could not fill in questions due to a lack of knowledge about the pillars: learning, teaching and school management, 3. In Surinam they use a different type of **language** than in the Netherlands: ''Ik denk die vragen zijn aan onze cultuur niet zo bekend, die begrippen'' (S6).

Even though, most parents said they did not mind to leave questions open, there was also one parent who did not like it and therefore decided to *guess answers*:

> Ja en wat deed u dan als u dat niet wist? (R) Gissen! Omdat ik dus de leerkracht dat zal ze wel zo doen denk ik. . . . Ik heb twee open gelaten, want ik vind het echt niet ok om daar iets te zetten als ik het echt niet weet. . . . (P1) En vond u dat vervelend dat u bepaalde dingen niet kon invullen? (R) Ja ja, dat vind ik niet fijn. (P1)

Transparency. Thirdly, in terms of transparency it seemed to be a process from; in the beginning not knowing exactly what role the inspector and what role the school leader would play, to receiving more clarity in the end. This can also be supported by observations during the process:

> Tijdens de Edukans training toen dit project geïntroduceerd werd was het wel duidelijk wat mijn rol is, en wat ik moet doen, hoe ik het moet introduceren. Maar gaandeweg tijdens de voorbereidingen werd het vaag… maar uiteindelijk heeft het afdelingshoofd gesproken met Edukans en hebben zij onze rol aangegeven. Dus toen was het weer duidelijk voor mij. (I4)

From the observations it appeared that in the end the inspectors took the *guiding role* on them. This also shows from answers of 4 inspectors and 2 schoolleiders.

Competency and needs inspectors

Some of the positive aspects of the intervention is the fact that many stakeholders considered *a smooth course of* assessment, and experienced a *good participation of stakeholders*. However, also notable barriers were found that can serve as feedback for skills, abilities and knowledge inspectors need to acquire. From both interviews and observations it became clear that giving feedback on each other appeared to be difficult, especially to someone with *a higher* position. *Showing respect to someone with a higher position* and *showing respect to older people* sets forth from the **hierarchy** principle. This can lead to stakeholders *not speaking freely* to each other. Two inspectors, 1 school leader and 1 parent confirmed this. This can also be confirmed by the observation during the assessment, where especially the teachers did not say anything during the entire session:

> Ik had wel het gevoel dat in het begin van de discussie de leerkrachten bang waren om te praten bij de vragen over schoolmanagement omdat de directeur er ook bij was. . . . en mensen kunnen zichzelf altijd iets beter uiten dan wanneer er een volwassene persoon bij zit of een persoon met een hogere functie bij zit. Dan, ja soms is dat echt bepalend voor het gesprek omdat mensen zich dan anders gaan opstellen. Ze kiezen hun woorden. En ze praten anders want ze zijn een beetje bang, een beetje nerveus. Hoe we zijn in Suriname van je moet respect hebben voor je ouderen, soms bij bepaalde bevolkingsgroepen gaat het zo ver dat ze zeggen van alles wat een volwassen persoon tegen je zegt is waar. Je moet geen gelijk zoeken bij ze. (I4)

> ''Ze zeggen het niet, ze zitten daar in die lerarenkamer allerlei dingen te zeggen. Maar nee als je ze gaat confronteren dan hebben ze niks te zeggen.'' (S3)

This difficulty of speaking freely with someone who is older or with a higher position could also possibly be related to the fact that *school leaders can be resistant,* which was mentioned by one inspector.

Discussion

The aim of this research was to identify which elements contribute to cultural sensitivity of the Edu-q intervention in Surinam at primary and secondary schools (Paramaribo and Saramacca). By answering this aim, recommendations for Edukans can be provided which contribute to the further development of the Edu-q intervention. Moreover, this research provides

a better understanding on how strategies to enhance educational development using global quality frameworks, are fleshed out in local contexts.

Quality of education

The first question of this study was: *'Do the conceptualizations on quality of education of the external (inspectors) and internal assessors (school leaders, teachers and parents) align with the pillars of the Edu-q card?'* The expectation that these conceptualizations would partly overlap and partly differ has not been confirmed. As expected, they both wish for children to become successful and reach their full potential, fitting the human capital approach. Though, Surinamese stakeholders also seemed to emphasize the human rights approach, stating the importance of teaching children respect. This corresponds with Edukans' goal for a child to acquire the knowledge and skills for a healthy socialization (Ünal, 2019). Teaching children respect can be explained by the fact that **hierarchy** is highly valued in Surinam (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The expectation that stakeholders would place more importance on the Teaching and Learning pillar and therefore less emphasis would be placed on the other pillars, can not be confirmed. In fact, most stakeholders highlighted the Parents & Community pillar. Thereby, every pillar was seen as crucial for achieving good quality of education. A possible explanation for the explicit importance placed on pillar 5, is the low parental involvement in Surinam. This can possibly be explained by the low **socioeconomic status** of Surinam. Parents who live in poorer conditions namely experience more trouble in supporting their child in their educational development (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Consequential validity

The second question of this study was: *'Does the Edu-q intervention meet the intended consequences in terms of fairness, meaningfulness and transparency from the perspectives of internal and external assessors?'*

Meaningfulness. Firstly, in terms of meaningfulness, it appeared that most stakeholders saw the intervention with the PM&E approach as a meaningful way to achieve good quality of education. Though, from the observations it seemed that at some schools, the stakeholders had a difficult time to give feedback on each other. This last outcome is in line with the expectation and can be explained by the value placed on **hierarchy** (Hofstede et al., 2010). A possible explanation for this contrast in seeing the value of it, but not showing this in their behavior, is that even though

Surinamese citizens have strong opinions on societal issues, they do not actively seek for change (Martin, 2001). Therefore, it is recommended for future research to find out how to empower Surinamese citizens to act upon their thoughts.

Fairness. The expectation that the fairness is hindered by the level of questions being too high for parents has been confirmed. This can be explained by parents' low educational levels, deriving from the low **socioeconomic status** of Surinam (Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq, & Berhanu, 2011). At the same time, the current **socioeconomic status** of Surinam could prevent schools from realizing their action points, given the lack of resources. On the other hand, an unexpected obstacle for filling in questions honestly appeared to be **language**. Even though, in Surinam the Dutch language is used, they still use a lot of different words (Van Kempen, 2006). At last, the lack of knowledge about certain pillars, possibly relates to the low parental involvement in Surinam. Since a low **socioeconomic status** seemed to be an obstacle in realizing action points and the source of low educational levels and low parental involvement, it would be recommended for future research to investigate how Surinam could improve their **socioeconomic status**.

Transparency. The expectation that transparency could form a challenge is confirmed. The multi-stakeholder approach, including many different tasks, is a possible explanation for this struggle (Estrella et al., 2006). Another possible explanation is that this intervention was in the starting phase. Surinam was the first country where the final versions were being assessed, and it seemed that Edukans also still encountered new struggles they did not foresee.

Competency and needs

The last question of this study was: *'Are the inspectors competent in guiding the intervention and what are the needs of the inspectors (regarding future trainings) in order to feel competent, based on perspectives of the external (inspectors) and internal assessors?'* The expectancy that inspectors would need skills in order to guide the intervention, because stakeholders would experience difficulties in giving feedback to each other is confirmed. This especially appeared to be difficult for people with lower positions to people with higher positions. This most likely derives from the **hierarchy** principle (Hofstede et al., 2010).

To conclude, the following elements have appeared as most important to take into account while implementing the Edu-q intervention in the context of Surinam: **hierarchy**, **socioeconomic status** and **language**. These elements should also be taken into account while

implementing the intervention in other non-western contexts, but also in similar cross-cultural interventions. In terms of the content of the Edu-q card, it appeared that the different pillars adequately reflect quality of education for the specific context of Surinam. Regarding the approach of the Edu-q intervention; the Surinamese stakeholders seemed to recognize the meaningfulness of the intervention and felt a strong willingness to work with the intervention. Though, it seemed that the approach does not fit their culture and adaptations need to be made in order to be able to reach Edukans' intended consequences. These results are in line with the results of Kopp (2019) who has conducted a similar study in Ethiopia. **Hierarchy** seemed to be an obstacle in providing feedback on each other. This in its turn makes it more difficult to have an honest open discussion. Therefore, inspectors need skills to be able to trigger a discussion. Furthermore, both a low **socioeconomic status** and **language** have caused difficulties in filling in questions, producing a risk for achieving intended consequences, namely: not filling in honest answers and therefore not creating an honest discussion and improvement points.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this research. First of all, considering the fact that the interviews were semi-structured, in different interviews slightly different questions have been asked. Secondly, two things formed risks for interviewees giving social desirable answers (Baarda et al., 2013). Namely, the interviews of the internal stakeholders always took place at the school where they work or where their children attend school. Thereby, due to lack of space, the interviews were assessed in the same room as where other interviews took place.

In terms of generalizability, the results of the inspectors and school leaders are easier to translate to other contexts than the results of the parents and teachers (Boeije, 2010). The interviews of the parents and teachers took a lot shorter than the interviews of the inspectors and school leaders. This could possibly be explained by the fact that inspectors and school leaders have more knowledge on the education in Surinam than the other stakeholders. Also, fewer parents were interviewed in comparison with the rest of the stakeholders. This had to do with lack of time. In future research, it would be recommended to take more time to do research in the field. This would also create the opportunity to examine more schools, including schools with different backgrounds, which would contribute to the ecological validity (Baarda et al., 2013). The schools in this research have a strict Christian background, which worked together with Edukans before.

On the other hand, one of the strong aspects of this study was the fact that it took an holistic approach. The researcher has been part of the entire process of the intervention, being included in both the 'distribution phase' and 'implementing phase' (Daamen, 2015). Besides doing interviews with stakeholders, the researcher has conducted observations at either information sessions for school leaders and inspectors and later on during the actual assessments. This has given the researcher a comprehensive understanding of the entire process of the intervention. Also, the observations were useful as support for the interviews.

Implications

This research has showed that Edukans has to combine an etic and emic approach in order to make the Edu-q intervention cultural sensitive for Surinam, but also for other contexts. The alignment of the conceptualizations on quality of education of Edukans and the Surinamese stakeholders, indicate that the content of the Edu-q card can stay the same across contexts (etic).

However, the fact that stakeholders experienced troubles filling in questions due to the **language** barrier and their **socioeconomic status**, more clarification of the questions is needed. Multiple recommendations can be provided for Edukans in order to solve this issue. Firstly, Edukans could adapt the formulations of the questions (emic). An appropriate translation takes psychological, linguistic and cultural aspects into consideration and contributes to the validity of the tool (Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004). Therefore, an advice would be to involve Surinamese stakeholders into translating items. Secondly, stakeholders could be given more insight into the questions beforehand. This would give them more opportunity to think about the meaning of a question and hereby provide more honest answers to the questions. Thirdly, a possibility would be to give parents more time for observations within their children's schools. At the same time, parental involvement possibly will be increased. Inviting parents and having an open attitude towards parents namely seemed to increase parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The importance placed by parents on 'having a triangle between parents, the child and school', gives hope for a future in Surinam in which the civil society will be strengthened, which contributes to the educational development of children (de Winter, 2012). These different solutions will most likely contribute to Edukans achieving their intended consequences of creating a multi-stakeholder dialogue based on honest results.

Moreover, regarding the fact that **hierarchy** seemed to form an obstacle in creating a discussion, a recommendation for future trainings in different contexts can be to teach inspectors

how to trigger the dialogue between the stakeholders. According to Estrella et al. (2006), especially in hierarchical organizations, creating a 'safe space' will help people with 'less power' to speak up to people with 'more power' and at the same time help people with 'more power' to listen to people with 'less power'. A safe space begins with ''Excavation of fear and the deconstruction of the social imagery that creates and supports a world organized around distance and separation'' (Stengel, 2010, p. 526). Thus, it is important for Edukans to figure out what exactly holds the Surinamese stakeholders back in speaking up to others, especially to older and 'more powerful' people.

Gaining insight into these different elements leading to cultural sensitivity of the intervention, has given Edukans concrete tools to further develop the Edu-q intervention in contexts on a global scale. By taking into account the recommendations for transferring their intervention to different contexts, eventually Edukans will be able to improve quality of education throughout the world.

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Appendix A

Topic list interviews

Question 1: How is quality of education defined by internal and external stakeholders?

Information about the assessment that is used to formulate topics for question 1:

The Edu-q card is based on the STAR-school model which describes that a 'good school' has five dimensions: 1. A conductive, safe learning environment. 2. Good guidance during the learning process. 3. Good educated and motivated teachers. 4. Organized school management and 5. Involvement of parents and the community (Iedere school een STER-school - Edukans, n.d.).

Intended for: inspectors (external assesor), school leaders, teachers and parents (internal assessors)

Topics	Questions
Beliefs	1. What do you believe is needed in order to achieve good quality of education? 2. Do you think the pillars of the Edu-q card cover quality of education? Follow-up questions: - Do you miss a pillar and if yes, what do you miss and why? - Do you find every pillar relevant? If no, which pillar not and why?
Values	How do you experience the quality of education in Surinam? Why do you think education is important? How do you hope the education in Surinam will look like in the future?

Question 2: What is the consequential validity of the Edu-q intervention from the perspectives of

internal and external assessors?

Intended for: inspectors (external assessor), school leaders, teachers and parents (internal

assessors)

Topics	Questions
Fairness	Did you experience any obstacles in answering the questions? If yes, how? If the assessments have not been done yet: What are your expected outcomes of the intervention? - Follow-up: positive/negative? If the assessments have been done: What are your perceived outcomes of the intervention? - Follow-up: positive/negative? To what extent do you think the action points will be realised? Is it even possible? To what extent could you fill in the questions; if not, what did you do?
Meaningfulness	To what extent do you think the assessment will contribute to the improvement of quality of education in Surinam? What do you think of the utility of the intervention and why do you think it is useful yes or no? What do you think of the different steps that are taken in the intervention? Follow-up: Do you find them useful/relevant? What do you think of the multi-stakeholder

	participatory approach? Do you think it is useful?
	Follow-up:
	   - If yes: why?
	   - If no: why?
	
	Would you want to change something in terms of the procedure of the intervention?
	Follow up: If so, what would you want to change and why?

Transparency	How would you describe your responsibilities/tasks during the assessments? And after?
	
	Do you feel like your responsibilities/tasks are clearly defined?
	
	How do you perceive your position towards the position of other stakeholders?
	Follow-up questions:
	   - Do you feel like there is an open relationship within you and the internal assessors?
	   - Do you feel like you can trust each other to express your opinions/views?
	Follow up:
	   - We read and heard that hierarchy is important in Surinam. What is your vision on this and do you think this could have influence on the assessments of the Edu-q card and if yes, how?

Question 3: Do the inspectors feel competent enough to execute the Edu-q intervention and what are the needs of the inspectors (regarding future trainings) in order to execute it?

Intended for internal assessors, thus the inspectors.

Topics	Questions
Competency	To inspectors (external assessors): Do you feel competent in carrying out the

	intervention? Follow up: - If not, what skills would you need in order to feel competent? To internal assessors: What kind of atmosphere did you experience during the assessment? Follow-up: - If good/open atmosphere: Why? - If closed/bad atmosphere: Why?
Obstacles	Did you experience any obstacles or will you expect any obstacles during the assessment procedure? Follow up: - If yes, how do you think these can be prevented/overcome
Positive aspects	Did you experience/will you expect positive aspects during the assessment? Follow up: - If yes, which?

Appendix B

Topics observations assessment

- How do the different assessors position themselves towards each other? (Is there power distance, are they being polite to each other, do they ask questions?)
- Is the goal clear of the tool?
- How do different stakeholders value the utility of the tool/do they find it meaningful?
- Are the different indicators of the Edu-q card understood?
- Are the different steps followed? (filling in the questionnaires by all stakeholders, creating a dialogue/discussion on the different pillars, formulating action points)
- What are obstacles?
- What is going well?
- What do the different stakeholders view as important pillars/indicators?
- Are the different stakeholders coming to a consensus? Is this difficult or not?
- Which action points are formulated and how?
- Are these observations in line with the interviews conducted?

Appendix C

Topics observations information sessions school leaders

- How is the intervention introduced? (Do they call it assessment, monitoring tool or something else?)
- How do the school leaders react on the fact that they will have to start with the assessments (some already quite soon?) - Are they showing resistance or are they compliant?
- How do the school leaders position themselves towards the head of the inspectors who leads the information session? (what is their attitude, are they polite, do they ask questions, do they pay attention?)
- Is everything clear to them? If no, what is not clear?
- Are these observations in line with the interviews?