

# Environment for a Learning Community

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# Developing a professional learning community – for better education for all children.

- What does it mean?
- Is it worthwhile?
- How is it done?







# Learning is a social process





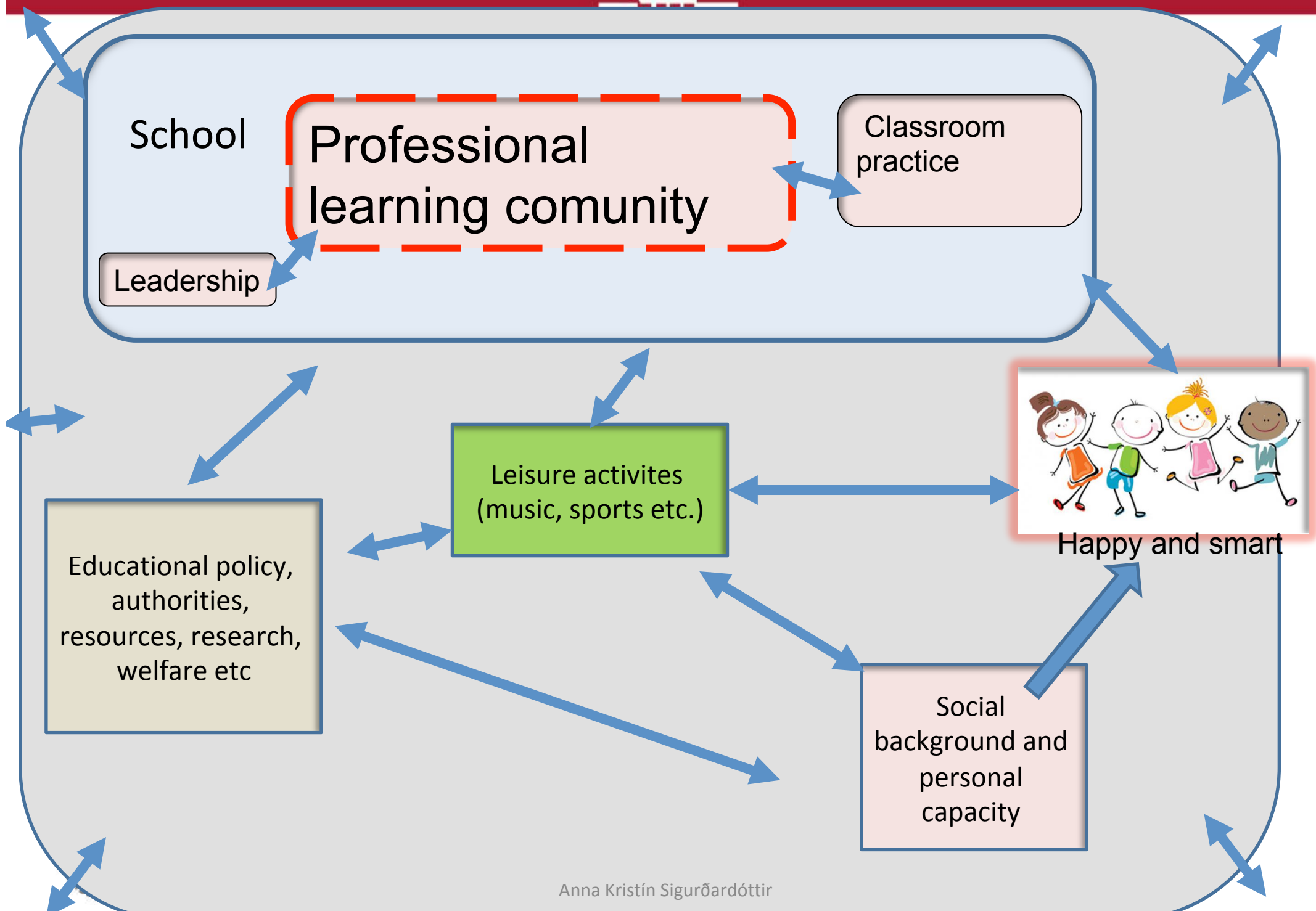
# Educational improvement

- Changes that lead to sustainable, long lasting improvements are based on **capacity building**, **collaborative inquiry into daily practice** and **data driven decisions**.
- Implementation of improvements involve **professional learning**

(Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2013; Hopkins et al, 2014; Stoll & Louis, 2007).







School

Professional learning community

Classroom practice

Leadership

Leisure activities (music, sports etc.)

Educational policy, authorities, resources, research, welfare etc



Happy and smart

Social background and personal capacity



*If we want to improve teaching ... we must therefore improve the conditions of teaching that shape them, as well as the cultures and communities of which they are apart.*

*(Hargreaves og Fullan, 2012, p. 47)*





**Coherence across professional learning environment was not achieved through the completion of checklists and scripted lessons but rather through creating learning situation where teachers and leaders learned together.**

(Timperley, H. (2011). *Realizing the power of professional learning*. (p. 104)





# Learning communities are not only about collaboration

Weak professional learning community is never successful but strong professional learning community could be even worse if it is not supported by a “right” approach and methods. Teachers should support each other in various ways of working that are successful.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006)

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Shared responsibility

Don't share stupidity  
Share real knowledge.

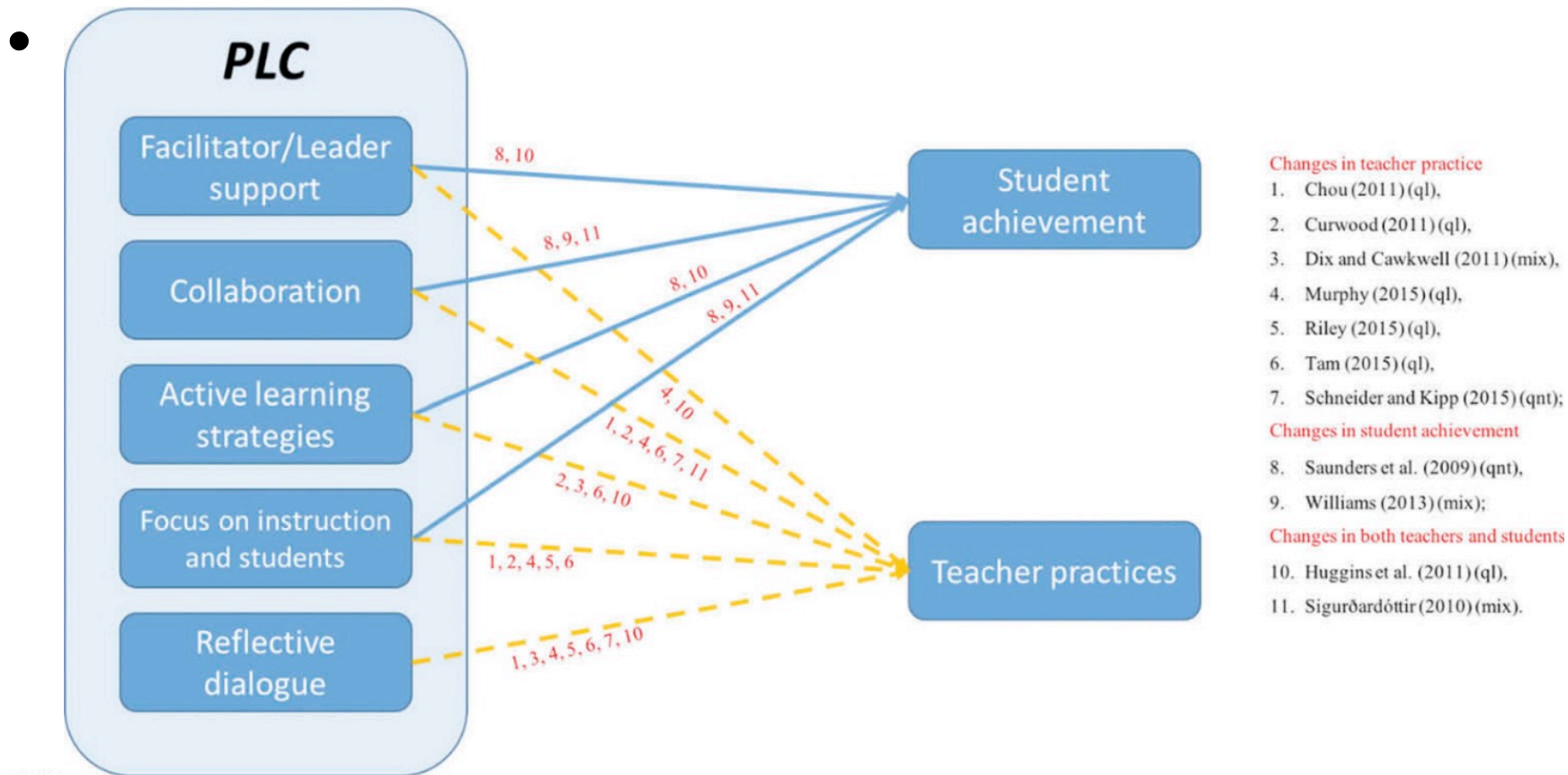
Hargreaves og Fullan, 2012

“I belong to a cult that believes cats have nine lives.”

Anna Kristín Sigurðardóttir, 2010

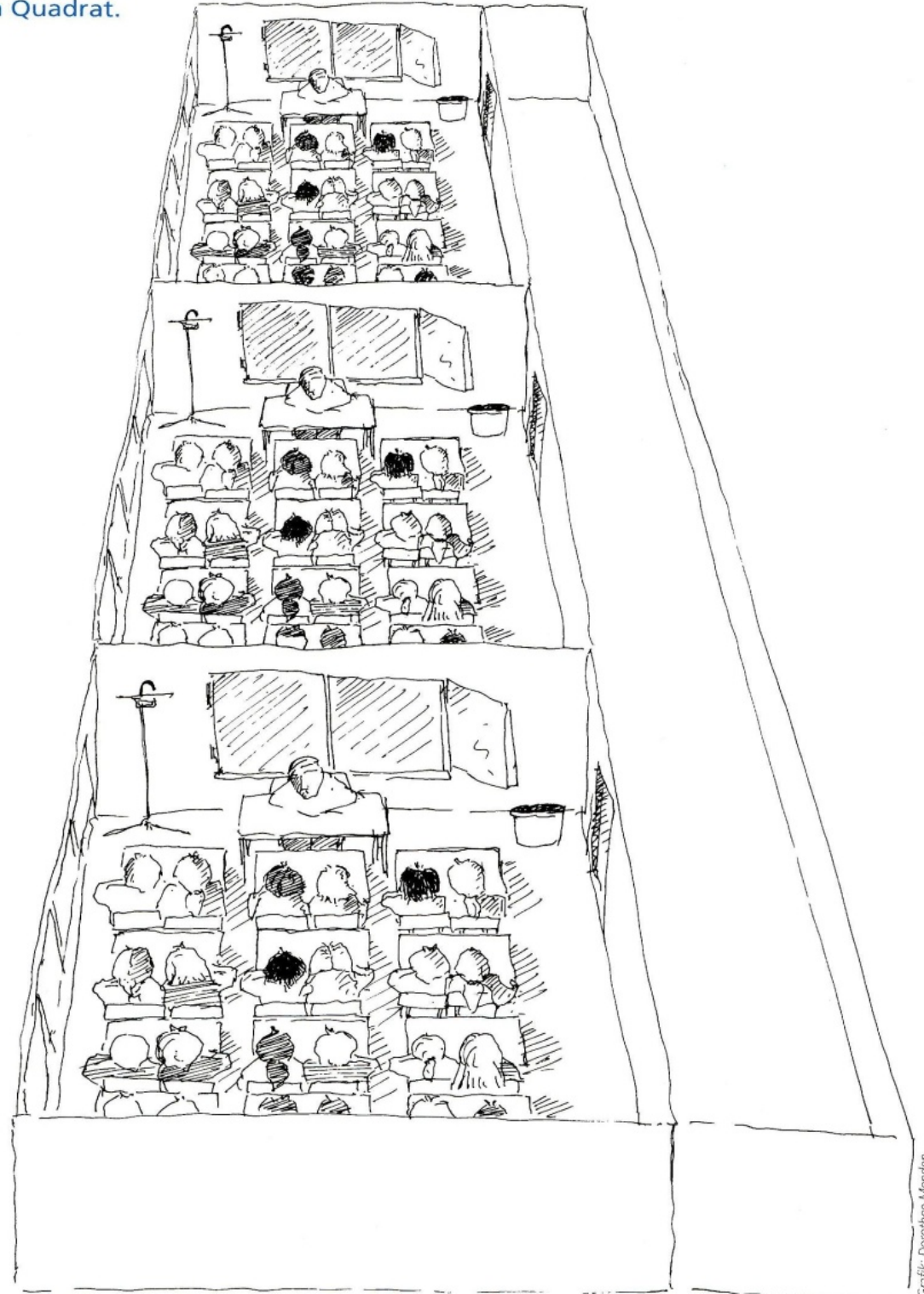


# The effects of professional learning community on student outcome and teacher practices.



Is this a good  
learning  
environment for  
teachers?

For students?





# Why is this the most common classroom arrangement?





- Open plan schools were built in many countries around the world, ca. 1965 – 1975/1980.
- They were changed into traditional arrangement rather quickly.
- Now is a new wave of open plan schools.

WHY?

**What are the differences in pedagogy and professional learning?**







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- Educational policy and ideas at each time directly or indirectly affect the design of school buildings.

(e.g. Torfi Hjartarson and Anna Kristín Sigurðardóttir, 2018)



# Educational Policy in Reykjavik around 2000

## Individualised learning – and student collaboration

- to deal with **different tasks** that suit their learning ability,
- **increased responsibility** for their own learning,
- to make **individual plans** for their learning,
- to work in active **collaboration** with schoolmates,
- different ways of working and their own **learning style or interest**.
- to make **decisions** about **learning** (such as choose of tasks or ways of learning),
- and **participate** in **decisions** about the school work.

Measurement tool for individualised learning (2005). Reykjavik City Department of Education)

Student-centred learning



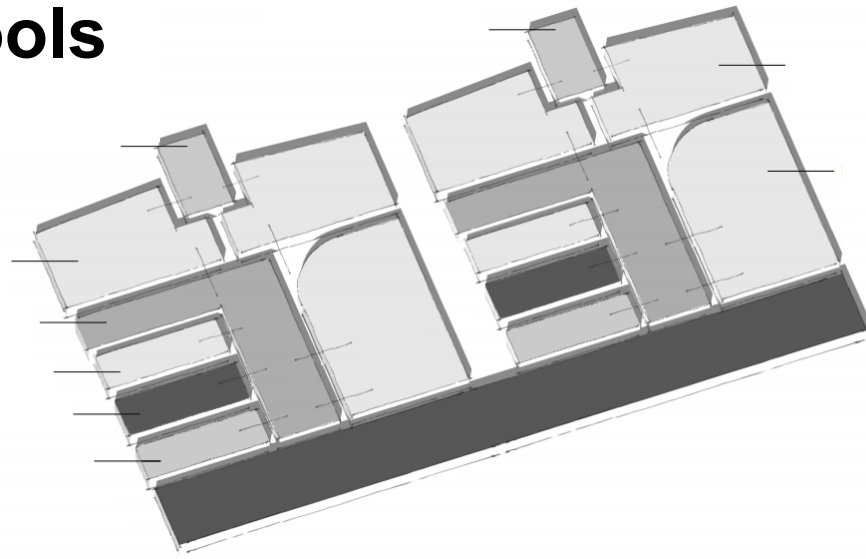
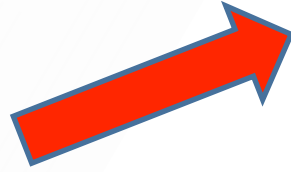
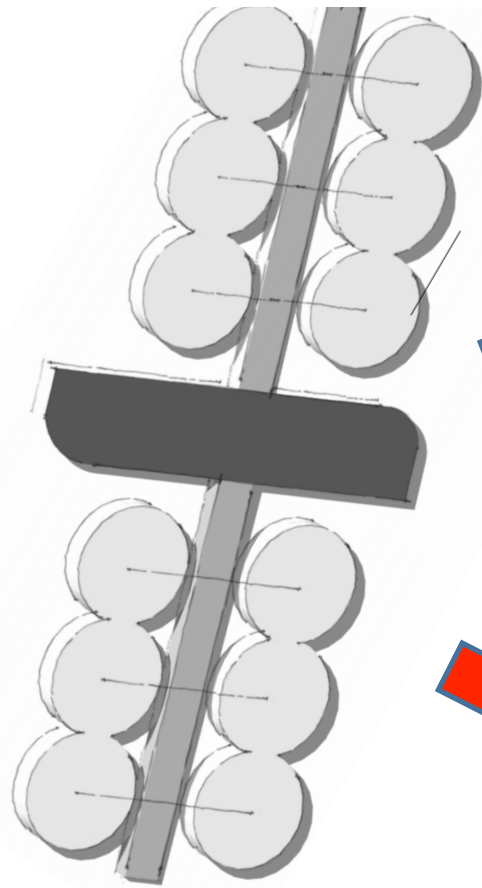


Teaching and learning in Icelandic schools, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir, 2014)

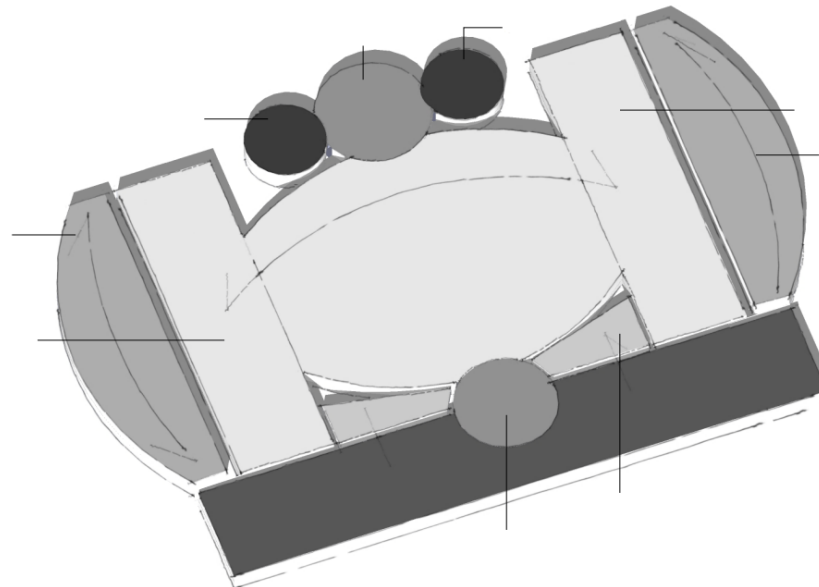
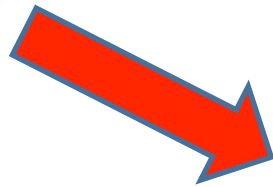


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# New wave of open plan schools




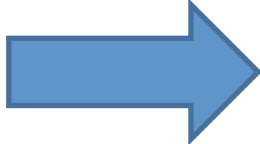
Designed for team-work, more open approach, transparency, flexibility and individualised learning (student-centred learning).







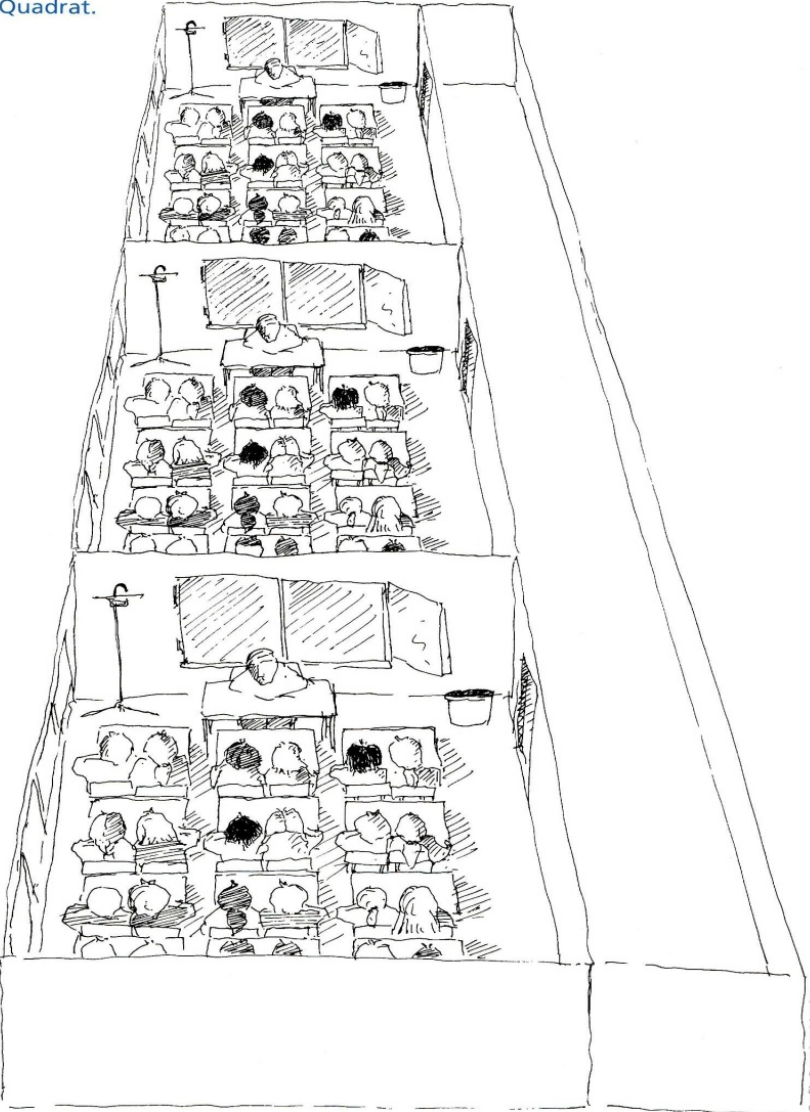
# The turning point

The design process was   
changed – from an educational  
idea  organisation of  
teaching and learning  
building



# 20<sup>th</sup> century school environment

Lernen im Quadrat.

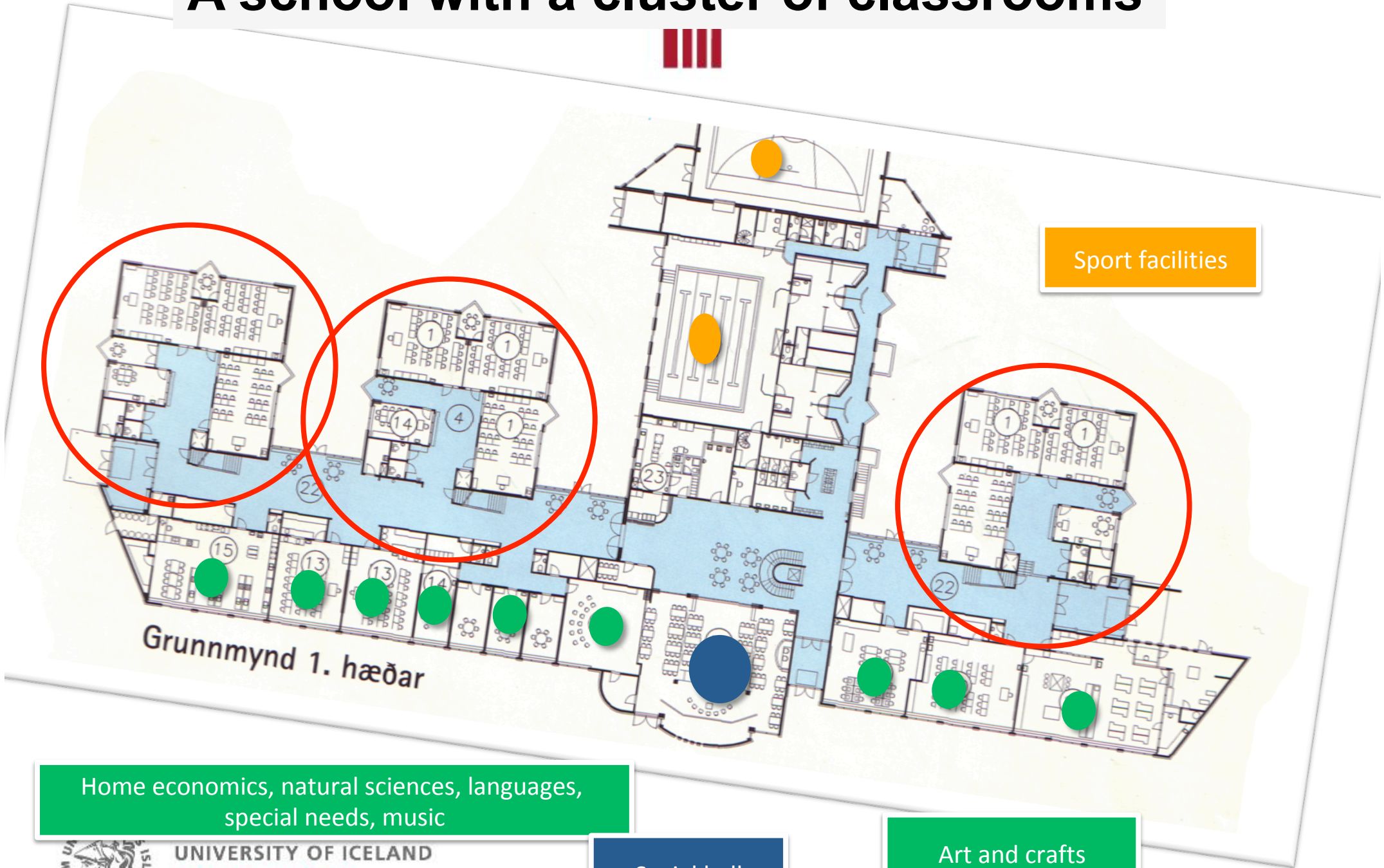


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# A school with a cluster of classrooms



Sport facilities

Home economics, natural sciences, languages,  
special needs, music

Social hall

Art and crafts



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# Open school – Open learning spaces







**Ground floor**

**Music and drama**

**Administration**

**Entrance**

**Learning space**

**Social hall – Library – Canteen**

**Sport**

**Learning space**

**Learning space**









Library and media centre in the centre of the building

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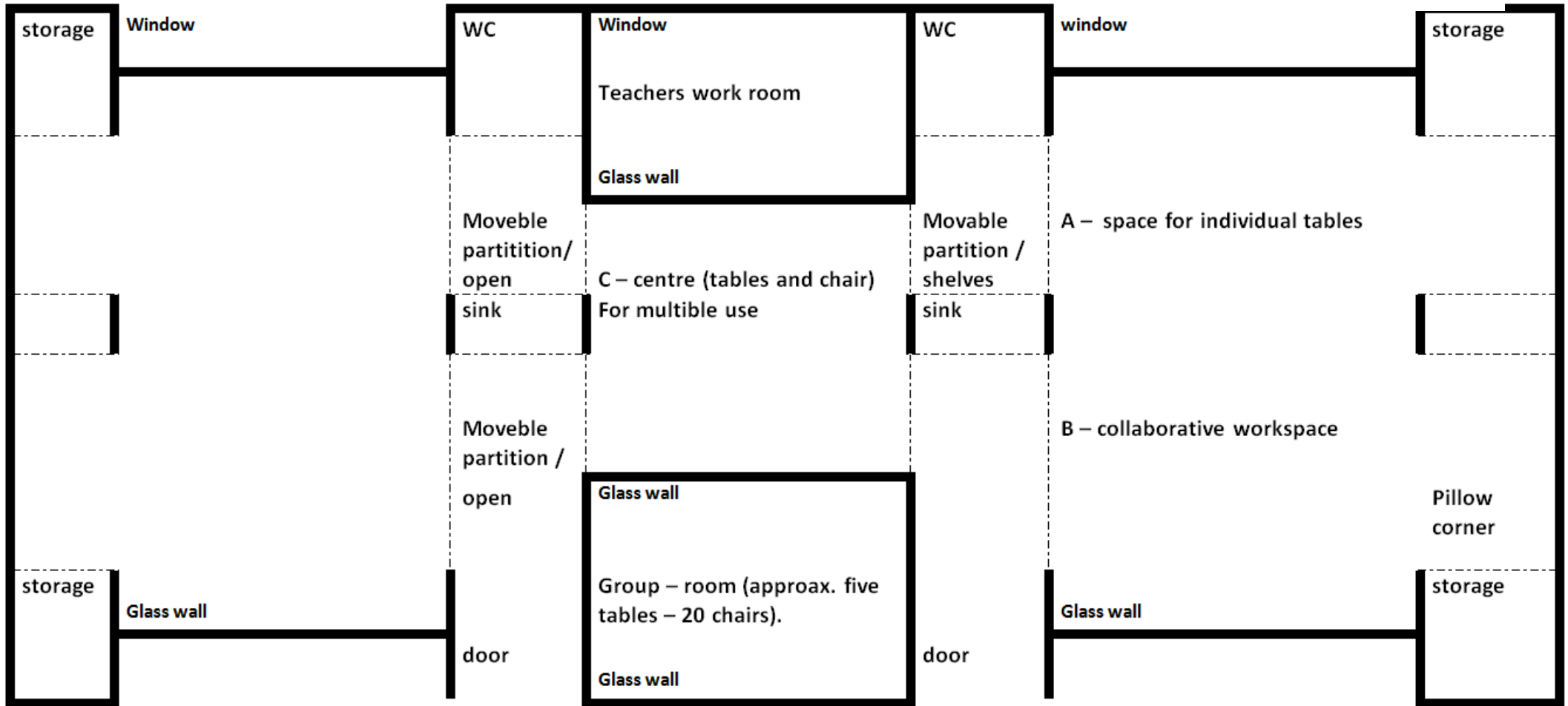
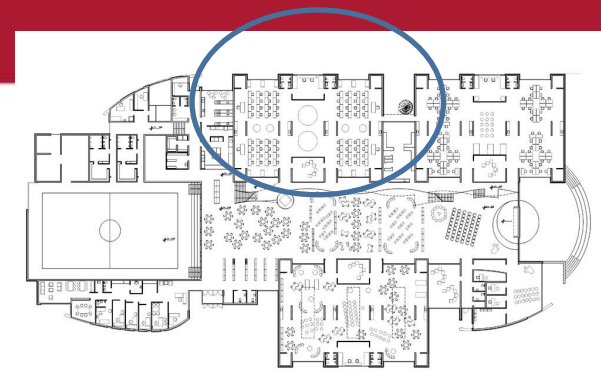




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**Classroom layout – grades 6 to 7, ca. 80 – 100 children in two groups. The observation took place in the area on left side (42 children, 2 teachers and 2 assistants). Total 412 m<sup>2</sup>**





Each learning space has a breakout room for about 20 students and a breakout work room for a team of staff members.





Older students have private desks  
in an open plan learning space at an upper level.





Glass wall partitions tend to get blocked and a few walls have been put up at the lower secondary age level.





**An umbrella is used to create a sense of privacy**

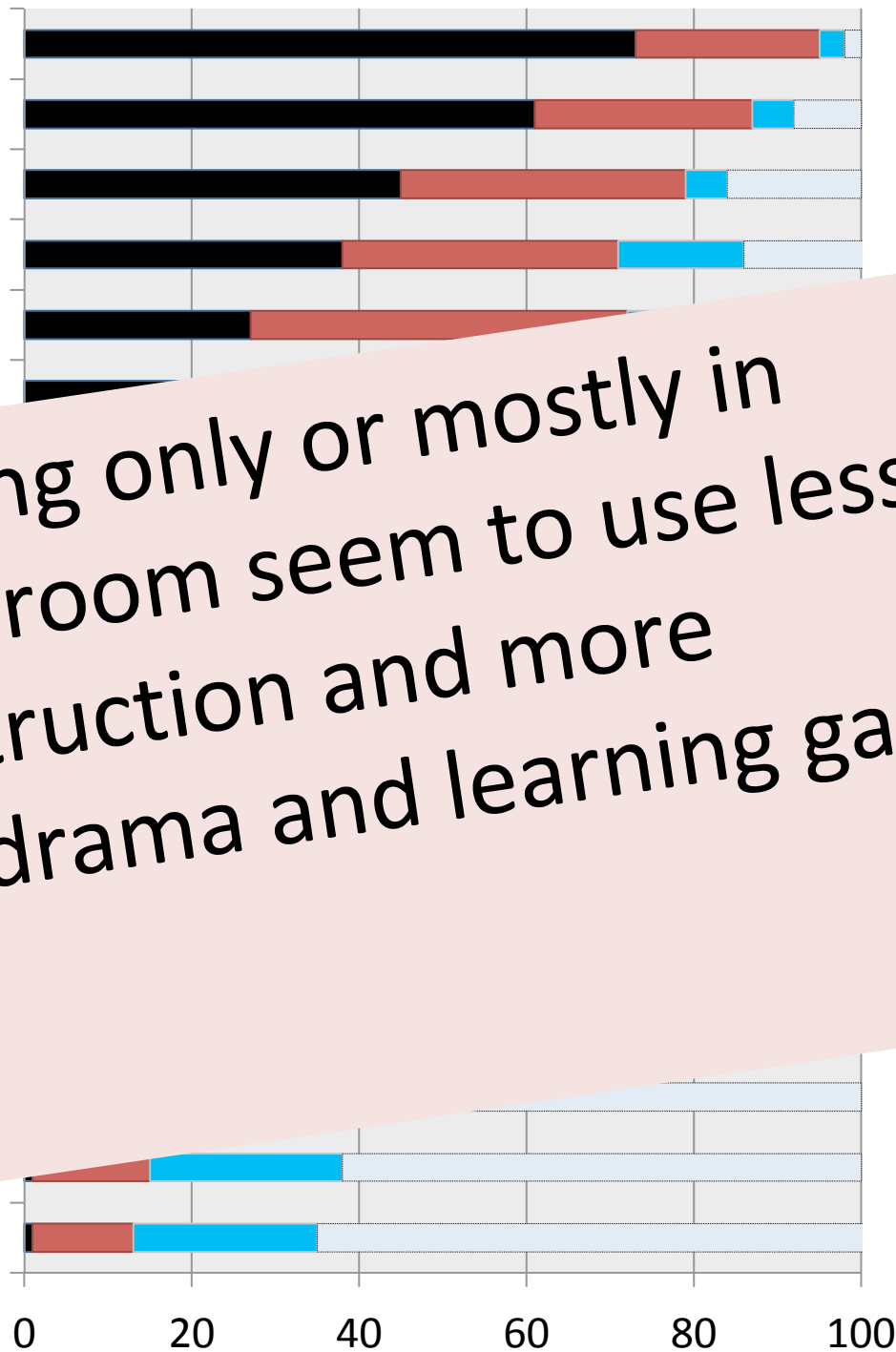


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direct instruction ..discussions  
 one-way instruction  
 worksheets  
 show how ...  
 groupwork  
 read together ..

Teaching methods according to teachers' use in schools

Teachers working only or mostly in open plan classroom seem to use less "one-way" instruction and more project work, drama and learning games.



independent groupwork

weakly  
 monthly  
 rarely or never





# Differences between open plan and traditional, based on teachers' perceptions and

In open plan classrooms are more developed individualised learning, more teachers collaboration.

Open plan vs traditional

Individualised learning  
4 items alpha = 0.79

Adapt towards student' needs  
6 items alpha = 0.84

Collaboration  
6 items alpha = 0.93

Satisfaction with

7 items alpha

Teachers are equally satisfied with the environment and claim it is equally easy or difficult to adapt it towards students needs.

ns

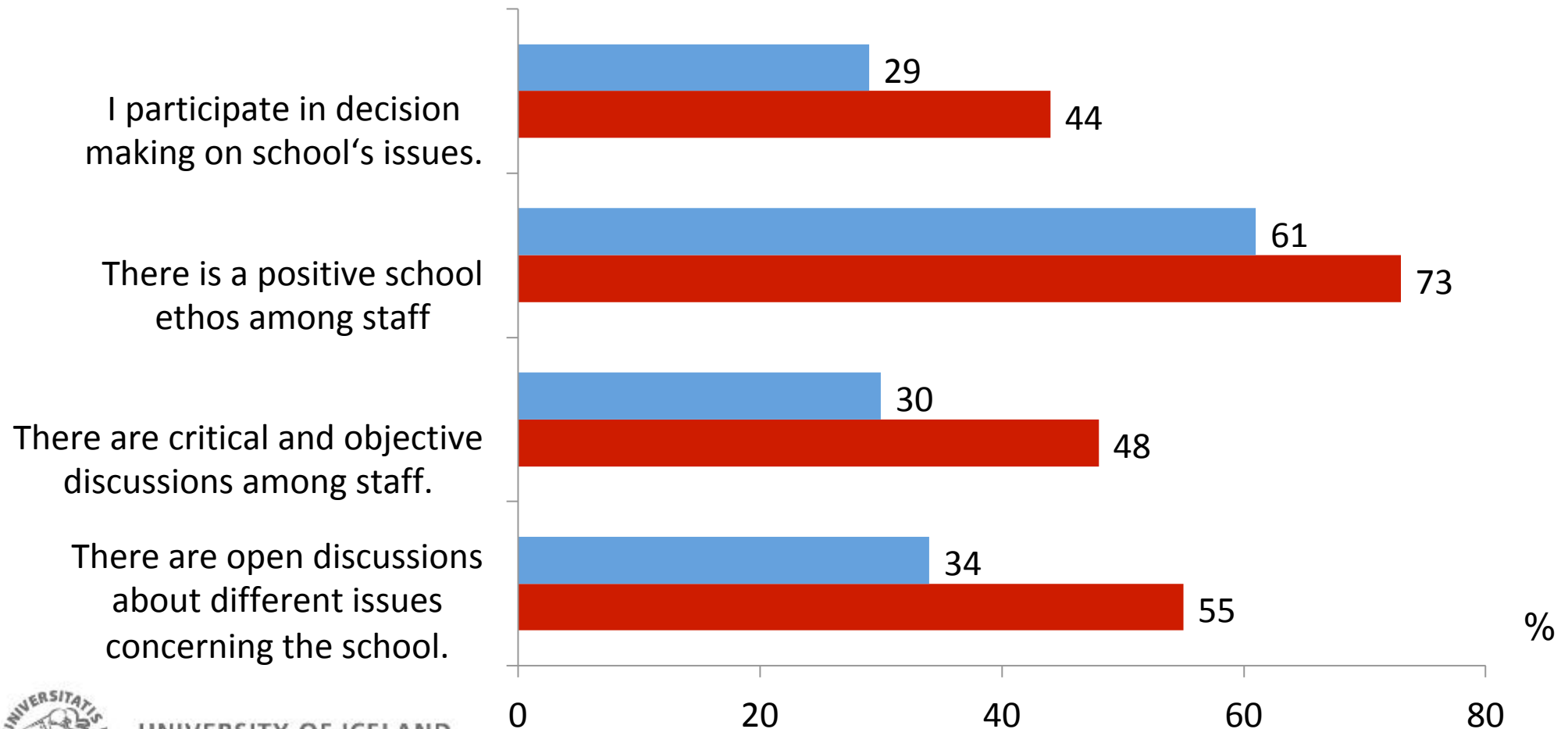
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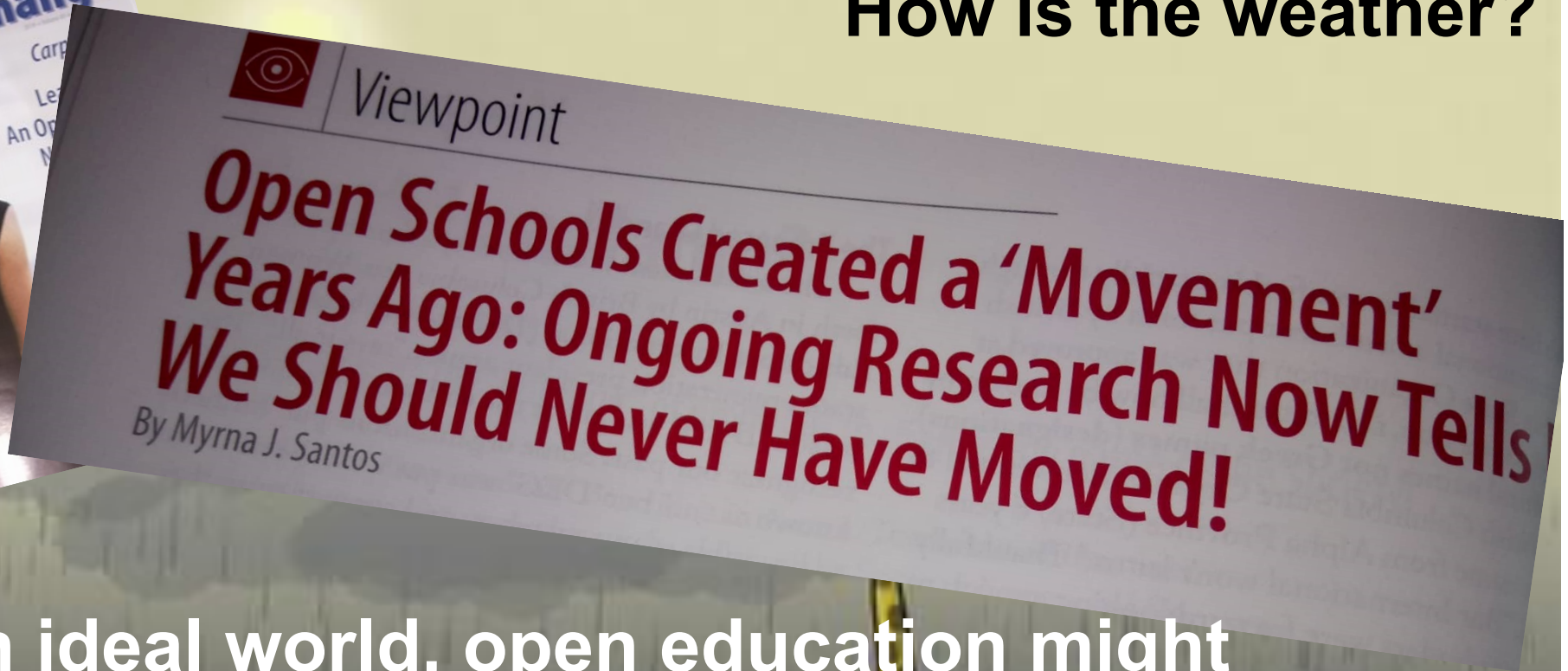
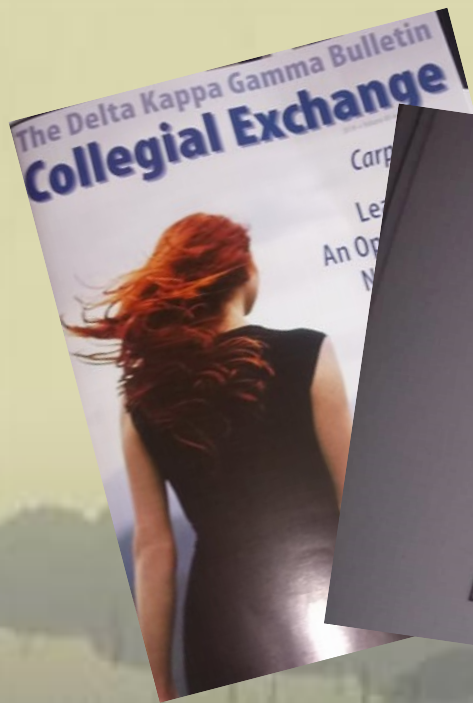


# Those who agree to the statements

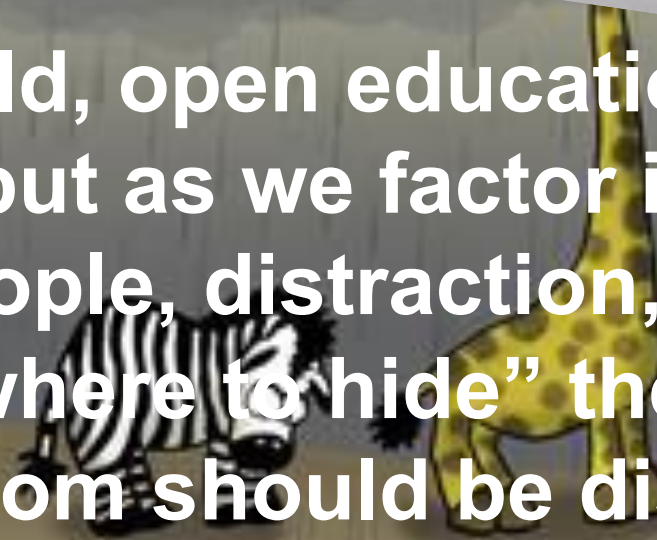
- Teach only or mostly in traditional classroom
- Teach only or mostly in open plan classrooms



How is the weather?



In an ideal world, open education might have worked, but as we factor in a diversity of people, distraction, and the feeling of “nowhere to hide” the open school classroom should be dismissed forever. (p.14)



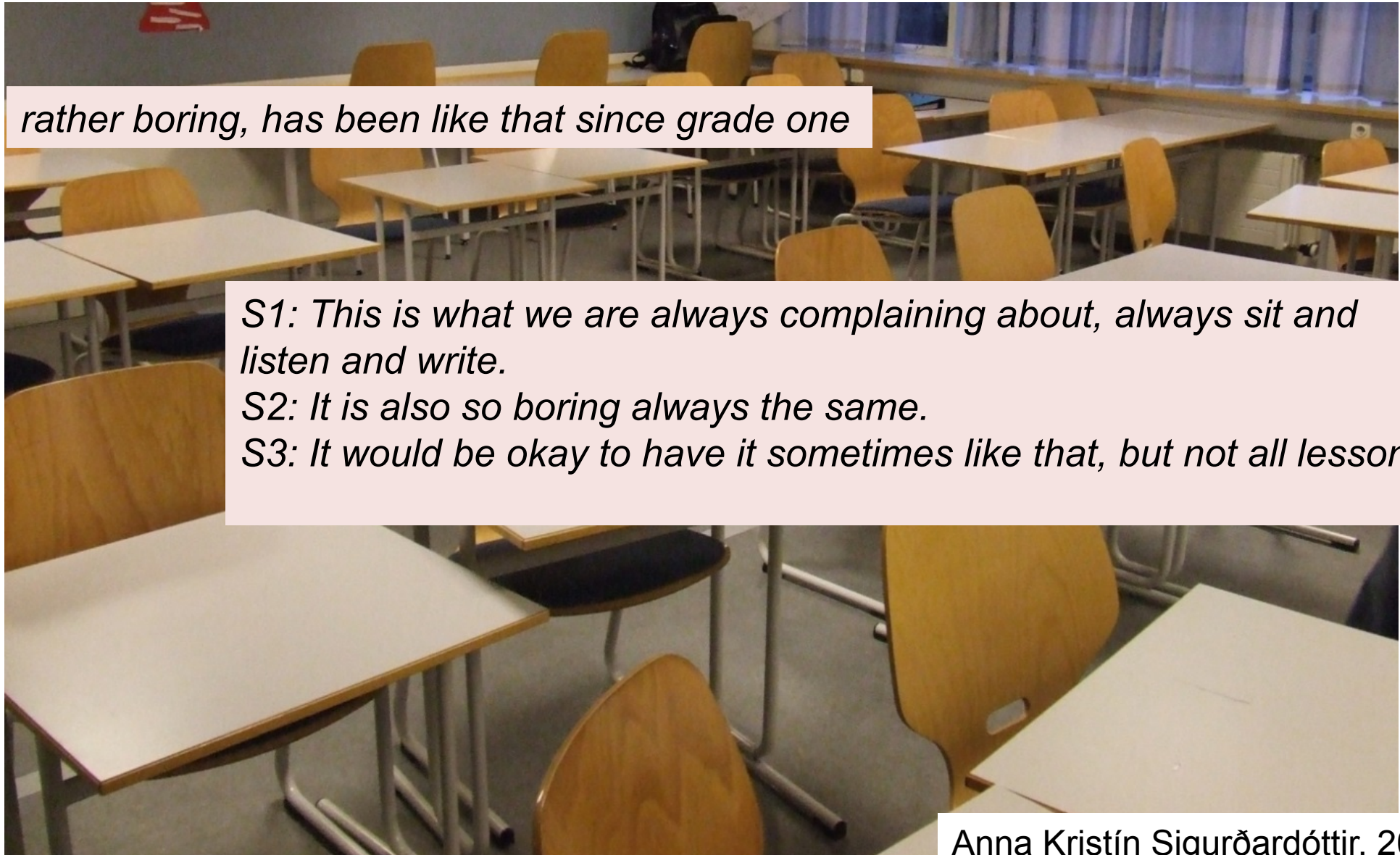


# Voice of students in grade 6 and 7

- The best place to be in at school was in their view the library but not necessarily to study but rather to “just hang out in the sofas”. The noise level was considered by some to be a problem, as well as the teenagers for occupying the sofas and being too noisy.
- The private desk was considered to be the best place for learning: “They are great!”
- Sometimes the other group in the classroom would be too noisy working on another task, “maybe doing project work while we were working in our week plans”.
- Mixing ages is not good, “a wall in the classroom would be great”.



# Students in Icelandic upper secondary schools evaluate the traditional classroom not the best place for learning



*rather boring, has been like that since grade one*

*S1: This is what we are always complaining about, always sit and listen and write.*

*S2: It is also so boring always the same.*

*S3: It would be okay to have it sometimes like that, but not all lessons.*

# Team teaching



More and more Icelandic schools are developing team - teaching as a way to improve the practice.

We have been team teaching for about one year ... I was sceptical in the beginning ... but now I like it very much ... easier, less stress and much more fun.



A teacher in grade 2





# Conclusions

What does it mean?  
Is it worthwhile?  
How is it done?



**Thank you**

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