

# QUALITÄTSKULTUR IN BERUFSBILDENDEN SCHULEN



## Using the Q-KULT Tool to Analyse the Quality Culture in Schools

- GUIDE -

540168-LLP-1-2013-1-AT-LEONARDO-LMP

[www.q-kult.eu](http://www.q-kult.eu)

Sabine Kurz, Helmut Ittner &  
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## 1 Introduction

As part of the Leonardo da Vinci project "Quality Culture (Q-KULT)"<sup>1</sup>, an instrument has been developed in order to help vocational schools to assess their organisational culture. The instrument was developed based on the assumption that every school has some kind of specific individual 'culture' that can also be assessed in terms of its own specific characteristics and is related (in a way that has yet to be defined) to the quality management system (and/or the quality procedure) used by the school in question.

The main question is: What influence does the specific culture of a school have on the implementation and/or further development of a quality management system? It is conceivable that a school's quality management system benefits from the school's own culture but also that this culture limits the implementation of the system. It may therefore be useful to have an instrument that can diagnose the specific culture of a school.

The instrument developed within the scope of the project is a revised version of the OCAI (Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument) for use in schools in German-speaking countries under the name Q-KULT Tool.<sup>2</sup>

This guide aims to provide a concrete description of the Q-KULT Tool for use in different potential applications in schools. In order to do so, it initially classifies the concept of "culture". The guide also contains a number of considerations about the situations in which the instrument can be used in schools and factors that need to be taken into consideration when using the instrument. The final part of the guide provides various examples showing how to interpret the results given by the instrument. These are included to provide the schools with guidance when dealing with these results. The instrument itself is included in the annex to this guide.

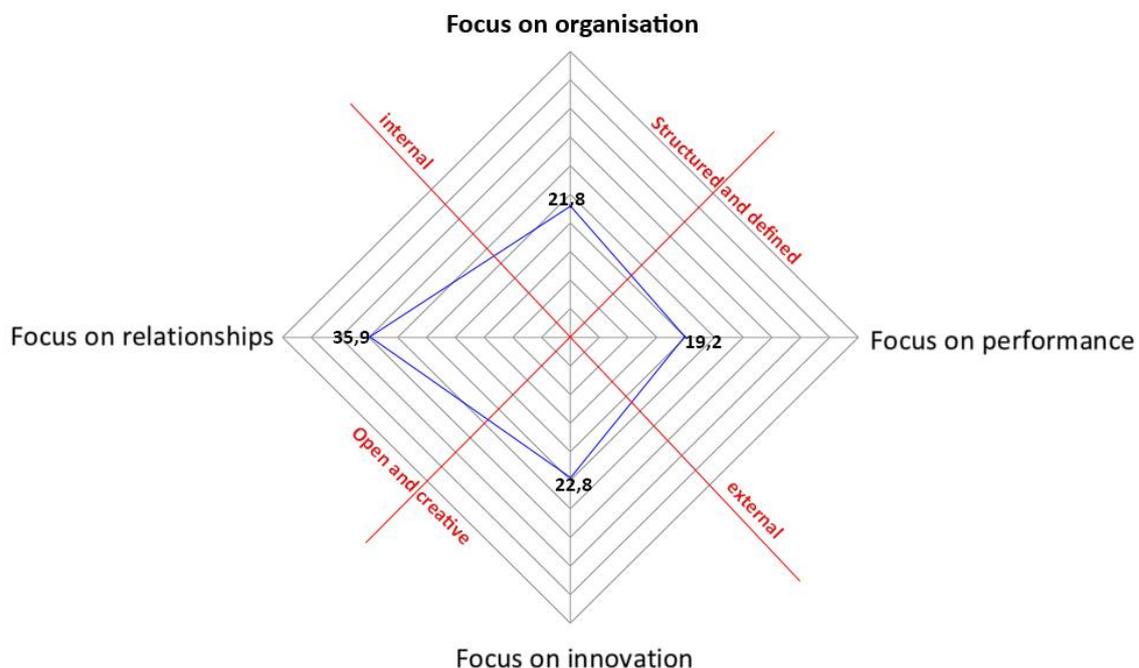


Fig. 1: Q-KULT Tool

<sup>1</sup> Cf. [www.q-kult.eu](http://www.q-kult.eu)

<sup>2</sup> Originally developed by Cameron/Quinn for assessing organisational culture (cf Cameron, K.S. & Quinn, R.E. (2006). Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: based on the competing values framework. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass)

## 2 Background information on the Tool

### 2.1 The understanding of culture used as a basis

In this guide, the assumption is made that, on the one hand, the culture of a school develops as a result of dealing with different internal and external requirements (e.g. the demands of students, the ministry and companies providing vocational training) and that, on the other hand, the culture of a school is characterised by factors that have proven successful when it comes to overcoming everyday challenges and reasonably reconciling interests. It is quite commonplace for culture to reveal itself as a result of regulations, language, ways of behaving, rituals, status characteristics, etc. (artefacts) but also in a discursive manner by means of strategies, moral and normative rules and/or statements, etc., as well as on a meaningful yet unconscious level through convictions, basic perspectives, secret rules, guiding principles, etc. On the whole, the assumption needs to be made that culture has (a certain) stability, which characterises the school and also contributes towards its internal cohesion.

This view follows the so-called 3-level model proposed by Edgar Schein, who defines culture as: *"A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems"*.<sup>3</sup>

The original OCAI instrument was not, however, derived from a theoretical model but is instead based on the "Competing Values Framework", a collection produced from empirical studies on the effectiveness of organisations.

### 2.2 Types of culture

The guiding principle behind the development of the OCAI into the Q-KULT Tool was the fact that the cultures that can be found in different contexts in organisations can be described using different types of culture. In this case, the assumption is made that a type of culture always develops functionally: on the one hand, with regard to managing external demands and internal problems and the associated conflicts of interests and, on the other hand, by tackling internal demands and problems in a more or less structured manner. There is therefore no such thing (!) as better or worse cultures but instead a number of varied yet clearly distinguishable types of culture. When using the Q-KULT Tool, these types are given different positions on the basis of the dimensions of "external versus internal orientation" and "structured and defined versus open and creative".

These dimensions are used as a basis for the classification of four types of culture, which are based relatively closely on the four types of organisational culture of the original OCAI instrument:

**Type 1:** Focus on organisation <=> Hierarchy (internal, structured/defined)

**Type 2:** Focus on performance <=> Market (external, structured/defined)

**Type 3:** Focus on relationships <=> Clan (internal, open/creative)

**Type 4:** Focus on innovation <=> Adhocracy (external, open/creative)

When developing the OCAI into the Q-KULT Tool, particular attention was paid to trying to adapt these four characteristic groups and the specifications on which they are based in a way that they

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<sup>3</sup> cf. Schein, E.H. (1992). "Organizational culture and leadership". San Francisco: Jossey Bass. And: Müthing, Kathrin (2013): "Organisationskultur im schulischen Kontext - theoriebasierter Einsatz eines Instrumentes zur Erfassung der Schulkultur" (Organisational Culture in a School Context - the Theory-Based Use of an Instrument for Assessing School Culture)

are able to successfully deal with the peculiarities of schools and the language use of the stakeholders at these schools:

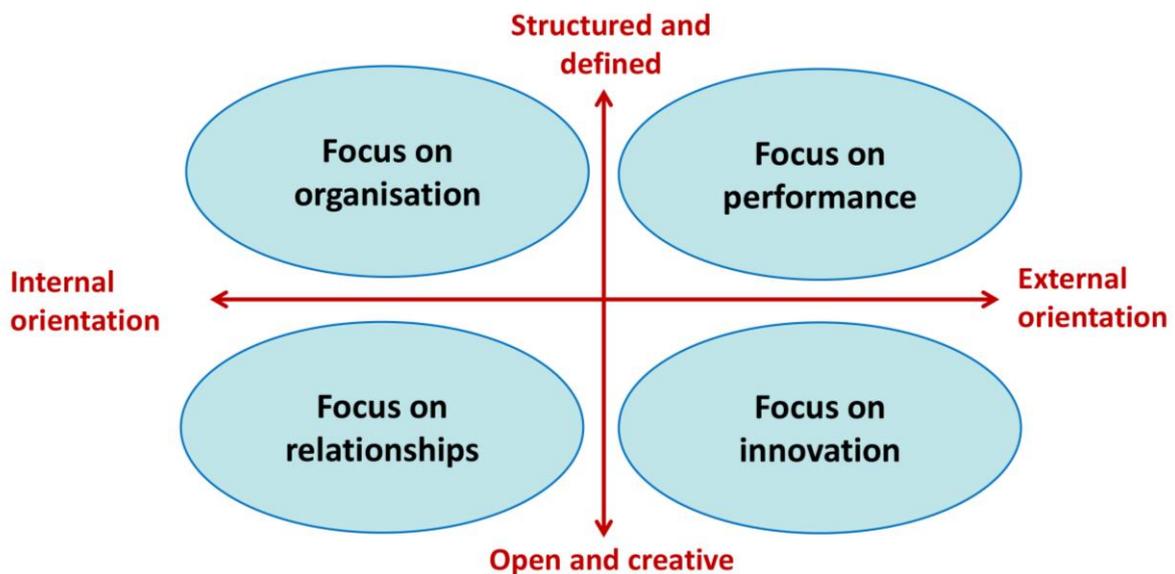


Fig. 2: Types of school

The following slogans/mottos, for example, can be assigned for an initial approach towards defining the types involved:

Focus on organisation – "**Reliability** is our strength!", "Everything is going really well!"

Focus on performance – "**Ambition** helps us to progress", "We did it!"

Focus on innovation – "**Enthusiasm** drives us on", "Great idea, let's do it!"

Focus on relationships – "**Harmony** holds us together", "That's good for all of us!"

### 2.3 Categories of analysis

The original version of the OCAI contains six aspects that have proven to be relevant categories of analysis (statements specified in brackets). There has also been a change made here based on the standards described above:

- Significant characteristics of the institution (Dominant characteristics)
- The leadership style of the institution's management team (Organisational leadership)
- HR management (Management of employees)
- What holds the institution together (Organisation glue)
- Strategic focuses (Strategic emphases)
- Success factors (Criteria of success)

A seventh category, "Quality concept", was added to these six categories of analysis. The categories refer to the properties of the organisation that are significantly characterised by culture. A descrip-

tion of the specific characteristics of these properties enables conclusions to be drawn with regard to the culture that forms the basis of the organisation.

The way in which the individuals involved in the analysis evaluate these aspects provides information on the characteristics of the organisation with regard to the four types of culture. This is then used to determine an overall result that reveals the school's specific type of culture.

## 2.4 Quality culture

The original OCAI has no direct or explicit reference to the topic of "quality". The original intention of the instrument was to determine and present the profile of an organisation in line with the two underlying dimensions of "Internal vs. external orientation" and "High vs. low structural preference" and according to the properties typical of its own individual culture. With the development into the Q-KULT Tool, a general analysis of a school's culture can be carried out with regard to the question concerning the extent to which the forms, tools or structures of a quality management system at a school suit the specific culture of the school in question. This is based on the assumption that the desired effects of a quality management system (the quality assurance procedures and tools) are more likely to be achieved if the system suits the school's own specific culture.

Use of the Q-KULT Tool therefore focuses on finding out whether the quality management system (or the quality assurance procedures and tools) of a school is suitable for its culture or not. When used for this purpose, the Q-KULT Tool becomes an instrument that can be helpful in providing a more detailed insight into the requirements of a functional quality management system with regard to the culture of a school. If one takes the view that cultures are, at least in the medium-term, extremely stable and can only be changed moderately and/or in the longer term, the following options are possible as a result of a culture analysis using the Q-KULT Tool: the quality management system could be adapted in order to ensure that the procedures and tools are optimally tailored to suit the existing culture. In line with the basic idea of the concept, this adaptation could help a school to achieve higher acceptance of its quality management system among its teaching staff. It is presumed that improved acceptance of the system also leads to a higher level of effectiveness of the school's quality management activities.

## 3 In what situations should the Q-KULT Tool be used?

The Q-KULT Tool is basically a helpful tool when a school is facing the following challenges:

- Introducing a quality management system
- Developing its quality management system (e.g. amending its mission statement, revising its rules of implementation, exploring the results of an internal or external evaluation, etc.)
- Appointing a new headmaster/headmistress
- Dealing with incomprehensible conflicts at the school
- Merging schools

In order to be able to use the instrument, a significant number of teaching staff must agree to the implementation of the Q-KULT assessment and expect the results to provide important findings.

The instrument can be used throughout the entire school (standard version with one result for the whole school). It is also possible to use the instrument only for specific areas (standard version with one result relating to a faculty or a location, for example individual results and one overall result).

## How is the culture analysis conducted with the Q-KULT Tool?

The use of the Q-KULT Tool involves a minimum of three steps:

- Evaluating the culture-related statements of the analysis questionnaire (100 points are distributed among four statements for each category of analysis; see Annex)
- Entering the results into an assessment tool
- Determining and presenting the results

The evaluation of the culture-related statements should ideally be carried out as a dialogue-based process, however, thus clearly widening the original analytic focus of the OCAI instrument. In our experience, carrying out the evaluation phase in two steps has proven to be successful. In this phase, groups of 2 to 3 members of staff should work together to discuss the given statements in relation to the question of which of these statements applies to their school and to what extent before deciding on how to distribute the 100 points among the four answer boxes. When doing so, we recommend using a paper-and-pencil version of the questionnaire and first of all asking the participants to individually distribute their points before deciding on the final allocation of points as a small group. Given that culture also always concerns fundamental perspectives, values and convictions which individuals are often unaware of in their everyday actions, the discourse-based stage of the procedure helps to encourage participants to consider fundamental evaluations and to challenge the partners in their small work groups to provide reasons that explain their convictions and perspectives.

Example:

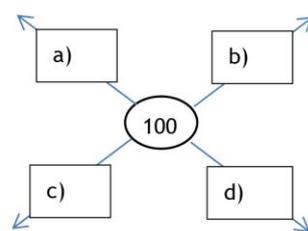
### 7) Quality concept

At our school, we understand „quality“ as meaning that we respond dynamically to the changing social requirements, and that we constantly develop.

At our school, we understand „quality“ as meaning that important work processes are thoroughly explained, well-coordinated, and functionally optimised.

At our school we understand „quality“ as meaning that the staff members provide each other with respectful feedback and suggestions for improvement, and help each other to implement these.

At our school, we understand „quality“ as meaning that the set learning objectives have been fully achieved and that we are able to get the best out of students (i.e. fulfil their potential)



**Fig. 3: An example of the distribution of points among four culture-related statements in a category of analysis**

From this point onwards, an online tool<sup>4</sup> developed specifically for the Q-KULT Tool can be used to support the implementation of the culture analysis. When using such a tool, two different options are conceivable:

#### Option 1

The small groups enter the results directly into the online tool at a time individually chosen by each group. Once all results have been entered, a person responsible for the analysis produces the overall result and discusses it with the participants at a later point in time (but soon after the analysis).

#### Option 2

The small groups all complete the procedure described above at the same time (as part of a workshop). A person responsible for the analysis ensures that the results are generated immediately so that the discussion about the overall result can directly follow the evaluation phase.

Regardless of which option is chosen, the instrument can either be used to diagnose the current situation only, the target situation only or both situations at the same time. The online tool offers a corresponding selection function for these different types of assessment. In the case of the paper-and-pencil version, two questionnaires must be used if an assessment of both the current and target situation is required.

## 4 Analysis and interpretation

The results relating to the seven categories of analysis are calculated by using an Excel table or the provided online tool. The calculation uses the following method: 4 point values are awarded per category. These values add up to a total of 100. The values awarded for each type of culture (a-d) are added up and divided by 7 (the number of categories of analysis) and the number of participants (groups or individuals), so that at the end, a total of 100 points are distributed among the four types of culture (Organisation, Performance, Relationships and Innovation). The number of points allocated to each type of culture therefore represents a calculated mean value (average).

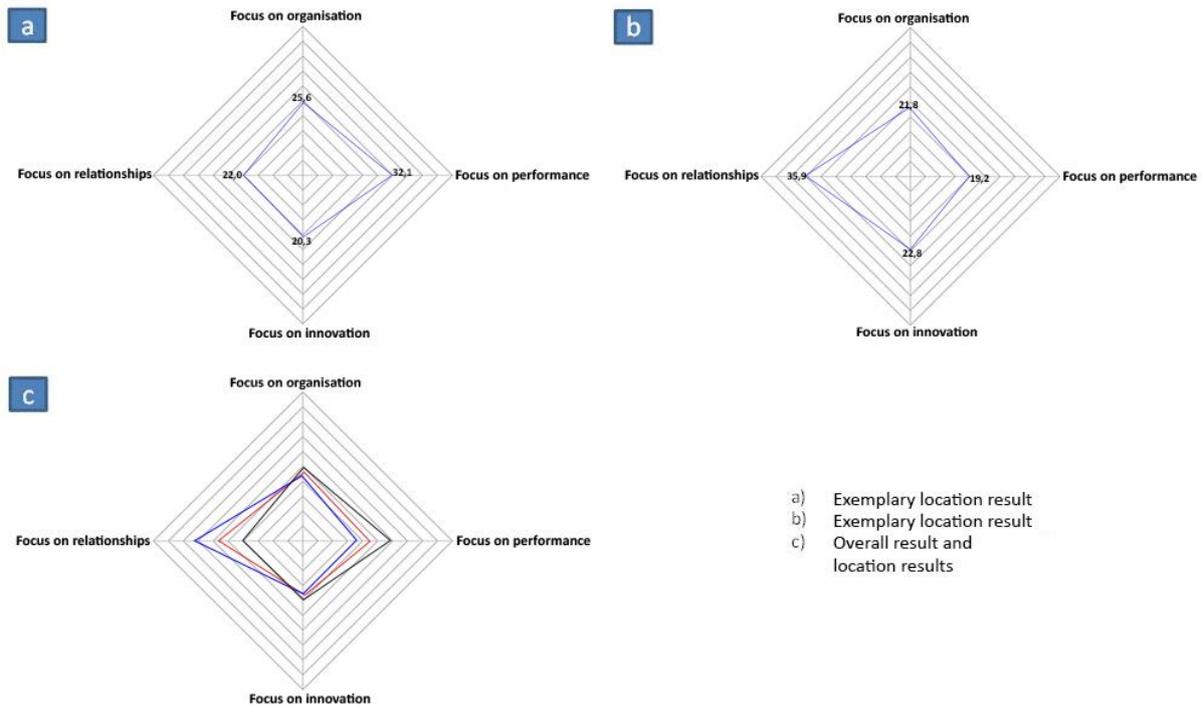
Should possible differences be assessed within a school, for example with regard to areas such as locations or faculties, a separate analysis of each area and an analysis of the results of all participants will have to be carried out.

The results are presented in a diagram (see below) that clearly displays the characteristics.

To a certain extent, the types of culture shown below represent idealisations. In reality, the results will always reveal hybrid forms of the types of culture because no school can be run entirely without any external (or internal) orientation whatsoever and/or without any openness (or structure) whatsoever. The analysis therefore focuses on whether a dominant type of culture can be identified or a hybrid form emerges.

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<sup>4</sup> A separate technical specification for this tool can be found at [www.q-kult.eu/instrument](http://www.q-kult.eu/instrument)



**Fig. 4: Example results**

It is recommended that the result is examined in a group discussion involving all individuals who participated in the assessment. This discussion can initially tackle the question of whether the result is surprising or corresponds with the participants' own perception. This step may, after the dialogue-based assessment, lead to more in-depth reflection on the specific cultural hypotheses of the school in question that have developed as a result of the Q-KULT Tool procedure.

Another aspect that can be discussed as part of a group analysis is whether the type of culture identified from the results corresponds with the desires, views and intentions of the individuals involved in the assessment. When discussing this aspect, it is advisable to make a note of the answers given in which the diagnosed current culture does not correspond with a formulated desired culture. This step could also be used to initiate a conscious examination of the culture of the school at which the participants work and which, if perceived at all, is perceived more as 'background noise' in their day-to-day working lives.

## 5 How can the results be used and explored? Preferred and critical characteristics of the quality management system

The culture analysis can help to answer the question of which aspects of the quality management system correspond well with the diagnosed culture of the school in question and which aspects reveal a discrepancy with this culture. In order to answer this question, the statements presented below can be used in reference to the preferences of each type of culture (with regard to specific characteristics of a quality management system).

As described above, when using the Q-KULT Tool, the assumption is made that there is not one single type of culture that is beneficial to the introduction and/or effective use of a quality management system, but that instead, every type of culture is justified in a certain way and that particular forms, characteristics and school-specific properties of a quality management system suit this type of culture to a greater or lesser degree.

The preferred and/or critical characteristics of a quality management system for each type of culture are primarily the result of the school's orientation (more internal or more external and/or more structured or more open). The following overview is based on inferred considerations and concrete experiences, especially those resulting from processes involved in the implementation of quality management systems at schools and/or from the external evaluations of schools.

The paragraphs below present examples of both preferred and critical characteristics for each type of culture. These examples are by no means complete but are based on experiences and plausibility considerations. The information presented below is provided for reasons of clarity and may give users ideas for their own considerations.

## 5.1 Focus on organisation

### Preferred characteristics:

This focus is beneficial to a quality management system that relies on concise structures such as clear descriptions of responsibilities or process descriptions and rules and also checks to ensure that these descriptions and rules are being observed. At the same time, and in contrast to the focus on performance, the focus on organisation tends to benefit a quality management system that concentrates on an internal orientation serving the interests of the teachers and management staff in order to ensure smooth processes.

In accordance with this, a mission statement that above all sets high standards with regard to resources, equipment and processes would, for example, also attract a positive response. A complaint management system would be accepted if it also served the interests of employees with regard to protection. This would then provide a good opportunity for self-evaluations if they were to explore issues concerning functional organisation or successful educational processes, for example.

### Examples of critical characteristics, where applicable:

There may be problems with the acceptance of a quality management system that primarily focuses on the interests of students and/or external partners. A quality management system that tends to be based on an ideational consensus and rely on the creativity of individuals, for example in the case of individual feedback and/or the continuous further development of a quality-based approach, would also be more likely to have a weak foundation in a well-organised school.

## 5.2 Focus on performance

### Preferred characteristics:

On the whole, an affinity for structural elements would provide good opportunities for a quality management system that relies on formalised process descriptions and clear rules. A clearly structured complaint management system or a regular cycle of target statements and checks to ensure that targets are being achieved, for example, would therefore have a good chance of functioning on a cultural basis.

An external orientation would benefit a mission statement that, for example, focuses on achieving a good public image. Self-evaluations relating to the results achieved by students or the satisfaction

of partners could develop on the basis of general acceptance. The results of school inspections, external evaluations or certification processes would also have a good chance of attracting interest.

#### Examples of critical characteristics, where applicable:

A quality management system that tends to rely on people taking individual responsibility on the basis of an internal understanding and granted trust is unlikely to suit the culture of a performance-oriented school. This would, for example, apply to a quality mission statement that is above all designed to provide internal orientation (which to some extent also meets conflicting demands). A feedback model that strongly relies on a basic idea of reflective assurance yet avoids using rules and requirements could be equally problematic. It would also be difficult to implement a quality management system that relies on constant renewal by means of stimulus from day-to-day educational work.

### 5.3 Focus on innovation

#### Preferred characteristics:

At a school focusing on innovation, a quality management system that relies on more informal creative approaches to assure and develop quality would, in particular, have a good chance of success. The mission statement of such a school would have to strongly focus on orientation towards social changes and the appreciation of individual contributions, for example, meaning that self-evaluations would above all be supported and used when connected with ongoing plans for development or school development projects with regard to renewal and change.

A feedback concept that not only focuses on the views of students but also those of external partners with regard to change and development in the school would also be consistent with the culture of the school. On the whole, there would be a high level of acceptance for a quality management system that (instead of using clear detailed rules) tends to represent a framework that is roughly oriented towards development and demands creative implementation.

#### Examples of critical characteristics, where applicable:

Any quality management system that is strongly formalised and relies on continuous procedures would have problems being accepted, however. The results of external evaluations or certification processes that above all focus on compliance with (narrowly) defined criteria would barely be accepted by such a school and would definitely not be considered to be a form of constructive motivation.

### 5.4 Focus on relationships

#### Preferred characteristics:

Every type of quality management system that relies on negotiation processes which, to the greatest possible extent, factor in the interests of employees, including all of their differences, has a good chance of being accepted and actively implemented at this school. If this system is able to establish an understanding of quality that is accepted by every member of the school, for example by using a quality mission statement, the system has a good chance of also being integrated into day-to-day life at the school.

A feedback concept that relies on connections between colleagues, rather vague shared views regarding individual reflection on educational processes and an associated need for personal responsibility and creativity when using these processes would also have a chance of being used and accepted, as would self-evaluations that aim to establish an understanding between colleagues and/or a

complaint management system that relies on personal mediation efforts that are 'close to the problem' or investigations with results that can be obtained by holding talks (interviews, rating conferences, etc.).

**Examples of critical characteristics, where applicable:**

A quality management system that mainly focuses on successful processes, results or the demands of external partners would gain little acceptance. The idea that quality means continuous improvement and renewal in line with the demands of a changing environment is also more likely to be met with opposition and/or refusal at such a school. Process descriptions or systematic self-evaluations carried out in accordance with strict guidelines would also make a quality management system rather fragile when used as its defining elements.

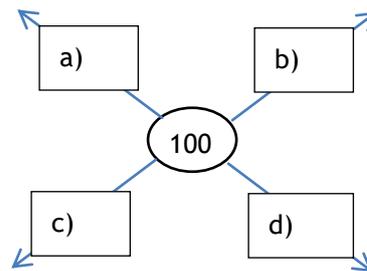


## ANNEX: Q-KULT Tool - Culture analysis questionnaire

### 1) Key characteristics of the institution

Our school is a clearly regulated and structured place. Formal rules and requirements are important points of reference for us; there is also great emphasis on properly functioning procedures and processes.

Our school is a highly performance-oriented place. It is important for us that students learn a lot and achieve good results.



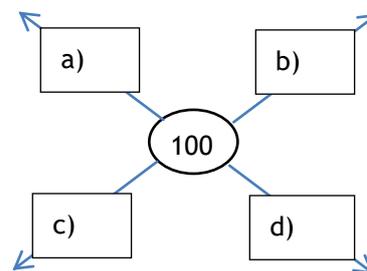
Our school is a very personal place. It is like one big family. There is close contact between everyone at the school and we tell each other a lot about ourselves.

Our school is a very dynamic place which is constantly changing. We are prepared to break new ground and also to risk making mistakes in doing so.

### 2) Leadership style of the school management

Our school management are generally perceived as caring, supportive and encouraging. They need to be able to rely on the staff and on having a school which operates based on mutual understanding.

Our school management are generally perceived as innovative and prepared to take risks. They have a specific vision and can convey this convincingly - and can therefore persuade the staff to help make the required changes.



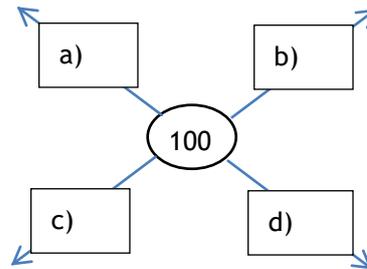
Our school management are generally perceived as organised and coordinating. They are interested in smooth processes. They monitor whether requirements are being met and rules upheld.

Our school management are generally perceived as performance and results-oriented, with high standards. What counts for them is achieving good results and demonstrable successes which can be communicated internally and externally.

### 3) HR management

HR management at our school is geared towards a high level of commitment to achieving results. We feel obliged to achieve a high level of performance, and we receive recognition and appreciation for this from the school management.

Our school's HR management focuses on cooperation, consensus and co-determination. Our school management strive to ensure that staff members participate actively in school life. They make sure there is sufficient cooperation and social exchange.



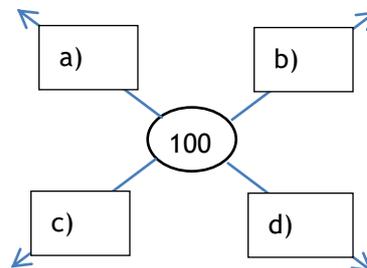
Our school's HR management encourages the staff to be innovative. The school management ensure the staff members have enough individual scope for creativity, and support initiatives for change and creative solutions.

Our school's HR management is characterised by transparency, reliability and stable work relationships. Clear roles and clear hierarchical structures are important for the school management.

### 4) What holds the institution together?

What holds our school together is the collective pursuit of innovation, the shared commitment to creative developments, and also tackling new challenges. We are proud to be part of important changes at our school.

What holds our school together is an orderly structure and a high level of reliability and continuity. Formal requirements and precisely regulated processes create transparency, provide security, and ensure work is carried out smoothly.



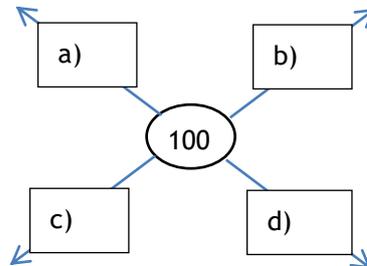
What holds our school together is the pursuit of success and the achievement of targets (e.g. academic performances, number of enrolled students and graduates). This is associated with pride in the achieved level of performance and externally perceived successes.

What holds our school together is loyalty, mutual trust and a good sense of unity. There is a very high level of personal commitment to the institution, particularly to a good social environment, at our school.

### 5) Strategic focuses

Our school focuses on consistency, stability, continuity and efficiency. Innovations are approached with caution and reservation; unrest, disturbances, turbulence and uncertainty associated with changes are avoided wherever possible.

There is a focus on social interaction at our school. Personal development is encouraged - particularly if this serves the community and takes us further as a team.



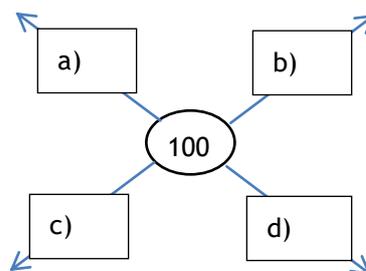
Our school strives to always be up with the times. It looks to take on the role of a trailblazer and pioneer. We are constantly trying out new things, and keeping an eye out for other options.

It is important for our school to be one of the best and strongest performers. Achieving ambitious goals and visible success compared to others are important (e.g. good test results, high graduation rates).

### 6) Success criteria

Our school measures success in terms of good cooperation amongst the teaching staff, and good relationships with one another, based on mutual understanding, trust and openness.

Our school measures success in terms of efficiency and reliability, good planning, and careful handling of available resources.



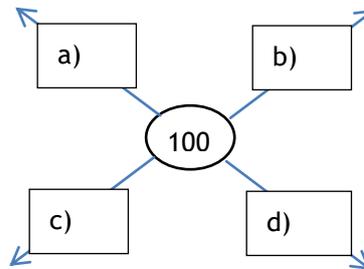
Our school measures success in terms of a high performance level, good graduation numbers, successful school and professional careers, and the school's positive reputation.

Our school measures success in terms of careful implementation of the latest developments, methods and techniques, and successfully completed development projects.

### 7) Quality concept

At our school, we understand “quality” as meaning that we respond dynamically to the changing social requirements, and that we constantly develop.

At our school, we understand “quality” as meaning that important work processes are thoroughly explained, well-coordinated, and functionally optimised.



At our school, we understand “quality” as meaning that the staff members provide each other with respectful feedback and suggestions for improvement, and help each other to implement these.

At our school, we understand “quality” as meaning that the set learning objectives have been fully achieved and that we are able to get the best out of students (i.e. fulfil their potential).