Contract management in public services: Case of school transportation in the city of Espoo

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Abstract:
The public sector is currently undergoing a transformation as a result of different challenges it must face. In recent decades, the public sector has instead taken on the role as an owner and a buyer (Valovirta & Hyvönen 2009) through privatization, purchasing and outsourcing activities (Pekkarinen, Hennala, Harmaakorpi & Tura, 2011). Back in the eighties, the public sector started to turn to the private sector (Sagawa & Segal 2000), resulting in the emergence of cross-sector partnerships (Guzmán & Sierra, 2012). Now, it is the private sector that instead provides public services.

The city of Espoo’s logistics unit is responsible for school transportation in the city. Followingly, the city has also contracted private transport companies to provide citizens with transport service, thus transferring the responsibility of the service provision to the transport companies. The question is: how can the city maintain its control over the service quality in such a service triad through a dyadic relationship?

This study is a case study focusing on the city of Espoo. The aim of this study is to provide suggestions for transport service quality management, monitoring and measurement by studying five other main cities and comparing them to the city of Espoo. Furthermore, this study contributes to the research around service triads and dyads. The case study adopts a qualitative approach by gathering data through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, statistics and documents.

The results indicate that the service quality monitoring in the city of Espoo is more intensive compared to other five cities. The results also highlight that the current monitoring level provides the city of Espoo with more data. The results show different reasons and strategies behind monitoring strategies, further suggesting different approaches to service quality management and supplier performance monitoring. Furthermore, all six cities seem to be following the current trends regarding public sector transformation. Yet, the transformation process is continuing towards one — yet — unknown destination.

Keywords: Public procurement, public service, school transport, public service quality, service triads, service dyads

Esbo stads logistikheten har ansvaret för skoltransporterna inom Esbo stad. Även Esbo har tytt sig till den privata sektorn genom att göra kontrakt med privata bolag gällande transportservice. Med dessa kontrakt har staden överförts ansvaret av servicen istället till företagen. Frågan är, hur kan staden ha kontroll över kvalitén av servicen i en så kallad service triad via relationen mellan den offentliga och privata sektorn, en så kallad service dyad?

Detta är en fallstudie som fokuserar sig på Esbo stad. Syftet med denna studie är att komma med förslag för bättre kvalitetsstyrning, samt uppföljning och mätning genom att undersöka fem övriga städer och jämföra dessa med Esbo stad. Dessutom bidrar denna studie till forskning inom service triads, service dyads. Denna studie omfattar ett kvalitativt tillvägagångssätt genom att samlar data med hjälp av semi-strukturerade intervjuer, direkt observering, statistik och dokument.


Nyckelord: offentlig upphandling, offentlig service, skoltransport, offentlig service kvalitet, service triads, service dyads
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1 INTRODUCTION

The public sector is currently undergoing a transformation as a result of different challenges. In order to deal with these challenges, the public sector has started to open for competition in recent decades, thus taking on the role as an owner and a buyer (Valovirta & Hyvönen 2009). It has also been noted that the public sector has turned to privatization, purchasing and outsourcing activities (Pekkarinen, Hennala, Harmaakorpi & Tura, 2011). Guzmán and Sierra (2012) identifies the seventies as the time of change when the public sector started to look for new models to improve efficiency in creating public value. Followingly, the eighties saw the relationship between the public and the private intensify even more (Sagawa & Segal 2000). Now, the old structures are crumbling under demands of change and the public sector is forced to seek out and learn new ways to fulfil its social obligations (Pärna & Tunzelmann, 2007).

Even today, the sectors are still looking over the strict boundaries between them for better interaction. Before, the public and the private sector was strictly separated, but now the old “defined precise roles for the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors have blurred” (p. 112) through alliances, partnerships, and procurement. The non-profit makers are entering the markets and the profit-makers are taking on the social services. (Sagawa & Segal 2000) Thus, new cross-sector social partnerships have emerged (Guzmán & Sierra, 2012). In this study, these partnerships are referred to as service dyads as part of a service triad, in which a public service is outsourced to an external actor. Such a service triad include three entities: the buyer, the subcontractor, and the end customer (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011).

The evolution has brought public purchasing activities. Public procurement, that this study focuses on, is one way for the public sector to manage public service that it must provide to its citizens. The most traditional definition of the aim of a public procurement is “to achieve the best value for money” (European Commission, 2018 p.62). The goal for tendering is to use public funds as effective as possible; to purchase price-quality ratio products, services, and other contracting as cheap as possible. (Pekkala & Pohjonen 2015).

1.1 Problem definition

According to Uenk and Telgen (2019), this new role as a buyer is, though, not easy as the public sector is complex and highly bureaucratic. This is bound to change as the demand to produce quality with less money (Uenk & Telgen, 2019) is further putting pressure on
the public sector’s stiff and old ways of managing public service (Pärna & Tunzelmann 2007). The value-for-money aspect (European Commission, 2018) is important, but is not included in the study itself. This aspect is also important, if considering the accountability aspect: public sector must maintain its accountability to the people as the public sector spends public funds (Osborne, 2007). This accountability aspect is also important to acknowledge, even though not included in the study itself as a separate study focus. Thus, this study focuses on the public procurement from a public sector’s point of view, including the service as a triad from a dyadic perspective (buyer-supplier).

According to Valovirta and Hyvönen (2009), by opening for competition, the public sector could, however, enhance innovation through such methods as e.g. public procurement and partnership models. Traditionally, the public sector has single-handedly maintained (Valovirta & Hyvönen) and provided public services (Pekkarinen et al., 2011), but now, the public sector is instead buying the public services from a private business. This means that the private sector has gained the responsibility of public services through outsourcing, thus the buyer can lose eventually lose control over the service quality (Li & Choi, 2009). When such a bridge transfer occurs, it means that the supplier has instead gained the control (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011). Even though service triads are popular, many fail to implement a service triad (Li & Choi, 2009).

Thus, this study focuses on the problem of bridge position transfer leading to possible weaker quality control of the buyer and, furthermore, possible weaker level of service quality. The problem with service triads and dyads is that quality of service can be difficult for some to define, monitor and measure as it is produced and consumed at the same time, customer judges through expectation vs performance, and because the customer also participates in the service process (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) The question is: what can the buyer do to enhance its bridge position in a service dyad and within a service triad? Thus, this study aims to identify different methods and strategies of maintaining the bridge position by studying six Finnish cities.

1.2 The research questions

The research design is built around two main research questions:

RQ1: How are cities managing the school transport services daily?

RQ2: How could school transport services be further enhanced?
The objective of the research questions is to provide the city of Espoo with suggestions and ideas for future procurement and contract management in such service triads through a dyadic relationship.

### 1.3 Research focus

This study focuses on the quality aspects in public school transport service and how the six case cities approach and manage quality issues in procurement and contract management. The study focuses on service definition, to identify quality related issues and challenges, quality requirements and criteria, quality measurements and monitoring and if quality related issues and challenges have been resolved and how these have been done. Cost-related aspects are omitted.

### 1.4 Research aim

The city of Espoo has acknowledged the challenge of service quality management in procurement and contracts. As a result, Espoo city has requested a comparative (Benchmarking) study by focusing on the six cities in Finland referred to as *Kuutoskaupungit* and *Kuusikko*: the cities of Espoo, Vantaa, Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu. Thus, the aim is to develop an understanding of different contract management methods in the six biggest Finnish cities. The results from the five other cities will be compared to that of the case city (Espoo). Followingly, the objective is to provide suggestions and ideas, not solutions. This is achieved by learning from others.

From a more academic view, this study also aims to contribute to the discussion around public service procurement in service triads and dyads. Uenk and Telgen (2019) point out that there indeed are no such studies available.

The research questions suggest that cross-learning is important, meaning that a deep case-dependent understanding is important. Thus, this study has also a knowledge sharing purpose.

### 1.5 Limitations

The study focus is on the school transportation benefit as a passenger transport mode that has been granted Swedish and Finnish speaking pupils in basic education classes 1 - 10 in Espoo and in the other five cities. The transportation benefit studied includes both group and individual transportation with taxi, excluding those using collective transportation modes.
The pupils with special individual needs, hospital school pupils, and pupils granted transport benefit because of an accident, that possibly need special vehicle equipment or other customized transport requirements, should be separately considered by the transport company when planning the school transportation. However, due to resource limits, these students’ needs cannot be explored in detail in this study. These pupils with special individual needs will be studied within same limits and same framework as other pupils.

The study case is the city of Espoo and its logistics unit, that is responsible of the school transport services. By the city’s request, this study focuses on comparing five additional cities to that of Espoo city. All six cities together are referred to as Kuutoskaupungit or Kuusikko. No other cities or smaller municipalities are wished to be included. This also means that the study is conducted from the public sector’s point of view — the buyer of services. It should also be mentioned that the generalizability of the results should be considered carefully as this study focuses only on six Finnish cities.

Finally, the city of Espoo is the contractor of this study and the employer of the writer of this study. Thus, there is an employer – employee relationship affecting this study. Unavoidably this means that the research will be affected by the writer’s position, experience, and knowledge.

1.6 Study methods

As this study aims for deep and rich data by focusing on one case city, and by comparing five other cities to the case city, a qualitative approach is favored. Following, this study is conducted as a single-case study with a comparative element. The objective is to provide the case city with suggestions and ideas, based on within-case analysis and comparison. The framework is built around the literature review, and the purpose of the evidence is to either confirm existing theories, methods, and tools, or to identify new theories, methods and tools of service quality, management, monitoring and measurements.

Before data gathering, the conceptual framework is developed by discussing relevant theory through available literature. The literature review focuses on the quality perspective of public service procurement. The literature review also defines relevant key concepts. This helps the researcher to focus on important and relevant themes and subjects. Ghauri & Grønhaug (2010) explains that by choosing theory before research, it is easier for a researcher to define research questions, focus, factors, and what hypothesis
to test. The literature and key concepts in this study focus on public sector service triads and dyads, and service quality definition, creation, monitoring and measuring.

1.7 Key definitions

This study uses the term end users, or sometimes customers, when referring to pupils and their parents (the families) that uses the public service. The public service is the school transport benefit, that is delivered by a private transport company referred to as a service supplier. The cities, or municipalities, as the public sector are referred to as buyers.

The school transport service is for pupils that have been granted school transport benefit either by receiving a travel card (collective traffic) or entitled to group or individual transport by taxi. Usually pupils are given a travel card. However, the caretaker can request for taxi transportation if the child is e.g. not ready to use the collective traffic for some individual reason, there are no safe connections, or the pupil has disabilities.

*Kuusikko or Kuutoskaupungit* – six biggest cities in Finland if considering the number of residents: the city of Espoo, Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu (Kuusikkokunnat. 2020).

**Public sector** – municipalities and local authorities. In this study, the public sector consists of the cities with the role as the buyer of the school transport service.

**Private sector** – transport companies as suppliers or producers (also referred to as subcontractors) that produce the school transport service instead of the cities (municipalities).

**School transport service** – a benefit based on law and granted by the municipalities to pupils living within the area, entitled to either free collective transport (e.g. HSL travel card in the Helsinki Metropolitan area), group transport, or in some cases as individual transport.

1.8 Study structure

This chapter (1) serves as the introduction to this study. After the introduction, the study will proceed as following:

- Chapter 2. Literature review that constructs the theoretical framework and concepts
- the public sector’s nature
- public service triads including a dyadic relationship
- public procurement, school transports and legislation
- Passenger transport service through a quality aspect

- Chapter 3. Introduction and discussion around study methods and quality of the study
- Chapter 4. The empirical results
- Chapter 5. Interpretation and analysis of the gathered data.
- Chapter 6. Discussion and closure including policy implications and limitations.

Chapter 2 constructs the theoretical framework and identifies the key concepts that will be focused on in the data gathering and analysis processes.

Figure 1     Final study structure.
2 LITERATURE-BASED FRAMEWORK

This chapter introduces relevant theoretical and conceptual framework for this study. The first part (2.1) presents the public sector in general: its purpose, goals, challenges, structure, and unique characteristics. This discussion is important as it also highlights the challenges in cross-sector cooperation. The second part (2.2) revolves around service triads including dyadic relationships between the buyer and the supplier, while also pointing out challenges. These triads include three actors, but this study focuses mainly on two actors: the buyer and the supplier from the buyers’ perspective. By focusing on the school transports as service triads, it is easier to demonstrate the purpose of this study and where the challenges are in a public service outsourced to a third entity, when originally the service has been between the municipality and the end users only. The third part (2.3) discusses public procurement and legislation in general as the background information and the environment of daily operations within school transports. The fourth part (2.4) discuss passenger transport service: what service quality is and how it is created.

2.1 The nature of the public sector

The difference between the public and the private sector can be described as following: the private sector aims for profit while the social sector aims to fulfill its social responsibilities without profit-making. In a way, the social sector exists to correct and provide where the markets have failed, giving it its unique characteristics. However, in cross-sector alliances, both entities can learn from each other: how such an alliance can help meet the demands of both the businesses and the municipalities. Together, these two sectors can contribute to the public good. (Sagawa & Segal, 2000) Yet, as this study will show, there are many challenges that need to be acknowledged and tackled before such a cooperation can succeed and benefit both the public sector, the private sector and the society itself.

Osborne (2007) urges to consider the public sector as an organism shaped by DNA, that includes the instructions of how an organism works and endures. The DNA is what should be changed for the organism to evolve. In a sense, this also applies to the public sector, but the modern world evolves fast and the public sector has difficulties with keeping up. (Osborne, 2007)

The key blocks or strategies of the DNA are purpose, incentives, accountability systems, power structure and culture. Thus, it is these key functions and puzzle pieces that
ultimately construct the public sector habits. By making changes in these blocks, the whole system can change. All the five blocks revolve around accountability issues. (Osborne, 2007)

The customer strategy is seen as the most relevant key DNA component for this study, thus will be described in more detail as it correlates strongest to the focus of this study by focusing on the end users (customers), thus the quality perspective.

The customer strategy- DNA component focuses highly on accountability by answering whom the organization is accountable to, especially when other contracted organizations are accountable to the contracting public organization’s customers. It is the officials that the public units are responsible to, but these officials are elected and under pressure of the interest groups. Thus, the officials tend to more focus on where the money goes rather than the results. (Osborne, 2007)

In a way, the customers are setting the quality standards for the public services, e.g. time, reliability, and service quality standards. These standards to emerge are important as it forces the public sector to focus on both resource management and results improvements. As Osborne highlights this provides the public sector with important information of customer satisfaction, thus gives a clear target to what should be aimed at. However, as Osborne reminds, “the customer is not always king” (p.8). This is possible in situations when the customer wants more than the officials can fund, or when customer requirements are considered illegal. Another important highlight is the notion that the role of both customer and citizen remain, neither one is replaced by the other. By gaining the customer role they gain the possibility to give feedback regarding e.g. public transport services. This is the core of customer strategy as it provides citizens with the customer role. (Osborne, 2007)

2.1.1 The public sector in Finland

Because this study focuses on the city of Espoo and five other cities in Finland, an overview of the public sector in Finland is in place. Firstly, according to Pekkarinen et al. (2011), the public sectors in Nordic countries have long been sole suppliers of public services to own citizens. This status will, eventually, change as the future brings forth new challenges. One such challenge is the aging population, meaning that the public sector must seek out new models to keep the public service at a satisfactory level. It can be expected that the old stable environment of the public sector must face a rather huge
and unpredictable transformation in the future (Pekkarinen et al., 2011) As mentioned earlier, procurement is one result of the transformation going on.

The public sector, as Pekkarinen et al. (2011) states, has the responsibility to take care of the citizens. Currently, the Finnish public sector is also looking at the private sector. It has taking on the role as a purchaser or a buyer through new “economical action and business principles” while keeping the “old habits and the history of producing public social and health services” (p.508). (Pekkarinen et al., 2011) It also appears that the public sector focuses on the users and the supporting factors of public services. Pärna and Tunzelmann concluded that the most important innovation goals for the Finnish public sector are going online, service quality improving and responding to user needs. Also, different externalities are considered more important, such as laws, regulations, good examples, cooperation, user demand and trust. Still, established habits and long history tends to cause the public sector to be less eager for new innovations. (Pärna and Tunzelmann 2007)

2.2 Service triads and dyads

The following discussion revolves around public-private cooperation, that has emerged in recent decades, mainly through outsourcing, triads, dyads, and procurement.

Uenk and Telgen (2019) state that the interest in service triads is growing especially in the SCM area. Such a service triad occurs when the buyer outsources its end customers’ service delivery responsibility to a third party (provider or supplier). The interest in service triads can also been seen among organizations as many are increasingly outsourcing services to subcontractors (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011; Wuyts, Rindfleisch & Citrin, 2015). This is expected to keep growing in the future (Li & Choi, 2009). Outsourcing is also one way to lower costs (Sanders, Locke, Moore & Autry 2007), that is one of the main goals for the public sector been discussed earlier.

The service triad relationships include three entities: the buyer, the subcontractor, and the end customer. In a way, service is being outsourced (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011). Service outsourcing means that the service is produced by an external agent. The service production is so removed outside from own internal service functions, as Li and Choi (2009) explains. Such outsourcing service triads are different compared to manufacturing triads, as the relationships between all three actors in a service triad change over time (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011). Controversially, despite the popularity of service triads, it seems that many fails to implement it successfully (Li &
Choi, 2009). A public service triad and dyad, being the basic structural focus, is illustrated in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Public service procurement - a service triad model. Based on Uenk & Telgen, 2019; van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011](image)

However, this a very simplified view of the relationship structure as in reality there are far more actors and levels in a triad as well as in a dyad: a service supplier has e.g. sub-contractors and own suppliers, the public sector has a complex structure with many units, decision makers and levels, and the customers can also include e.g. schools, daycare units, afternoon activity units and caretakers. The most important notice in Figure 2 is that there is no contract between the end user and the service supplier. Moreover, regarding school transports, there is no existing contract between the public sector and the end users, only a legal obligation to provide a requested service based on law. The links between the three actors are referred to as bridges, that are established e.g. when the buyer contracts a supplier it creates a bridge between itself and the buyer (Uenk & Telgen, 2019; van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011) These bridges consist of service, information and resource flows (p.199). (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011) In other words: this study focuses on the dyadic relationship between the buyer and the supplier and the established bridge between them and all that what is flowing within the bridge between the two entities. The quality perspective is, however, difficult to define as the quality is created in the bridge between the supplier and the end user, thus the buyer has no part in this, other than e.g. providing with information. In some cases, the information goes directly from the end user to the supplier, thus excluding the buyer. This is one challenge acknowledged in this study: how to deal with “[...] quality control, performance monitoring, and a deteriorating information position for the buyer” (p.5). (Uenk & Telgen, 2019)
The so-called bridge position is held by the buyer in the beginning, but if neglected, the position can go to the supplier, meaning that the buyer suffers loss of control over the service quality. (Li & Choi, 2009) These triads can create a situation in which the buyer has eventually no direct control over the delivered service quality and so being dependent of the service supplier enjoying the bridge position. So, the service quality is instead in the hands of the subcontractor (supplier) and defined through its performance. (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011) This means that a supplier should stay motivated and remain able to meet the customers’ needs, as Wuyts et al. (2015) points out. The challenge for the buyer in this situation is to maintain the bridge position and control over service quality. This is the initial standpoint and focus of this study: the quality and the quality control.

Such a service triad creates difficulties for the buyer to manage the service quality as the quality is dependent of the suppliers’ performance and the buyer is not directly experiencing the service quality. (Uenk & Telgen, 2019) The service triad contracts are often conflicting: the buyer thinks it knows what the end user wants, the buyer contracts a supplier based on these assumptions while the supplier is in direct contact with the end user. Additionally, the subcontractor, or the supplier, must face two customers: the buyer and the end user. It is very possible that the supplier adapts the service, so eventually the service might be different than what has initially agreed upon by the buyer and the supplier. The authors suggest a proposition, based on the supplier having two customers: “we expect the subcontractor to act according to the targets linked to compensation” (p.201). (Van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011) Thus, the suppliers should follow the targets of the buyer.

Uenk and Telgen (2019 p.5) suggest that the buyer (the public sector) in a service triad should focus on supplier performance monitoring, maintaining strong triad position, building strong collaboration- and trust-based relationship, outcome-based contracts, and incentives alignment between buyer and supplier. Additionally, Li and Choi (2009) suggest active interaction between itself and the end user and by continuously monitoring the supplier. Followingly, these recommendations are the basis for the data gathering and the focus of analysis and interpretation of evidence.

### 2.2.1 Challenge: Supplier performance monitoring

The challenges of triads and dyads are followingly discussed in more detail in order to better frame the objectives of this study, supported by the research questions. These
challenges are those being addressed and dealt with throughout this study. By addressing different challenges, the buyer can manage possible opportunistic behavior and keep the service quality under control as Uenk and Telgen (2019) reason.

The nature of monitoring is explained as an effort to measure how another party is performing, or as a process that can be implemented in a relationship. Thus, in an e.g. service triad, this would help the buyer to notice opportunistic behaviour through changes in the service quality. However, it can also lower the supplier’s motivation to perform well. The relationship between the buyer and the supplier is much affecting how monitoring is experienced by the supplier. (Heide et al., 2007)

Monitoring can work as a tool for the buyer (the public sector) to keep its bridge position. If it fails to keep its position, the supplier might gain the position and turn to opportunistic behavior. Thus, the control over quality is lost. (Uenk & Telgen, 2019) To ensure service quality, the buyer must use measurements of service and behavior (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011). For a stable transfer decay, the buyer must keep monitoring the service supplier by communicating with end users and collecting feedback from them to keep an eye on the supplier performance and service quality. Monitoring should not be viewed as something negative but more as a necessity to avoid bridge transfer in a service triad. (Li & Choi, 2009).

All organizations are involved in performance measures in order to know a company is doing, are customer needs met, understand own processes, identify problems and weaknesses, and verify improvements. However, it is not that simple because a company must choose the right measures as intended, what should be compared, timeframes, and how to be precise and objective. (Stainer & Stainer, 1998)

2.2.2 Challenge: Maintaining strong triad position

This challenge revolves around obtaining and maintaining control.

When the buyer contracts a supplier, it creates a bridge between itself and the buyer (supplier-buyer). The buyer and the end-customer create a bridge in which the service provision takes place. There is no linkage between the buyer and the supplier-end-customer bride. This is referred as a “structural hole” (p.8), and the supplier-end-customer link as a “bridge decay”. (Uenk & Telgen, 2019)

The structural hole, bridge decay, bridge transfer and the initial bridge position are illustrated in Figure 3.
The bridge position brings advantages to the position holder in form of power and information. If the supplier has purposefully gained this bridge position referred to as bridge transfer, it can use it for own purposes unknown to the buyer. (Uenk & Telgen, 2019) A challenge for the public sector as the buyer is of how to control the service produced by a supplier (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011). The favorable situation would thus be the bridge decay because bridge transfer would mean loss of control for the buyer, so the authors suggest a permanent state of decay. This would require communication with end users, but also performance feedback. (Li & Choi, 2009).

The initial stage is present during the early stages of service outsourcing negotiation between the buyer and the supplier. Here, the buyer has full control through the bridge position. After the contracting process, the supplier and the end user start to interact with each other, creating a bridge. This leads to gradual erosion of the buyers’ bridge position and the triad erodes. Now, the supplier receiver power as the “gatekeeper of the information” (p.33) that the buyer does not have. (Li & Choi, 2009)

How strong the bridge between the supplier and the end user will eventually be, is an important question as Li and Choi explains. This is affected by previous experiences of that the buyer and the supplier have gained from each other, and what kind of contract there is between the two. Thus, good communication methods will most likely be adopted between the supplier and end users if the communication has been good initially between the buyer and the supplier. Li and Choi (2009)

2.2.3 Challenge: Building strong collaboration- and trust-based relationship

Uenk and Telgen (2019 p.8) identified different dimensions of collaboration. Collaboration has its benefits: it is based on cooperation, active communication, and long-term commitment. Collaboration also prevents opportunistic behavior or power abuse through the bridge position. Li & Choi (2009) proposes that a pre-existing
relationship between the buyer and the supplier forms the new relationship between the supplier and the end customer.

When the bridge transfer occurs, the power shifts from the buyer to the supplier as so far discussed. This transfer is the aim of the buyer as it wants to free itself from the service operations, thus lower the administrative costs related to service operations. After all, the meaning of such outsourcing is to free the buyer from the service delivery. If the buyer still gets involved in the service delivery it risks higher administration costs through the interface with the supplier. Thus, the supplier has been entrusted with the task of direct customer engagement while maintaining the link between itself and the buyer as the payer of invoice. Even though bridge transfer has occurred, the buyer should maintain communication between itself and the supplier while also monitoring both end users and the supplier to ensure service quality according to what has been agreed upon. (Li & Choi, 2009) Sanders et al. (2007) identified full outsourcing as one outsourcing engagement category, meaning that the buyer has given the supplier full control of the service including e.g. design, management, and processes. Also, Li and Choi (2009) refers to this finding by Sanders et al. This cost-related aspect is also important as one goal for the public sector is to keep the costs low.

2.2.4 Challenge: Contracts

As mentioned earlier, there are only two contracts within a service triad with three actors. This means for the public sector as the buyer of the service delivered to the end customer, that the contract between itself and the service supplier should somehow acknowledge the needs of the end user. (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011)

There are two types of contracts: outcome-based contract types and behavior-based contract (Eisenhardt, 1989), e.g. using behavior-based when outcomes are measurable (Uenk & Telgen, 2019). Li and Choi (2009) discuss competitive (adversarial) contracts and collaborative contracts. There is yet another type of contract: (microlevel) social contracts. However, this type of contract is more on a microlevel and kind of an “informal agreement” (p.427), so not necessarily legally binding. Such contracts can have many benefits such as strengthening the relationship between buyer and supplier, thus affecting monitoring experiences in a positive way. Otherwise, monitoring can be experienced as intrusive by the supplier. (Heide et al., 2007)
2.2.5 Challenge: using incentives

This challenge is overcome if the buyer manages to align goals of the contract parties by “setting the right incentives” (p.9). (Uenk & Telgen, 2019) As one conclusion offered by Wuyts et al. is that a customer focused supplier should be one of the most important attributes to focus on when choosing a service supplier. However, this is not enough to ensure a strong service triad. (Wuyts et al., 2015)

A key component is the customer focused orientation of the supplier, but a customer-focused buyer is also enhancing the customer-focus of the supplier. This assumes that a buyer possesses such customer knowledge that a supplier lacks, thus the buyer should mentor and coach the supplier. If the buyer is not customer focused, it does not either have valuable customer knowledge and, thus, cannot fulfill its role as a mentor for the supplier. (Wuyts et al., 2015)

How well customer needs can be met depends also on the supplier’s resources or abilities to serve. Abilities depends on the relationship between the buyer and the supplier through customer knowledge sharing. Another note is that a company’s ability to meet customer needs can be affected by the market’s turbulence; the higher turbulence the weaker ability to meet customer needs as these needs change rapidly. (Wuyts et al., 2015)

Thus, as a summary; Wuyts et al. (2015) suggest that a supplier’s customer focus is dependent of buyer-supplier relationship, the buyer, and the end users as these affects how well a supplier can access end user information.

2.3 Public procurement and legislation

The school transport services have been bought as a procurement by the case city in this study through competitive tendering, resulting in public service contracts. The tendering or the procurement process is not included, but these must be shortly introduced in order to understand how public services are constructed. Also, public procurement and the legislation are discussed as these define the school transport service framework in which the public and the private sector must operate. It should illustrate the challenges of contract management in procurement. Legislation is not discussed in more detail.

The public procurement in Finland is subject to the national legislation: Act on Public Procurement and Concession Contracts (*Hankintalaki*), that has its roots in the European Community directives on public procurement. (The Public Procurement Advisory Unit, 2020)
When the value of the procurement exceeds the national threshold value, it will by law be considered a public procurement. (Pekkala and Pohjonen, 2015) The EU has defined threshold values for public tenders in EU member countries. If a public procurement is higher than the national threshold value, the EU rules are to be followed. (European Commission, 2020) In Finland it is the Act on Public Procurement and Concession Contracts (Hankintalaki) that must be complied (Hankinnat, 2019). If the EU level threshold value is exceeded, then the EU rules are to be followed: Classical Directive 2014/24/EU (European Commission, 2020).

The current threshold values for public procurement by Central Government authorities, thus applying for school transportation benefits, have been updated and has come into force 1st January 2020. Threshold levels have been defined (Hankinnat, 2019; European Commission, 2020) for the National threshold level as 60,000 euros without VAT (corresponding to Hankintalaki 25 §) and EU threshold level 214,000 euros without VAT (corresponding to Hankintalaki 26 §).

2.3.1 Competitive tendering and public procurement

The traditional role of the public sector has changed. The public sector is now inviting companies to competitive tendering and forming cross-sector partnerships with the private sector. Instead of traditionally providing the required services (or products) alone, the public sector is now providing services (or products) through contracts with the private sector. This is not simple as contracting is case-dependent, and a very complex process with many risks (p.155). (Sagawa & Segal, 2000)

The co-operation between the two sectors in the seventies and eighties started to emerge as cross-sector partnerships. The social sector goals were also in unison with the private sector goals, thus both sectors gaining value through the partnership. The benefits for the private sector included “greater visibility and recognition” and better image, leading to an increased interest in studies within CSR. Cross-sector partnership became even more popular in the eighties as the media started to support this view and awareness grew. The businesses noticed the visibility of such partnerships and so the interest in cross-sector partnership rocketed and took different forms. These so-called exchanges between the two sectors, meaning that one recognizes that the other can meet their needs. (Sagawa & Segal, 2000)

The most traditional definition of the aim of a public procurement is “to achieve the best value for money” (European Commission, 2018 p.62). The goal for tendering is to use
public funds as effective as possible; to purchase price-quality ratio products, services, and other contracting as cheap as possible. (Pekkala and Pohjonen 2015) There are three different kind of procurement contracts: works contract, supply contract or service contract (European Commission, 2018). As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on the school transportation benefit pupils, thus a public service.

The local authorities are involved in a public procurement process through which the necessary products and services are purchases for the community with public funds (Pekkala and Pohjonen 2015). In procurement processes the public sector is referred to as the contracting entity. For public transportation services it is the municipalities or other public authority, or as this study the six case cities as municipalities. The awarded contract will be referred to as a public service contract. The winning company is referred to as the transport service supplier. (Liikennevirasto, 2018) The procurement process includes five steps: 1. Preparation and planning, 2. Publication and transparency, 3. Submission of tenders, opening and selection, 4. Evaluation and award, and 5. Contract implementation (European Commission, 2018).

2.3.2 Public procurement in Finland

The expenditures of the Finnish general government expenditures stand for a significant amount of the country’s GDP (see e.g. Statistics Finland, 2020 p.1) The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland upholds the HILMA website for public procurement announcements without any costs (HILMA 2019) Much of the public sector is referring to the General Terms of Public Procurement (known as JYSE 1994) based on the Decree on Public Procurement 1416/93, that was replaced by the Act on Public Procurement 348/2004 in 1st June 2007. The newest terms are referred to as JYSE 2014. JYSE stands for Julkisten hankintojen yleiset sopimusehdot palveluhankinnoissa. (Ministry of Finance, 2015)

The Finnish procurement is reported and monitored by different authoritative bodies and procurement under the EU threshold value but exceeding the national threshold value are bound by national laws. These bodies and laws are illustrated in Table 1 (with both English and Finnish names):
It is well worth knowing that only laws in Finnish and Swedish are legally binding, and translations are not, e.g. translation of Act on Public Procurement and Concession Contracts (Finlex ENG, 2016 vs Finlex FIN, 2016a).

**2.3.3 School transportation service in Finland**

This part introduces the phenomena being studied: the school transportation service in Finland. The chapter introduces to general statistics, definition of school transportation benefit and regulatory requirements and rights that builds the framework of the school transportation service.

School transportation is a benefit granted by the municipalities as local authorities. Pupils are entitled to free use of collective traffic, usually by receiving a bus card to use. However, in some cases using collective traffic is not possible or recommended, meaning that the caretaker has the option to request for taxi transportation.

Laws are difficult to consider in the contracts as the laws can change. One important change is already coming next year in June 2020: Revisions to Road Traffic Act by the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Finnish Government, 2018). Another law that is under turmoil and actively debated in the social media is the present Act on Transport Services that underwent a reform in 2018.
Table 2 National laws in Finnish and English. Source: Finlex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decree on the Use of Vehicles on the Road (1257/1992) – present</td>
<td>Asetus ajoneuvojen käytöstä tiellä (1257/1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Interlock Device Act (730/2016)</td>
<td>Alkolakkolaki (730/2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014) – present</td>
<td>Yhdenvertaisuuslaki (1325/2014)</td>
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Table 2 illustrates well the legislative richness that both the public and the private sector must comply regarding the public transport services in practice and who has the right for public school transportation benefit. Of course, there are other Acts that has some level of effect on school transportations, but these have been listed according to the judgement and knowledge of the researcher as the most interesting and important ones.

This study is not discussing the legislation, but it is important to know the laws and rules that together build the legislative framework in which school transportations are created and for which pupils, e.g. Basic Educational Act. One interesting update is the new Road Traffic Act (upcoming 2020) and the Act on Transport Services (2018) as these have been under active discussion in the media, especially how the Act on Transport Services has affected the taxi services in the country.

### 2.4 Passenger transport service

This part of the theoretical framework that introduces the passenger transport service itself, service quality and how quality can be defined, monitored, and measured.
Services can be regarded as performances; produced and consumed at the same time. Service is also an “interaction between producers and customers”. This means, as the author points out, that the customer is part of the production as a “co-producer of the service” by adding something to the input, e.g. time, effort, and energy (p.279). (Parasuraman 2010) A service production process is, thus, different from a manufacturer’s processes as service is an open system in which the customer participates. (Grönroos & Ojasalo 2004)

Yet for the customer, productivity is the relationship between own experienced input and output of the service. On the other hand, it is neither wise to focus solely on the customer’s input as resources are finite. Instead, Parasuraman suggests focusing on both the producer and the customer. (Parasuraman 2010)

2.4.1 Closer look: what is service quality

According to Grönroos and Ojasalo (2004) traditional productivity measurement requires a constant quality output and that there are no “significant variation between inputs used and outputs produced” (p.416). Moreover, inputs and outputs are simply much more difficult to calculate compared to manufacturing. Changes in inputs might as well lead to negative as positive changes among customers regarding their willingness to buy the service. (Grönroos & Ojasalo, 2004) Parasuraman et al. (1985) agree upon the importance of service quality but pondered over the situation that quality in general is still difficult to define and model.

One challenge is that quality of goods is different that quality of service, thus should not be compared to each other. Additionally, there are three characteristics of services: intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability. Intangibility refers to the difficulty of how to look at services through numbers because services are more like performances. Heterogeneous services mean that service performance can vary depending on producers, customers and even on daily basis. The third characteristics of inseparability means that a service is produced and consumed at the same time. The possibility of a company to affect the service quality can be difficult especially in services with high level of consumer involvement, meaning that customer input becomes crucial for the service production. According to Parasuraman et al, (1985) the customer must rely on other ‘evidence’ compared to goods with e.g. style, color, label, packages. However, service quality is more difficult to judge than judging goods as service judgement is based on the comparison of expectation and performance and involves both the outcome and the
process. Parasuraman et al. constructed and proposed a service quality model as a result of their study in an under researched field.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has provided with an overview of the theoretical framework of this study; the public sector, procurement and legislation, school transport as a public service as well as introduces the service quality aspects.

The following chapter introduces the study methods used in this thesis to answer the research questions, what data is collected, how it is collected and how the study quality is enhanced.
3 METHODS

The difficulties with managing the bridge position in passenger transport service triads and dyadic relationships, and how to measure quality of such service are acknowledged. In other words: this study takes a simplified dyadic approach even though the supply chains are complex with many actors. Moreover, the school transport benefit and public procurement are heavily regulated by law, making the topic difficult to approach. These initial settings highlight the need for a deeper qualitative approach from a simplified setting.

As Espoo city is the assigner of this study, having requested for a comparative study including all the six biggest cities (Kuusikkio), this study is conducted as a holistic single-case study supported by data gathered from five other cities for comparison. The needed data is gathered through qualitative methods (interviews, observation, and documents), summarized in case (theme) records, and finally analyzed deductively through within-case analysis, supported by comparison of the five other cities. The aim is to provide the city of Espoo suggestions and ideas for future procurement by exploring how other cities are approaching the quality of school transport service procurement and how they maintain a strong position within the triad through a dyadic relationship.

3.1 Study design

The research design can be regarded as a plan for collecting and analyzing data as it defines the research type and adopted priorities, thus affects the quality of the empirical research. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010) Choosing a design and a strategy depends on the purpose, resources, the audience, and the researchers’ own interests, as Patton (2002) points out. Yet according to Yin (2009 p.26) it is a “logical sequence” that links together research data, questions, and conclusions, reminding of a plan of action to get from one point to another. The purpose of a research design is, thus, to connect evidence with the research questions. (Yin, 2009) Because the study is requested and defined by Espoo city’s needs and interests, a single-case study design serves this purpose well as it allows to focus on Espoo city. However, as the city requested the study to also include five other big cities (Kuusikkio), a comparative approach is included. The chosen study design is based on one of the four case study designs in Yin’s so-called 2 X 2 matrix (see Yin 2009 p.46 Figure 2.4): a holistic single-case study. This design is supported by comparative elements.
3.1.1 Case studies

One of the most popular approaches in public administration studies is the case study approach (McNabb, 2008) and most used method among qualitative researchers (Stewart, 2014). Such a study is conducted when one unit or case is being studied (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The reason behind its popularity lies in its flexibility (McNabb, 2008) or as Eisenhardt (1989) explains such studies as highly iterative, meaning that the researcher can move freely between research processes. Case studies in public administration helps to identify what should be done or avoided, but its purpose is to instruct by showing one administrative unit what other administrative units are doing. (McNabb, 2008) Thus, this further strengthens the decision to use the case study approach as the aim is to provide the contracting city with suggestions by identifying what should or could be done by studying other units. Moreover, the flexibility and free movement during the study is highly beneficial.

According to Patton (2002), a more general explanation is that a case study is used when focusing on one organization and its behavioral factors. Eisenhardt (p.534) defines a case study as “a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting”. This is also the focus of this study: one case city studied and compared to other cities to enhance the city’s performance. This comparison is only possible by identifying the unique attributes of each city.

The research questions of this study are structured as how-questions, further supporting the chosen design for this study. Thus, when a study includes how (and why) questions, the researcher usually chooses the case study strategy (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010; Yin, 2009; Stewart, 2014) because a case study provides the possibility to study something in-depth and to interact with the study units (Stewart, 2014).

McNabb describes a case study as a qualitative approach that can be either explanatory, interpretative or critical. Explanatory studies are focusing on explaining some phenomena being studied through a cause-consequence approach (McNabb, 2008). This study is explanatory by studying school transport service triad through a dyadic view (the phenomenon) by focusing on the service quality cause-consequences: what and why causes higher, or lower level, of service quality.

In a case study, data is analyzed by organizing cases for a deep comparative study, thus having a holistic theme (Patton, 2002). What is the final study unit depends solely on the researcher (Stewart, 2014), but a case is generally chosen according to how well it points
out a problem, or how it represents as a solution for others to follow (McNabb, 2008). In this study, however, the city of Espoo as the contractor of this study has pointed out the five other cities to be studied for comparative purposes. The choice does not reflect the researcher’s interests, but the case city’s interests. Additionally, the case represents those eyes through which the writer aims to look through to understand a phenomenon (Bryman, 1988). In this study the case unit is Espoo city’s logistics unit, representing the eyes through which this study is conducted.

As a case study enables an intense study of an organization, it demands enough information of the unique attributes and characteristics of that organization (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010), thus a case study requires a clear definition of the case (Patton, 2002). A case study is most useful when the subject is best understood by studying in its natural setting (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). In other words: a case study enables the researcher to see the world in a “valuable way” in a specific context without any laboratory walls (Rowley, 2002 p.18). In the results chapter, descriptive records (tables) are used to illustrate the answers of each city’s informant, thus highlighting the unique attributes of each city. The study also includes descriptive summaries per city and per theme.

### 3.2 Data collection methods

The following step is to decide what kind of data will be collected and how. The chosen data collection methods depend on what type of data is needed to solve the current research problem (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010; Arbnor and Bjerke, 2009) and how well methods suit the study purpose (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Thus, data collection methods are used to answer a research question (Mills, 2014), or as Silverman (1993) defines them as research techniques. Arbnor and Bjerke (2009) further defines methods as guiding principles that helps us create knowledge.

According to Silverman (1993 p.9) there are four main methods in qualitative studies: observation, analyzing texts and documents, interviews, and lastly recording and transcribing. Patton (2009) again identifies three sources of qualitative data: interviews, observations, and documents, and that “What people say is a major source of qualitative data” (p.21), gained through observation, surveys, and interviews. Yet for case studies, the main data collection methods are e.g. interviews and observations (Eisenhardt, 1989). Yin (2009 p.102) refers to six main sources of evidence in case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artefacts. Thus, Yin recommends that a researcher should aim to use as
many sources as possible for a higher-quality case study. In other words: triangulation. (Yin, 2009) Notable is also that most case studies use mixed methods (Stewart, 2014). Yet, Bryman (1988) suggests longer involvement time-periods by participant observation, in-depth and unstructured interviews.

In this study, the research questions are answered by gathering data through qualitative methods: interviews, observations as audits, and analysis of organizational reports, documents, and statistics. Qualitative methods can, indeed, provide rich information on fewer cases, but with weaker generalizability (Patton, 2002). In this regard, fewer observations are justified as they provide a more in-depth understanding as the purpose of this study is not a higher level of generalizability but a deep understanding of the case city. Such rich and deep data would simply not be possible with too many observations (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Thus, this study focuses on data provided by one case city and five additional cities for comparative purposes. Interviews are the main source of data, thus highly valuable and the focus of analysis. Triangulation is the main tool for strengthening the quality of the study by using many different data sources.

Eisenhardt (1989) points out two strength of case studies: data overlapping and flexibility. During a case study it is possible to overlap analysis with collection, e.g. field notes as both observation and analysis. This is possible because of flexibility of data collection processes, as it allows modifications. (Eisenhardt, 1989) This flexibility of free movement during a study is highly fitting for this study as the researcher moves between the different study stages doing continuous cross-checking, rewriting, and redefining.

3.2.1 Interviews

Interviewing is “one of the most important sources” (p.106) of evidence in a case study (Yin, 2009). Direct quotations from interviews are used to reveal the emotions, thoughts, experiences and perceptions, thus creating a “basic source of raw data” (Patton, 2002 p.21) The study is focusing on gathering relevant evidence by doing interviews with a comparative purpose. It is an important source of evidence in order to understand possible similarities, differences, strengths, and challenges at the cities in order to answer the two research questions (RQ1 and RQ2).

One popular interview type, also used in the study, is the open-ended interview with small sample sizes (Silverman, 1993 Figure on p.9), combined with the basic general interview guide approach. (Patton, 2002) Following Patton’s suggestions, the questions
in the interview guide are more based on knowledge, experience, and opinions and values in the present time.

In order to understand the data, a mutual understanding between the interviewee and the interviewer is fundamental. This deep understanding is where reliability and validity takes form. (Silverman, 1993) A deep understanding is justified as other local authorities can be a valuable resource “of information on practice elsewhere” and thus, “provide technical assistance” (Walker et al (2010 p.734). Indeed, the five other cities are regarded as such valuable data resources for other methods, strategies and ways of doing things. One of the benefits of the researcher being familiar with the field is that it grants a mutual ground between the interviewees and the researcher, further strengthening the interview outputs. Followingly, this study combines open-ended interviews with the general interview approach; having a prepared set of common questions asked of all interviewees, supported by an interview guide. Some questions are modified or excluded, depending on the interviewee’s responses. This is necessary because each question is expected to be answered in different ways, thus highlighting the need of open-ended questions as well as having an interview guide to support the comparative purposes.

The researcher will return to the respondents for more information or explanation if needed after the interviews have taken place. Thus, post-modifications are possible. One additional important highlight is that the researcher uses her own experiences and expertise from the field when conducting the interview guide, but also according to instructions by Espoo city as the study contractor.

The data gathered from interviews will be in the form of own notes and recordings, that will be transcribed. Permission for doing the actual transcription through a professional third-party company has been asked from each interviewee separately before the interview starts. The final transcripts are supported by the researchers own notes from the interviews (e.g. own thoughts and feelings). Each interviewee is again reminded of the study purpose, how data is managed, what data will be used, how each interviewee is referred to, how data is recorded, transcribed and that each interviewee are provided with a draft of the results for further commenting. All interviewees agree to the study and the conditions through presenting each respondent with a written consent to personal data processing.
Unfortunately, interview 1 with the chief of transportation (A1) could not be recorded due to technical problems, why it was essential to send the interview summary to interviewee for commenting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1: Espoo</td>
<td>Chief of transportation (A1)</td>
<td>30.3.2020</td>
<td>01:19:50</td>
<td>Online call (not recorded) + guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2: Helsinki</td>
<td>Planner (B)</td>
<td>13.3.2020</td>
<td>00:54:01</td>
<td>Online call recorded + guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3: Vantaa</td>
<td>Administrative manager/ chief (C1) and Office secretary (C2)</td>
<td>18.3.2020</td>
<td>00:57:24</td>
<td>Online call recorded + guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 4: Turku</td>
<td>Chief of transportation (D)</td>
<td>13.3.2020</td>
<td>00:46:54</td>
<td>Online call recorded + guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 5: Tampere</td>
<td>Chief of transportation (E)</td>
<td>30.3.2020</td>
<td>00:56:54</td>
<td>Online call recorded + guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 6: Oulu</td>
<td>Logistician (F)</td>
<td>13.3.2020</td>
<td>01:05:51</td>
<td>Online call recorded + guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 7: Espoo</td>
<td>Project coordinator (A2)</td>
<td>23.3.2020</td>
<td>~01:50:00</td>
<td>Online call (not recorded) + guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Interview diary.

### 3.2.2 Observation

Those conducting a qualitative research has the goal of going further than just explaining the environment; they aim to do a deeper description and analysis of the environment they study to the small details (Bryman, 1988 p.63) A case study of such nature requires studying a case in its natural setting referred to as direct observation (Yin, 2009). Observation in a qualitative study is usually combined with a small sample size, something that quantitative researchers criticize. Another issue is that different observers can make different observations from the same setting (Silverman, 1993). Still, observation can be a good addition to interviews in order to understand a phenomenon better, but observations must be descriptive enough for the reader to get a picture of the
phenomenon being observed without any judgement. (Patton, 2002) However, observations are only conducted in the city of Espoo as the contracting study case city.

The researcher’s role can be either emic (insider) or etic (outsider) (Mills, 2014; Silverman, 1993), and either conduct categorization that is used by those being observed (emic) or by the observers themselves (etic). (Patton, 2002 p.265). The researcher must choose own level of participation between being participant and nonparticipant observer, as Patton (2002) describes. However, the data will unavoidably be influenced by the researcher’s own knowledge (Mills, 2014) and how much the observer is affecting the actual observation is thus an issue for the researchers. Those being observed might be affected by the observer and not acting naturally — an overt observation — compared to when the observer is unknown to the observers — a covert observation. (Patton, 2002)

Yin (2009) identifies participant-observation in which the observer can even take part in the events. This form of observation is presented by Yin as both an opportunity as an issue. It can provide access to stages otherwise inaccessible, provide a possibility to see things from the inside, and give a possibility to manipulate small events. The issue is that it sometimes forces a position on the observer, makes the observer a supporter of the units being observed, or the participant role might take too much time to do observation. Also, it might be a problem to be at the right place at the right time. (Yin, 2009)

As the observations are in form of official audits, the observations are completely overt as every observed is aware of the observer. The transport companies and the schools were beforehand informed of the upcoming audits. However, the transport companies were not given exact date and time as not to affect the results of the audits. The role of the observer is emic because of the role as an employee. The audits were conducted by two workers (researcher and a colleague) wearing a yellow west and ID cards visible. Doing audits alone was not possible due to e.g. safety reasons. Moreover, the audits were performed as participant-observation as auditors had to walk over to drivers and ask specific questions. Auditors were not allowed to step inside the vehicles. To ensure both observers were working in unison and making same observations, a form was developed by A2. One form had to be filled for each arriving vehicle, including e.g. registration number, time of arrival, and use of alcohol interlock device. The results were summarized by A2 in a formal report, accessible to the researcher. Also, all forms were handed to the researcher to be used in this study.
3.2.3 Documents as secondary data

Different documents can provide valuable information of companies and organizations. Thus, it is advisable to negotiate access to these data sources, e.g. statistical charts, and customer records. Documents can, as Patton highlights, offer access to such data that would not be accessible through observation and, thus, remain unknown for the researcher. (Patton, 2002) Quantitative data has also a supportive function. It can help the researcher to stay focused and not get “carried away” by “impressions in qualitative data” (p.538) and to support qualitative findings. (Eisenhardt, 1989) For example, Walker et al. discussed so-called user groups (citizens referred to as end users in this study) as sources of knowledge regarding performance. These users can e.g. contact someone in higher position to notify about an underperforming agent. (Walker et al., 2010) Followingly, the customer responses and complaints (feedback statistics in this study) are regarded as one important source of information. However, organizational reports and statistics are only available through the study case (Espoo city), used with permission from the supervisors. Especially statistical reports are valuable as they provide support for the observation and interview findings through numbers. Also, the five other cities have each provided with a copy of one of their current contracts.

3.3 Analysis, interpretation and presentation

Patton (2002 pp.438 and 439) describes different options for how to organize and present qualitative data (see Exhibit 8.1 p.439). This study follows the case study approach. The following discussion describes the actual processes of analysis, interpretation and final presentation drawn from all collected raw data (or evidence).

Some observations can be established as true or false. There are two ways to define what is true and false in order to draw conclusions; induction and deduction. (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010) If needed, these two approaches can be combined in one study (Patton, 2002). Eisenhardt (1989) highlights the ideal theory- and hypothesis-free status before starting a case study, but at the same time admits that this ideal is impossible. It is though good to consider this as possible theories, assumptions and hypothesis can affect the findings. (Eisenhardt, 1989). This issue is also discussed by Bryman (1988); a pre-theory in the beginning of a qualitative study might affect the chance of seeing through other individuals’ eyes, thus a blinding effect. Yet, Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) emphasize the importance of a pre-theory when answering cause-effect questions, as it aims to answer what causes something, or are these effects mutual or without any relationship.
The study purpose is to compare and confirm existing theory and categories (discussed in chapter 2) to the empirical findings gathered from the study case and other five cities (presented in chapter 4). This means that the research questions and the study aim require background knowledge and a pre-theory before any data collection can occur to support the focus of what data to collect.

### 3.3.1 Theoretical framework

Many researchers can study the same organization with same methods but reach different conclusions because of their respective framework. These researchers would not be able to understand each other's studies, as Patton explains. Each of these theoretical frameworks have their “own internal logic and assumptions” (p.134) — all equally valuable. In other words, what framework should be used depends on the values of that perspective. (Patton, 2002) Riege (2003) points out that case studies require a higher level of theory compared to other qualitative methods. This level of theoretical framework is needed in order to specify the conditions for a phenomenon to occur and not to occur. This is essential for a case study as such studies require constant comparison between findings and literature for strong theoretical level. Furthermore, using similar literature is favorable as it supports in combining findings that otherwise would not be combined. This also strengthens the established concepts. (Eisenhardt, 1989)

The theoretical framework in this study aims to be rich and deep, supporting the understanding of the studied phenomena. The literature is chosen to support each other, thus making theory and evidence easier to compare and eventually point out similarities and differences. The theoretical framework in this study focuses on themes and concepts such as the nature of (transport) service and its quality, the public sector, challenges, and different service quality measures and monitoring strategies. It also introduces school transport benefit as a service triad though a dyadic perspective.

### 3.3.2 First step: data analysis

Data collection can generate a huge amount of data - and the challenge is to understand that data (Patton, 2002). The first step should be to sort the raw data in some manageable order. This means that the researcher is trying to find and choose categories or classes according to which the raw data will be sorted, followed by cross-comparison between categories and classes. (McNabb, 2008) Patton suggests using “classification or
coding scheme” during the first phases of data analysis. The researcher can thus find patterns in the data mass generated from observations and interviews. (Patton, 2002)

This study undertakes a deductive approach. The themes or categories are built around the theoretical framework and the research questions, with initial key themes as quality definitions, quality challenges and successes, quality monitoring, strategies, measuring and future ideas. Correspondingly, the study conducts following analysis process: 1. sort all data manageable and write a case-report/record, 2. identify classes/categories/dimensions based on literature review and research questions, 3. sort data according to classes and categories, and 4. within-case analysis and comparison to find patterns.

3.3.3 Second step: interpretation

The next step after analysis is to interpret the identified patterns and links within each case and between cases. Interpretation is the process of drawing “conclusions from whatever structure is revealed in the data” (p.285). (McNabb, 2008) Interpretation starts with analyzing the cases in order to find meaning to the evidence generated from each case by “going beyond the descriptive data” (p.480). It is though important to notice the difference between description and interpretation. (Patton, 2002). Yet, Eisenhardt suggests conducting continuous comparison (or iteration) between the evidence and the theory, aiming for a “close fit” (p.541). One step is to strengthen the constructs by redefinition and with evidence. This is achieved by constantly comparing data and constructs. Another step is to verify that relationships between constructs is supported by the data from the case. (Eisenhardt, 1989)

This study implements following data interpretation process, being iterative by moving back and forth between theory, constructs and evidence: 1. continuous comparison of theory and evidence → similarities/differences, 2. continuous comparison of constructs/themes and evidence → similarities/differences, 3. see if evidence confirm or disconfirm relationships between constructs and cases, and 4. polish final comparison to theory and constructs → confirm or disconfirm.

3.3.4 Third step: reporting findings

The last step is to write a final report of the research findings (McNabb, 2008). Yin suggests considering the audience and its specific needs when writing the final report. (Yin, 2009) The final report will be following the case-study format. Patton suggests that data in a case study could be presented as a case record for the final case analysis. It
includes primary information and data that has been edited, sorted out, fitted together, and organized. Furthermore, Patton (2002 exhibit 8.5 p.450) suggests following order for a case study: 1. assemble the raw data of each case, 2. construct a case record for each case (optional), and 3. write a final case study narrative. The suggestions by Patton (2002) and Yin (2009) are combined into one figure to further illustrate the final analysis, interpretation, and presentation process:

![Final study process model. Based on Yin (2009), McNabb (2008) & Patton (2002).](image)

### 3.4 Quality of the study

The terms used to describe quality of a study depends on if a study is qualitative or quantitative by nature. Murphy and Yielder (2010) define qualitative terms as trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These four terms are also presented by Riege (2003) as corresponding tests to Yin’s (2009) four tests of quality establishment in a case study: validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.
Validity is described by Yin (2009 p.43) as an “major barrier in doing case studies”. Bryman (1988) further declares that the validity of interpreting the subject’s perspectives is a challenge for qualitative researchers. It is, thus, a challenge to know which interpretation of a perspective is true for the case being studied. Two researchers might even be of different opinion thus affecting consistency. (Bryman, 1988) Thus, the aim is to lower and acknowledge subjectivity (Rowley, 2002).

Much of criticism is unfair because of the comparison to statistic generalization, when case studies are instead based on analytic generalization (Yin, 2009; Rowley, 2002). This method means that the evidence is compared to an already established theory that should have been acknowledged in the study. (Rowley, 2002) A so-called universal generalization is not even correct when discussing case studies. Instead, a case study relies on generalization to “a particular set of results to some broader theory” (p.43). (Yin, 2009) This false interpretation of case studies is also discussed by Bryman (1988), by stating that the comparison of cases to samples representing the universe is misleading.

Validity is built during data collection and composition. Yin illustrates the main tests for a case study through a figure in which validity can be reached by using multiple data sources, a chain of evidence, and by having key informants review a draft version (p.41 figure 2.3). (Yin, 2009) Even Bryman (1988) suggests using informants as sources of validations by asking for feedback during the interpretation. Moreover, Eisenhardt (1989) recommends using similar literature for better generalizability and conceptualization.

The study includes qualitative methods, so the quality will be assessed through trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### 3.4.1 Credibility

If quantitative studies have measuring instruments, then qualitative studies have the researcher herself as the instrument. This means that credibility is directly dependent of the researcher herself. (Patton, 2002) Credibility can be compared to internal validity, thus requiring study findings interpretation to be accepted by e.g. interviewee’s (Riege, 2003) Credibility is a criterion that shows how the data interpretation is representing, or how well it fits with the cases’ view. This can be achieved by e.g. asking respondents feedback and giving them an opportunity to ask questions, longer involvement time, and by triangulation, as Murphy and Yelder (2010) discuss.
Interviews are regarded as the main source of evidence. However, even though interviews are of high importance, they should only be considered as verbal reports because of possibly “bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation” (pp.109-110). This is why interviews should be supported with other sources of evidence. (Yin, 2009)

The credibility of the evidence interpretation is strengthened by asking each interviewee to comment the interpretation or analysis of each interview transcript. Longer involvement time is achieved as the writer is employed in Espoo city, thus, has gained experience and understanding of school transport management, procurement and insight through audits. This study includes different sources of data, thus aiming for higher level of triangulation. During the study, the writer is asking continuous feedback from Espoo city’s professionals and colleagues. The writer is also supported by own supervisor from Espoo city as a mentor. Informants are also asked to give feedback of interview data. Moreover, the writer participated in a Passenger transport conference (Henkilökuljetuspäivät) at Tampere 6.-7.2.2020 that provided valuable insights to current challenges, changes and new ideas and trends in the public passenger transport (incl. school transport) in Finland.

3.4.2 Transferability

This quality criterium is comparable to external validity as it also focuses on generalization (Riege, 2003). Transferability can also be referred to as generalizability. Yet qualitative studies do not aim for generalization as these studies focuses on uniqueness of each setting. (Murphy & Yelder 2010) Generalizability means that findings can be generalized to a specific theory, corresponding to analytic generalization used in case studies. It is here that the importance of well-defined constructs is evident when comparing case data with these constructs. (Riege, 2003) Thus, transferability is strengthened during the analysis and interpretation processes by constantly comparing evidence with the literature. There is only one case, thus a universal generalization is not the aim. Instead, findings are generalized to the theories and concepts, based on the literature review.

3.4.3 Dependability

Dependability is comparable to reliability in quantitative methods as it focuses on the inquiries through stability and consistency, thus, a study should have consistent techniques available (Riege, 2003). Dependability can be achieved by providing enough information for readers to assess if the assumptions are linked to the gathered data, thus
providing a trail that leads to the theory (Murphy and Yielder 2010). The aim is to show how data collection can be repeated by others and how to get the same results (Rowley, 2002) by replicating findings, but the data gathering must be consistent (Riege, 2003). Thus, it is crucial to document all the processes and steps in a study (Yin, 2009). However, the challenge is that humans are not “as static as measurements”, but data variations can still be valuable (Riege, 2003 p.81).

Dependability will be strengthened in this study by documenting carefully each step and reporting methods and results in a systematic way throughout the study. All gathered data is stored in secure locations.

### 3.4.4 Confirmability

Riege (2003) explains that confirmability can be compared to neutrality and objectivity, or validity. The data needs to be logically interpreted, without any judgement, or that data is interpreted in a reasonable way. Confirmability is the requirement of other researchers to be able to confirm the results of a study, so a study should acknowledge issues around subjectivity. (Murphy & Yielder 2010)

As Patton (2002 p.93) reminds: “absolute objectivity of the pure positivist variety is impossible to attain” but at the same time objectivity is seen as “worth striving for”. However, Bryman (1988) points out that conducting a qualitative study by focusing on the cases point of view would require a longer time of involvement. According to Riege (2003) case studies indeed seem to be more subjective compared to other qualitative methods due to the situation of the researcher being in close contact with the cases. It is, thus, advisable to acknowledge this issue for better validity.

The writer has a role as a representant of the main case city as an employee. Furthermore, the writer is working at Espoo city’s logistics team, that is responsible for school transportsations. In other words: the researcher herself has gained over time insights, experience, and expertise in the field of study. The issue of weaker objectivity level is accepted through the nature of this study. However, the employee role also provides a longer involvement level.

### 3.4.5 Quality of interviews and observations

Patton (2002) explains that the time right after an interview is “critical to the rigor and validity of qualitative inquiry” (p.383). What the researcher should do right after the interview is to check the recording and the tape, make possible follow-ups to the
It is also important to look at the interviews as a whole and make notes of details that occurred during the interview; reactions, conditions, feeling of the interview and the quality of the interview process with possible issues and problems. This will work as a “quality control to guarantee that the data obtained will be useful, reliable, and authentic” (p.384). This time is also critical after every observation. (Patton, 2002) Thus, this reflection process will also be done after each of the six interviews and all observations (audits).

3.5 Protection of data and participants.

Yin (2009) discusses the issues around “protecting human subjects” (p.73). Thus, a formal approval is required for the study, and the priority should be to aim for “the highest ethical standard”. When collecting data, Yin suggests that the researcher should aim for: “informed consent from all persons” participating in the study, protecting participants from “any harm” and deception, protecting participants’ “privacy and confidentiality”, and to be precautious with “especially vulnerable groups” like children (p.73).

Following Yin’s (2009) suggestions, the researcher informs every participant of the study purpose and by sending separately a note for consent to data processing. At the beginning of each interview, each interviewee was informed again the purpose of the study, methods, consent and how the received data will be handled. Also, they were informed that they are given the possibility to read through, comment, correct and modify the interview summary to ensure the validity of the data. The summary is in English, including also original citations in Finnish. No names will be revealed in the study, only position, responsibilities, and the city. Even though this study revolves around school transportation for children, no pupil will be individually observed or mentioned in this study. The schools are not named, and the school transport companies are anonymous. The observations are conducted as audits ordered by the city of Espoo as the employer of the observer.

The documents and statistics have each separately been accepted to be published before being used and published. The contracts are not as a whole published in this study. No individual or transport company is recognizable. Data is, however, linked to each city, its units, and interviewees by referring to title/position/responsibility area and city.

The following chapter will introduce the results of the study - gathered as described in this chapter.
4 RESULTS: SCHOOL TRANSPORTATIONS TODAY

This chapter introduces the empirical findings of this study, gathered through different qualitative methods. First, the case city evidence will be introduced, including the interviewee with Espoo Logistics unit’s project coordinator, responsible for reclamation management and monitoring. Also, the writers’ field observations (audits form Fall 2019) results are presented, followed by a customer satisfaction survey from 2018 and other relevant statistics. After presenting the evidence from Espoo, the discussion goes to introducing all evidence gathered from the interviews with the cities by gathering data from each city by topic for further comparative purposes.

4.1 City of Espoo results

The results from the main case city of Espoo have been gathered by interviews, observation (audits) and by analyzing organizational reports and statistics. The school transportation service is managed by Espoo Logistics unit.

Figure 5 City of Espoo administrative organization. Espoo, 2019 p.2.

Figure 5 illustrates the decision-making structure in Espoo. The Logistics unit responsible for school transports, is located under Administration & Development. The decision-making responsibility is held by the Education and Cultural Services, who handles all school transport benefit applications. Finnish and Swedish speaking pupils are managed in different units (Finnish education and Swedish department). The communication flow regarding school transportations in general goes, thus, between these three units.
4.1.1Interview with the project coordinator at Espoo Logistics department

The interview was held online in 23rd March 2020. The discussion revolved around themes such as transport quality, monitoring, measurements, feedback statistics and management, but also interviewee’s own experiences, opinions, and improvement suggestions. The interviewee will be referred to as interviewee A2. The original interview guide and translation are in Appendix 5 and 6.

4.1.1.1 The reclamation process in general

The city of Espoo is accepting all feedbacks either per phone or e-mail. The city has one email address for all city-related feedbacks, that is managed by the Contact Center (CC). The customer service has many responsibilities and reclamation handling, of which reclamations are only a fraction. The employee turnover is high and there are many itinerants, so managing all these tasks — including reclamations — can be a challenge for the customer services. (A2)

Regarding school transports, customer service manages those feedbacks that are rated as less severe, while those rated as more severe and acute are forwarded to the interviewee, that handles these with the supervisor’s support when needed. Customer services or the interviewee processes the feedback or reclamation and ask for a rejoinder from the transport company being the target of reclamation. In more severe cases the interviewee will inform own supervisor and then directly contact the company and negotiate the issue. The company is asked a written rejoinder that is forwarded to the customer. Some issues include penalties for the company, depending on the circumstances and the issue. (A2)

Figure 6 Reclamation management flow. Based on interviewee A2, 23.3.2020.
Espoo Logistics did the city’s first passenger transport audit in Spring 2019. The idea to do audits was the interviewees, who had previous experience in doing audits or inspections. The interviewee has developed the audit and reclamation process, tools, statistics, and measures for the city. (A2)

There was a total of 929 reclamations regarding school transports in 2019, if including also elderly people and disabled, then it would be around 1,400 (see Appendix 1). According to the interviewee, the city has set 0.2 % as the target for reclamations as it is currently 0.3 %. What comes to the severe reclamations, the target is zero reclamations, meaning that no severe accidents and such should never happen. Examples of such severe incidents are mentioned as a customer in wheelchair is not properly strapped and falls during transport. (A2)

Interviewee A2 defines a good school transport as: being on time, drivers as customer service professionals, and the drive is safe and ecological.¹

4.1.1.2 Benefits of the reclamation process

Interviewee A2 starts with reminding what the transport service is about and what service the city has bought: it is about safe passenger transportation, regulated by the laws. Most customers, if also including elderly and customers with disabilities, are those that need more help. It is not about collecting money from the transport companies, but to ensure safe transports for customers. The purpose of reclamation monitoring and management is, as interviewee A2 sees it, an important tool to produce data for the higher-up’s decision making. By following the feedbacks and reclamations, it gives the city also a tool to interfere in possible problems and challenges. (A2)

The financial aspect is also important, as interviewee C2 reminds. The school transport services require much funding, so the municipal managers are very much interested to know where funds are going and how much. So, also in this regard, producing data is important. Another viewpoint is that the services are produced with public funds, so the city is also accountable to the citizens. Interviewee A2 thinks that the companies are not

¹ ”Hyvä koulukuljetus sitä että auto kulkee ajaltaan, kuljetaja on asiakaspalvelun ammattilainen, ja matka tapahtuu turvallisesti ja mahdollisuuksien mukana myös ekologisesti, eli ajetaan niin, että polttoainetta kuluu vähän, eli siis hallitsee auton.” (A2)
motivated to fix problems and challenges without effective sanctions and monitoring. Thus, reclamation monitoring is a good quality management and monitoring tool. (A2)

Before interviewee A2 started at the Logistics unit with reclamation process development, the customers in the passenger transport services had to send all complaints and feedback to the transport companies as the city had no own reclamation management system. Interviewee comments that now, after developing the current system, the customers have now a place to contact and, indeed, seem to be using it well. Before, customers did not know what to do — but now they do. The city should keep this process because otherwise the city would lose an efficient tool and ‘its teeth’\(^2\). For example, the statistics can show a spike in the feedbacks, thus the logistics unit can start to investigate what and why has caused a spike. By monitoring issues can be identified, and necessary actions taken to investigate and solve the matter. Another viewpoint is that monitoring can also prepare supervisors for possible press contacts, thus supervisors are more informed of what happens on the field. (A2)

Monitoring also provides benefits for the transport companies, as interviewee A2 explains, by doing “free work” and providing “free data”. One company has given positive feedback of the provided data. Another example is that by considering the feedback that the city gives to the companies, they can also avoid tickets e.g. installing missing alcohol devices or school transport signs as defined by law. (A2)

4.1.1.3 Challenges and issues with the reclamation process

The reclamations must be carefully read and processed because misinterpretations and groundless penalties are an image issue for the city, as interviewee A2 ponders. Thus, one challenge is how customer service workers, or the interviewee can interpret a reclamation in different ways and wrongly. (A2)

Another issue identified by interviewee A2 is those customers who send their complaint to many places; one correctly to the info-box (Contact Center), one to administration and so on. The complaint circulates and can at some point return to the customer service, thus leading to possible double processing. Some customers assume that by sending one complaint to many places they get a reply faster. (A2)

\(^2\) “Taulukosta tulisi pitää kiinni, koska muuten menee työkalut ja hampaat menetetään” (A2)
A third issue are those customers or school personnel, who collects for a longer time issues and then sends them all at once to the customer services. It would be better if the customer or the school would send the reclamation immediately after occurring, so that the city can intervene in the matter. Thus, the city cannot do anything if the complaints are hold onto for a longer time. It is also more difficult to investigate old matters. (A2)

A fourth issue are those customers that send reclamation to a person they have contacted before, thus bypassing the official reclamation process. This only slows down the process instead of making things go faster. (A2)

Another challenge is related to the transport companies. According to the contract, the companies must reply within three days or at least inform if the reply (rejoinder) is delayed due to some specified reason. If not, the customer service or interviewee must keep reminding the transport company. This also causes frustration among customers waiting for a reply or solution. (A2)

4.1.1.4 The future of the reclamation process

Interviewee A2 has noted that during this year (2020) the amount of reclamations has clearly gone down (if excluding the current coronavirus pandemic). Interviewee concludes that so far (in 2020), monitoring has affected the transport quality.³

The audits and the monitoring have sent the message that the city does follow what is being produced to them (as a service buyer). It seems that a tighter grip has resulted in decreasing reclamations. Also, this is something that was not only done once (for one year) but is a continuous process. For example, when the city confronted one company for the missing alcohol interlock devices, the company started installing these devises in new vehicles and doing internal check-ups. (A2)

According to interviewee A2, the results from the audits in 2019 showed that the mandatory school transport signs were missing from many vehicles, so when confronted with this, the companies started to use these more often. In other words, monitoring has increased security and legality in the passenger transports. (A2)

³ “Tänä vuonna 2020, niin on reklamaatiot vähentynyt [...] On alkanut vaikuttamaan [...] Eli on vähenemään pain selkeästi” (A2)
Interviewee A2 ponders how the city should somehow kindly inform and guide the customers of how the process works, so that reclamation handling would be more efficient. Thus, customer information should be enhanced. (A2)

Another notice is that those handling reclamations should focus on the existing guidelines and not stray because a customer demands otherwise. This helps managing the reclamation process. Also, customer service personnel might need more resources as they already have many different processes to manage. Some have already given feedback that the reclamation handling takes too much time and that it is complicated. (A2)

It seems that the interviewee’s work will continue. The themes for the next audits will focus on elderly people and people with disabilities. Moreover, the focus will be on how well the seatbelts are in use as the driver is responsible of passengers having seatbelts fastened. Another change in the future is the new Western Uusimaa Transport Services (Kulkukeskus) that is currently being developed and the operator chosen. However, the piloting is currently on hold because of the coronavirus. The initial idea is that this new transport service will manage all Western Uusimaa passenger transports by choosing vehicles and do the routing for transport companies. The common reclamations (e.g. delays) will be handled by the new service, but the more severe and challenging reclamations would be managed by interviewee A2. How things will work out regarding monitoring remains to be seen when it starts to operate. (A2)

4.1.2 Observation (audits) in Fall 2019

The audits were in October and November 2019. The results are in Appendix 2.

There was a total of 49 school transports being checked at five different schools in Espoo, defined by the employer (Espoo city). The focus was on breath alcohol interlock devices, identification of transport companies (logos) and if the school transport sign was visible. The schools are on the transport company C area.

It was noted that 34.7 per cent (17 of 49) of all vehicles lacked the breath alcohol interlock devices, even though the law states that the device is obligatory when transporting pupils. Of these, seven vehicles were subcontractors, three said that device will soon be installed, one said own car was being repaired and one was a new unexperienced driver. One driver commented that small cars (e.g. Prius) do not have such devices.
The obligatory school transport sign was missing from 18.4 per cent (9 of 49) of the vehicles. Two drivers commented that because this was a new car, the sign was missing. One was not cooperating and refused to place the sign despite being asked to. Two drivers said that the office had not provided them with a school transport sign, and additional two drivers placed the missing sign when asked to.

The company logos were missing from 20.4 per cent (10 of 49) of all vehicles, thus being unidentified. Some vehicles were identified as subcontractors, while some remained unidentified.

One driver stopped for a while to give some feedback. According to the driver, it was concerning that the school did not have any personnel greeting the children (as many are special pupils), even though the front door is about 25 meters away from the drop-off place. The driver was also concerned about the transportation data being updated regarding those children that must have someone to greet them when dropped off.

### 4.1.3 Feedback statistics from 2019

The feedback statistics from the city of Espoo highlights what issues should be focused on. The feedback statistics from 2019 are included in Appendix 1 with a total of 929 feedbacks, of which only 7 are positive, meaning that negative feedback stands for 922 cases. The statistics is maintained and archived by the Espoo city’s logistics department.

According to the statistics from 2019, the most often occurring issues were too early arrival of the taxi (82 of 929), taxi did not arrive at all (167 of 929) and delayed drive (379 of 929). The drivers themselves gained 59 negative feedback, vehicle equipment 36 and the offices 21. The following year (2020) seems to follow the previous year: mostly delays and no arrival of the taxi. It should be remembered that all feedback stands for only 0.003 per cent of all (roughly) 300,000 yearly school drives, including 1,200 pupils with a school transport benefit one way or both ways.

The negative feedback is classified according to severity: positive, groundless, minor, medium, higher, or serious. These can also be seen in Appendix 1: medium severity stands clearly for the majority with 700 of 929, while groundless are the minority with 19 of 929. If looking at how feedback is divided between the three contracted companies: company A is clearly the best performing with only 28 feedback cases, B with 265 feedback cases and C with a total of 633.
4.1.4 Survey in May 2018 regarding the attitudes of families

The city of Espoo did a survey study during May 2018 about families’ attitudes of school transport service. The results can be seen in Appendix 3. Newer survey has not been done or being planned. (Espoo, 2019)

The city has three contracted transport companies for school transport services (group and individual transports): company A, B and C. These companies use subcontractors when needed. These companies are referred constantly as A, B and C throughout the results-chapter. (Espoo, 2018)

Company A has received most positive feedback. In Appendix 3 the results show that the company has scored best in all evaluation parts. company B has also received positive feedback but some, though, have experienced unfriendly customer service. (Espoo, 2018)

The questionnaire was sent to 1,162 homes, of which 330 answered. According to the results, all three suppliers scored at least 3.6 of 5. This result indicated that familiar are generally pleased with the transport service. However, some respondents stated that the school drive is too long and question the planned routes. Taxies do not stay within the timetable, so the familiar wish that taxi companies would inform families earlier when delays occur. Families also wish for more exact timetables when a child is brought home. The school transport sign has been missing on the vehicles. (Espoo, 2018)

There is also some feedback regarding the drivers. The service quality varies between drivers, weak language skills, driving expertise is questioned, drivers do not ensure that pupils are strapped in seat belts, do not ensure a pupil’s name (identification), are talking on the phone while driving, and parks the vehicle on the wrong side of the road so that the child has to cross a road. There were also some complaints about bullies and disturbing behavior among the pupils. (Espoo, 2018)

The cooperation between the families and the companies has been experienced mostly positive by the families. Some families mentioned issues with transport changes and cancellations not reaching the drivers accordingly, especially during mornings. Some families experience that the companies make too many changes in the timetables and possible changes are informed too late (the evening before). Moreover, the changes made by the families are not always responded to, so the families wish for a reply that the change has been noted. (Espoo, 2018)
The city of Espoo’s customer service has mainly been given positive feedback. Some state that the customer service is fast, but some experience it as too slow. Some have experienced unfriendly service and sometimes no one has answered the phone. It has also been unclear where the families should be in contact regarding transport change notifications. Some families have not gotten any response for the feedback they have sent to the city. (Espoo, 2018)

4.2 Kuusikko: an introduction

The six cities, as mentioned before, have together formed the so-called Kuusikko-group. These cities are also the biggest Finnish cities. However, they do differ from each other. All tables in the following chapter have Espoo city highlighted as the case city being compared to that of other cities.

Table 4 illustrates the number of pupils with school transport benefit (classes 1-9), including both those using collective traffic and those using group or individual transportation (focus of this study). These numbers were also asked to be commented by all interviewees. All except for Oulu agreed to these numbers, as Oulu interviewee sees that a better number would be around 3,000. (Interviewee F, 13.3.2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Pupils with transportation benefit</th>
<th>Percentage of pupils with transport benefit</th>
<th>Pupils together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>2 955</td>
<td>6.6 %</td>
<td>31 323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>6 993</td>
<td>13.0 %</td>
<td>53 715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>1 605</td>
<td>6.9 %</td>
<td>23 223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>1 779</td>
<td>12.1 %</td>
<td>14 643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>1 566</td>
<td>8.4 %</td>
<td>18 660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>2 787</td>
<td>11.7 %</td>
<td>23 784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Statistics over school transportation benefit in cities 2018. Vipunen, 2019a.

The number of pupils with group or individual transport benefit have been separately requested from each city:
### Table 5 Pupils in group and individual transports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Group transport</th>
<th>Individual transport</th>
<th>Total sum of pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>~1,020</td>
<td>~80</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>545-555</td>
<td>&lt; 10 or 1-10</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>500-550</td>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>500-550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results will be described in more detail further below. However, Table 5 gives an initial overview of the main differences between the cities. Tampere area (including Teisko) has most pupils (1,250) and only a few in individual transports, while Helsinki has 1,200 pupils, but much more in individual transports. This was explained by interviewee B (13.3.2020) partially by the fact that Helsinki has a big hospital school.

### 4.3 Results from the interviews

The informants from each city are referred to as interviewee A1, and A2, B, C1 and C2, D, E and F. Espoo city has two informants: A1 and A2. However, the interview with A1 was not possible to record. The original interview guide and the translation of the interview with A1 are in Appendixes 9 and 10. A back-up informant was used as informant A1 has been away from office for a while, so fresh data was received from A1’s depute, referred to as A3. Informant A3 was not interviewed as comments were asked during office hours.

The initial purpose was to interview one person with expertise and knowledge from each of the five additional cities. The cities decided who would be participating. Vantaa wished to participate with two informants (C1 and C2). This was accepted in order to gain all necessary data for this study and to respect this wish. Originally, all contact names were directly given to the researcher by informant A1, who also wished to include these specific five cities in this study. Original interview guide and translation are in Appendixes 7 and 8 regarding the interviews with interviewees B, C1 and C2, D, E and F.

Responsible units and informants from each city, including position and responsibilities, are summarized in table 6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Informant(s): interviewee</th>
<th>Unit(s):</th>
<th>Informant(s)' responsibilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Espoo      | A1 and interviewee A2     | Logistics department/transport services | A1: Chief of transportation (kuljetuspäällikkö) with 6.5 year of experience in Espoo city’s passenger transports.  
Informant’s responsibility:  
A2: Project coordinator at Espoo Logistics  
Informant’s responsibility: all passenger transport reclamations (management, contacts, and processing) |
| Vantaa     | interviewee C1 and interviewee C2, and C3 | Education and Learning Department (Sivistystoimen toimiala) and the Procurement unit (Hankintayksikkö) | C1: Administrative manager (chief) (hallintopäällikkö)  
Informant’s responsibilities: decision making officeholder in school transports (as depute)  
C2: Office secretary (toimistosihteeri)  
Informant’s responsibilities: accept and prepare school transport benefit applications for informant C1, place transport orders and other school transport-related regular tasks. |
| Helsinki   | interviewee B             | The Education division (Kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen toimiala) | Planner (suunnittelija) in the procurement unit (Hankintayksikkö; Erityiskuljetukset ja koulumatkat)  
Informant’s responsibilities: procurement of special- and school transport services |
| Turku      | interviewee D             | Central Administration/ Transport services | Chief of transportation (kuljetuspäällikkö)  
Unit: Central Administration/ Transport services (Konsernihallinto/Kuljetuspalvelut)  
Informant’s responsibilities: chief for the passenger transport services, procurement and supporting the Education Division (Sivistystoimi) |
| Tampere    | interviewee E             | Passenger transport unit (henkilöliikenneyksikkö) | Tuomi Logistiikka Oy (owned by the city of Tampere and Pirkanmaa Hospital District)  
Informant: interviewee E  
Chief of transportation (kuljetuspäällikkö)  
Unit: Passenger transport unit (henkilöliikenneyksikkö)  
Informant’s responsibilities: managing group transports and activities, including also non-urgent patient transports and managing driver cooperation contract. Procurement and planning the whole. |
| Oulu       | interviewee F             | Logistician (logistikko) | Unit: Collective and passenger transports under The Department of Urban and Environmental Services (Joukko- ja henkilöliikenne, joka on Yhdyskunta-ympäristöpalveluiden alla).  
Informant’s responsibilities: school transport contract management, procurement & planning, transport benefit decision-making |

Table 6 Responsible units in respective city.
4.3.1 End users, service suppliers and responsibilities

The cities vary in the number of pupils within the school transport services, as already been illustrated. However, also the number of contracts and how these pupils have been divided varies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Transport districts / pupils divided between companies</th>
<th>Transport companies</th>
<th>Who maintains transport-related data of pupils (e.g. timetables and addresses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The city (logistics department) and the transport companies themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>According to school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Transport companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transport companies and schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>500-550</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Education Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>2 (600 + 600)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Passenger transport unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Different solutions</td>
<td>~20</td>
<td>Schools and the transport companies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Results from the interviews.

4.3.1.1 Espoo

Espoo has divided the city into seven metropolitan areas, but only five transport areas, each with one contracted transport company. Each area has its own schools and the pupils are divided accordingly per area. The transportation districts in Espoo city can be seen in Appendix 4. However, Matinkylä, Tapiola and Olari areas are roughly combined into one transport area, and Kauklahti area roughly with Espoo city area. The areas are divided between transport company: A manage one area, while B and C both two areas.

According to interviewee A1, Espoo has around 1,200 pupils, or about 800-900 each week due to turnover. Espoo has currently three contracts with company A, B and C. It could be better if Espoo had more service suppliers, because too few means higher risks for the city. As interviewee explains, currently only few transport companies manage all Espoo city’s school transports but also transports of elderly and people with disabilities, so if one company has problems, e.g. system failure, then it will affect too many individuals. If the city had more contracted companies, then these risks would be smaller as one company would not have too many transport pupils. So, interviewee sees that Espoo could have more contracts, but the current transport districts are big, so smaller companies have difficulties with entering the competitive tendering. (A1)
When interviewee A1 was asked about Oulu’s city’s model, interviewee replied that it would probably be too difficult for Espoo to manage and that it would be better that the transport companies have all the routing and scheduling responsibilities. Espoo city has so many pupils in a rather “compact area”. Thus, it is better for companies to manage routing and scheduling. In this way, the companies can fill their vehicles to maximum and avoid half-filled vehicles. Also, this means that companies can manage their costs — meaning that they can offer lower prices for the city. This is a “win-win situation”. Additionally, interviewee mentions that the city wants closer cooperation with transport companies, so having too many contracts would simply be too heavy to manage. (A1)

Interviewee was also asked to comment Turku’s and Vantaa’s models. Regarding Turku, interviewee A1 sees that the model is reminding of what Espoo used to have before this current model. The earlier model worked better back then as it enabled better tailored contract, e.g. Swedish speaking pupils in one contract and, thus, include a transport company to provide Swedish service. However, Turku’s model with 12 contract packages sounds too heavy for Espoo. Interviewee A1 offers as an idea to divide all pupils so that all basic education pupils would be in e.g. 2-3 packages, pupils with special needs as one package, hospital school pupils as one package, and lastly those with individual transport as one package. Regarding Vantaa’s model with only two contracts and two groups of transport pupils, interviewee A1 comments that one of Espoo’s current service suppliers is using this kind of solution within own. Still, having only two contracts would be too risky for Espoo as there would be too many pupils for one company to manage, leading to higher risk of interruptions for the overall daily transport operations and functioning. (A1)

4.3.1.2 Helsinki

According to interviewee B, the procurement unit is responsible for school transport service management in Helsinki as well as handling reclamations and guiding schools. The first notice is that Helsinki has clearly most individual transports than other cities (around 80 pupils). According to interviewee B, this number is high because Helsinki has a bigger hospital school with 25 pupils (current number). There are also many special schools in Helsinki with many pupils needing transport service. (B)

Helsinki has contracted seven transport companies, of which three are bigger companies. Two biggest companies stand for 85 per cent of all school transports in the city. The pupils have been divided between the transport companies according to school. (B)
4.3.1.3 Vantaa

The assistant city manager has the decision-making power, but this responsibility has been delegated forward to interviewee C1. The transport unit has the responsibility of managing school transports in the city: everything from placing an order to decision-making. Vantaa has a separate procurement unit that manages all procurement processes. Currently, the transport unit has three workers, and interviewee C1 as the team leader and decision-maker. The transport companies and the schools manage transport data of all students. (C1)

The city has currently 555 school transport benefit pupils (C2). Under ten pupils have individual taxi transportation. Interviewee C1 did not know the exact number of those in individual transports, but C2 says that there are 105 pupils with special needs. (C1 and C2)

Currently, Vantaa has two transport companies: one has all special needs pupils, while the rest pupils’ transports are managed by the other company. The city is not divided into any transport areas as Vantaa is one whole area. (C1) So far, this system has worked well.

The secretaries (including C2) accepts the feedback given to the city. Usually the feedback is something that they can solve right away. (C2) Moreover, the line between the special needs pupils and the rest is not such a fine line. One company has more pupils who needs further support, while the other company can also have pupils with special needs that do not need as much support as those at the other company. (C1)

4.3.1.4 Turku

Currently, two secretaries in Turku city’s Education Division (Sivistystoimiala) has the responsibility of managing the school transport services in practice. (D)

The city has divided all pupils with school transport benefit into twelve (12) different sized ‘packages’, defined according to the latest procurement in Fall 2019. There are five (5) special education schools, each as their own package (five packages), Swedish schools as one (1) package, hospital school pupils as one (1) package, other basic education schools as one package (1), preschool children as one (1) package, individual transport pupils as one (1) package, shorter transport needs during summer break and other school break periods as one (1) package and lastly transports outside the city borders are one (1) package. The idea behind is that Turku city wants to offer many different size
companies a possibility to make an offer in the competitive tendering process, however there are only five winning tenderers for all twelve packages. (D)

4.3.1.5  Tampere

Tampere is standing out from the Kuusikko. Tampere city and Pirkanmaa Hospital District have together founded Tuomi Logistiikka Oy to manage passenger transports in the region. As a result, Tuomi Logistiikka Oy has almost all municipalities in Pirkanmaa district as its customers. They operate all school transports both in Tampere and Teisko. Pupils are not grouped, or vehicles earmarked in any way. In this way, Tuomi Logistiikka Oy can lower costs and make processes more efficient. Moreover, there are no transport districts, because procurement included service suppliers committing to drive all transports ordered by the company. As the only exception, Teisko is a separate area with its own contracts and suppliers. The distance between Tampere and Teisko is long, so it was not seen fair that service suppliers would have to drive all the way there without separate compensation. All in all, there are about 600 pupils in Tampere and about 600 in Teisko area: a total of 1,250. (E)

Most pupils in Tampere are pupils with special needs, or pupils been in an accident needing temporary taxi transportation. Most pupils are still using collective traffic at Tampere as the main means of transport. However, Teisko is more on the countryside and the distance between home and school is longer, so more pupils there need transport service, managed by Tuomi Logistiikka Oy. (E)

When asked how may contracts they have, interviewee E recalls them having around 30-40, depending how being calculated. The contracts include bigger buses, a couple of tens minibuses, 36 accessible vehicles (meaning vehicles for wheelchairs and such) and 27 passenger cars. As an estimation, maybe around 30 contracted service suppliers. Yet, later interviewee defined the amount to 40 contracts after asking a colleague. Interviewee reminds that these 40 contracts includes all passenger transports and not only the school transports. There are around 30 vehicles owned by three bigger companies. So, they have a couple bigger companies and a few smaller companies. (E)

Tampere differs also in another way. Tuomi Logistiikka Oy has kept the right to coordinate transports as they see best, but service suppliers can express wishes. These wishes are not always possible to fulfill but are considered. (E)
Another interesting notice is that transport schedules are made, either half year into the future, or to the next bigger event when schools change their timetables. Timetables can change in the middle, but initially they are in the system active for either six months or to next timetable update. Interviewee E further explains that they want to avoid any unnecessary driver changes regarding pupils with special needs. Thus, they try to arrange regular routes, drivers and so on. Yet this also depends on schools are making timetable changes, that can lead to major changes in the routes. Smaller changes are managed so that the whole set is not necessary changed. Regularity is, thus, something they aim for as much as possible. (E)

4.3.1.6 Oulu

Oulu has divided the school transports in different ways through procurement. Which transport company manages a pupil's transport service can either depend on a pupil's place of residence and where the local school is (45 schools), if the pupils lives in one of the five municipalities that emerged with Oulu, or attending one of the five special schools. It is also mentioned that Oulu is geographically wider (or spread), compared to the other Kuusikko-cities. The number of contracts is ~20 because the city wants to offer contracts to different companies. Oulu merged with five neighbor municipalities during 2013 – 2014, thus the city wanted to keep their functioning school transport systems as there was no reason to dissolve them. (F)

Oulu also uses buses in their school transports. Buses are necessary in outskirt-areas where there is no collective traffic and many pupils. (F)

4.3.2 Communication structures and information flows

During the interviews, the informants were asked to describe daily communication and how data flows between all parties involved in the school transports, including caretakers and schools. Based on these descriptions, a map has been drawn according to writers’ own judgement and interpretation. However, as mentioned previously about the study quality, each interviewee was provided with a draft of the interview results, including the map, thus giving them a possibility to comment or correct possible mistakes.

4.3.2.1 Espoo

Interviewee A1 states that it is exactly the daily communication and information flow that is a big challenge for Espoo right now. In other words: how correct information reaches all involved parties in time. The challenge is, that the school transports in Espoo involves
so many different actors (logistics unit, customer service, the Education Division, schools, transport companies, afternoon activity units, morning- and daycare units and also temporary care- units), and that there is so many pupils with the transport benefit (around 800-900 each week). The goal is that all parties would get correct information, but the new Data Protection Act (1050/2018, see further Finlex ENG. 2018) makes data sharing much more challenging as well. Still, interviewee A1 sees that the city is going for the better, e.g. by using new system solution like Timit, but also by using social media for information sharing purposes and enhancing internal cooperation. According to A1, Espoo is currently piloting the Timit-system, offered by Intoit Oy (that is the same company behind Movit, used in Tampere). (A1) During the interview with Tampere (E), the informant told that they were pleased with the Movit-system.

Another challenge mentioned by interviewee A1 concerns caretakers. Each year, all caretakers must again apply for the transport benefit separately for each child. If the transport benefit is granted, caretakers must send transport-related information by filling a separate form, as both the application and the transport information cannot be filled at the same time. Interviewee regards the current bureaucratic system as difficult for caretakers. Interviewee suggests that the city could perhaps use an e-form. Here, the new Data Protection Act is a challenge. These issues are currently under internal development. (A1)

When asked how data should be stored, interviewee A1 replied that all correct and up-to-date transport information should be available from one system instead of many. It would be important to have all data available through a system managed by the city, that would transfer data to other systems. One solution for the information flow could be to have systems communicate with each other, so that all involved parties would have their own, tailored interface view. In this way, everybody could update the data and follow the information flows, and all data would be stored in one location. (A1)

A1 was asked to comment Oulu’s strategy to use schools as the main interface in the daily communication flows, in which only complaints and contract-related matters goes to the logistician (F). According to interviewee A1, the schools in Espoo would not want this responsibility. Instead, it is seen better that the Education Division is doing all decisions of group and individual transports and that the logistics unit manage the whole school transportation set. (A1)
Currently, all change requests and cancellations should be informed to either the logistics unit, customer services or the transport companies. Thus, as A1 explains, the logistics department has gained the role as a “gatekeeper” in school transports. This was also the wish of the transport companies themselves as they wanted to have contract-related matters quickly solved by having one contacting place. (A1)

4.3.2.2 Helsinki

The schools in Helsinki send each transport pupil’s timetable to the transport company, that has been contracted to take care of their transports. Caretakers should be directly in contact with a transport company as their customer, while reclamations should be sent to the procurement unit. The unit also must monitor that schools do send the necessary timetables to the transport companies. The transport companies are in contact with all other three: schools, caretakers, and interviewee B. (B)

The procurement unit (including interviewee) monitors the school transports, making sure that the transports are according to the contract. Their role is to act as a “judge” in conflict situations, as interviewee B explains. (B)

A challenging time for communication is when a new contract period starts, meaning that new operators step in and starts to interact with the families. There is more ‘friction’ between the families and the transport companies. If problems arise, or the transport companies are doing something outside the contract (doing solo), the procurement unit steps in. However, in general, the communication has worked well as the transport companies are getting more experienced. Sometimes there are breaks in the daily information flow as e.g. a caretaker has forgotten to inform the transport company that the child’s transport is cancelled. These create some challenges for the city. (B)

Helsinki has some plans to enhance information flow regarding cancellation. Right now, the cancellations are not visible anywhere. This is also a financial problem, regarding invoicing. An interface would be appreciated so that cancellations would be visible for the city also. (B)

4.3.2.3 Vantaa

The city sees that they have had a good operations model for years. When an order is placed, the information goes also to the school. The city follows that the transport starts and works as it should. Basically, the schools, caretakers and the transport companies are communicating intensively with each other, e.g. school timetables. (C2)
An (school transport) order is still placed on a separate form that is sent via e-mail. However, C2 points out that the city is going to pilot a new customer database, that will also be used by one transport company. C2 also recalls that a school and a transport company have their own system for sudden changes, and C1 adds that the other company has its own system for schools to fill in timetables. C1 suspects that both transport companies have their own customer database, but a shared database has only just been implemented through the planned piloting. (C1 and C2) The city is, thus, trying new technology to make communication even easier. It remains yet to be seen how it will work out. When interviewer told about a new system being piloted at Espoo, C2 remarked that the system is similar. Additionally, the city can also place orders directly through the new system. Everybody would have access to the same system. (C2)

The city must have all information regarding changes, so that they know where the child is going and when. Usually the caretakers inform the transport companies of changes, while the transport company contacts the city to confirm the change. Sometimes caretakers inform the city directly or the schools. Communication works rather well; no child’s transport has been unclear. (C2)

C1 continues that caretakers inform absence and other temporary things, but principally transports are directly from home to school and from school back home, so schedule changes go from caretakers to the transport companies. All up-to-date transport data is stored at the transport companies and the schools. Schools have their own responsible key person for school transports, either e.g. the school secretary or assistant, to manage all weekly transport data. (C1)

Regarding customer satisfaction surveys, the contracts state that such inquiries should be done during agreed points of time. Latest was from two years ago (2018) when customer satisfaction inquiries were sent to transport companies, caretakers and to schools’ contact persons. When asked about the results, interviewee C1 could not remember the results, but recalls that the results were twofold. Those families with children been granted transport benefit were already quite satisfied with the service. (C1)

4.3.2.4 Turku

The transport companies have been given the responsibility of managing routes and schedules of all school transports. The city’s transport unit sends the basic information regarding the pupils with transport benefit (all individual data). The companies in return
send the final routes and schedules to the city, that are then distributed by the city to the caretakers. (D)

The main responsibility of transport change management has been given to schools. The five special education schools have each their own key person for school transport management. Also, these five schools are the biggest transport units in the city. In a way, the schools are the link between the transport companies and the families. (D)

In general, the caretakers make cancellations either to the city (schools) or the transport companies. Sudden cancellations are made directly to the transport companies, especially outside city office hours. Changes are made to the city, that forwards the information to the transport company. Complaints and bigger changes go through the Education Division in Turku, that manages the whole picture. (D)

The Education Division (administration) is the main actor in the daily information and communication flows with the main responsibility of managing the whole picture, processing feedbacks and complaints, supporting schools and maintains all transport-related data per pupil. (D) Thus, the Education Division makes the decisions and alignments. Currently there are two secretaries who manages all these tasks. (D)

4.3.2.5 Tampere

The information flow and all transport data go through Tuomi Logistiikka Oy and its group transport team. However, the company has its own passenger transport call center for caretakers. During rush hours, some calls can overflow to the group transport team’s own coordinators. The drivers have their own drivers’ line, but they can also contact the driver support-team with contract-related questions or technical problems. (E)

The decisions (school transport benefit) are made by the city. All pupils’ data are sent by the city to Tuomi Logistiikka Oy. The school principals make timetables and send them to Tuomi Logistiikka Oy, who manages routes and all daily operations. All questions regarding decisions should be directed to the city itself. (E)

According to interviewee E, they are using Intoit Oy:s Movit-system for routing and scheduling. It is also used as data storage for all transport information, e.g. timetables and special needs. Each vehicle is equipped with an application that they use to access all data, routes, and schedules. The transport coordination team uses Movit, and change requests from schools and caretakers are accepted through e-mail. (E)
4.3.2.6  Oulu

The school is the main communicator in the daily information flow. It has been noted that it is easier for school units to manage daily matters when they do not need to get involved in contract related matters, that are again the interviewee’s responsibility. Also, there are not enough resources to manage all communication. (F)

The schools have a responsible key person for the school transports, e.g. the school secretary, teachers, or special education teacher. Sometimes all transport pupils are placed in same class, thus one teacher can be the contact person for a whole class with transport pupils. The caretakers contact the school if they wish to make transport cancellations. (F)

Caretakers directly contact the interviewee with more urgent matters and issues, but also transport companies contact the interviewee regarding e.g. contract-related matters. The school forwards contract-related and more serious and urgent matters to the interviewee. Changes can only be made by the interviewee as the city is the buyer of the service. Thus, it has been decided that it is best that one person at the city of Oulu handles all contract related matters and more difficult situations as well as changes. However, there is an exception with the special needs pupils as the city has given the responsibility to manage changes to the transport companies. (F)

Schools have all transport-related information; transport companies can ask for information of a pupil. Of course, also the transport companies have their own database. However, everyone is obliged to share and give data when needed. More acute matters (e.g. health issues) are communicated between the caretaker and the transport companies. (F)

Additionally mentioned, it is always a challenge when new companies are contracted for a new contract period before everything settles. These changes always pose a risk, and usually during the beginning there is kind of “inactivity”, but things always settle down. However, these challenges have been solved by clearly defining responsibilities and information-providing obligations, as interviewee explains. (F)

4.3.3  Grading overall information flow and communication performance

All interviewees (one grade for each city) were asked to evaluate the current daily communication or information flow between all parties involved in the school
transportation services. The grades in the first column in Table 8 are from 1 (very weak/bad) to 5 (very strong/good).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Daily communication</th>
<th>Translation of the citation</th>
<th>Citations from the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>According to A1, information flow and communication is one of the biggest challenges.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>5 + 5</td>
<td>“[...] if it is the interaction between a company and myself, then I could give quite easily a five [...] but between families and companies [...] based on current feedback, I could give a five there also [...]”</td>
<td>“[...] jos se on kuljetusyhtiön ja mun väliseen tiedonkulkuun, niin siihen mä voin antaa kyllä aika heittämällä sen vitosenkin [...]perheen ja kuljetusyhtiön välillä [...]Tänhetkisten reklamaatioiden perusteella vois antaa vitosen siihenkin [...]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;Well, I think that we have it working well.&quot;</td>
<td>“No mun mielestä meillä on erittäin toimiva.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot; [...] well, yes I would say it is somewhere in between, that yes, there is probably things that could be done better. [...] In general, it is quite Ok, as I see it.”</td>
<td>&quot;[...] kyllä mä sanoisin et se siihen puoleenvälilin menee et kyllähän sinä nyt parantamisen varaa aina varmast i on. [...]Pääsääntöisesti ihan OK mun käsittääkseni.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;It could be a four. It is going very well, but there is always something that could be done a little better [...]”</td>
<td>&quot;Neljä varmaan ois semmonen. Kyl tosi hyvin menee, mut aina ois pieniä petrattavaakin [...]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Well, I would give a four, as I think that we do not have any major problems. Of course, now when it is March, we live in the more stable time, so if you asked in middle August, then this could be quite different.”</td>
<td>“No, kyl mä nelosta niinku antasin, että ei mun nähdäkseni oo mitään ihan merkittävää probleemaa. Toki nyt ku ollaan maaliskuussa, nyt eletään varmaan sitä stabilimppaa aikaa, että jos kysysit tätä asiaa tuossa elokuun puolivälin kiepeillä, nii se vois olla vähän toinen juttu.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 Communication ratings per city.

4.3.3.1 Espoo

A1 rated the overall daily communication and information flow a 3 out of 5. Communication is one of the biggest challenges in Espoo’s school transportation. For example, fall 2019 was very challenging for Espoo logistics from an information flow perspective. (A1)

The satisfaction of the end users in Espoo city was discussion previous chapter. Interviewee A1 has the impression that the overall satisfaction was rising, and that the
majority was satisfied with the school transports. Because of the number of feedbacks, it might seem that there are a lot of issues within school transports, but as the city started to ask and remind caretakers to give feedbacks, the number of complaints naturally rose. However, the survey from 2018 showed that most caretakers and children are very satisfied with the service. (A1)

Another issue are the different ways of understanding the service quality. Interviewee A1 points out that families and schools see service quality differently than what has been included in the contract between a company and the city. Schools and families are often expecting the service to include more than what it should include (e.g. that a driver is expected to call beforehand or wait for the child at home).

4.3.3.2 Helsinki

Helsinki’s informant gives the highest grade for the general daily communication between all parties: 5 out of 5 between the interviewee and the transport companies, and another 5 out of 5 for the communication between families and transport companies. However, the grade could be a 2 out of 5 in the beginning of a new contract period. One benefit is that the interviewee and transport companies have known each other for a longer time, making communication easier. (B)

Interviewee acknowledges the difficulties the transport companies can have with hiring enough staff or predict how much staff is needed during the start of a contract period. It also might be difficult to find seasonal workers. (B)

4.3.3.3 Vantaa

C2 grades the daily communication as 5 out of 5, thus working very well. Interviewee hopes that they keep staying on the same level. When asked what they would commend, C2 replied school staff that have been there for a longer time. These people know the ways of doing things. Also, transport companies are reliable and can operate in different situations, thus is seems that there is no high turnover of workers. The key contact persons at schools are very skilled. When schools also have a low turnover, it means better consensus. (C2)

C1 further commends their office secretaries for swift, efficient, and good work within school transports. Applications are swiftly handled, and children are quickly in the transports. A decorous way of doing their work.
4.3.3.4 Turku

D gives a 3 out of 5 (an average) for the daily communication flow. There is always something that can be done better, but in general it works well. The city has started with the contract follow-up negotiations and monitoring meetings together with the transport companies. (D)

When asked to give positive feedback, D stated that the service producers are very responsible, and that customer service is good. After all, many are special needs pupils. This again requires more of the service suppliers. (D)

Challenges were a bit difficult to pinpoint. Communication could be handled better by both the city and the service suppliers. As an improvement example, the city has started to collect and send data to the service suppliers in a specific data format. Currently all data is in Excel-format, compared to the past when data was received in all kinds of formats (Word, Excel, e-mail and so on). This makes it easier for the service suppliers to manage all incoming data. This is something that the transport companies have been complementing. The city could in the future focus more on how to enhance communication by procurement requirements and how to forward and manage data with e.g. new tools. (D)

4.3.3.5 Tampere

E, representing Tuomi Logistiikka Oy, gives two grades: a 5 out of 5 for the interaction between the transport companies and the interviewee, and another 5 out of 5 for the current interaction level between the families and the transport companies. The daily communication flow works well, but there is always something that they could do better. Much communication-related issues are not about the information not reaching its destination, but rather about situations when the drivers have not looked in the application for the transport data as all pupil-related data are stored there. So, the challenges are more related to situations when data would have been there, but the driver has not had the skills to look for it. (E)

When asked about successes, interviewee mentions that the overall communication with the transport companies is working “really well”. Especially now, when drivers do not need to answer e-mails but can instead look for possible changes in this new system (Movit). It has made many things so much easier. Data is now correct and reliable. Before, Excel-sheets were sent through the e-mail to all drivers, so “it was always a little
terrifying to not know with what list the driver has left that morning when changes had been made the day before”. Interviewee feels that currently it is good to know that the information is correct. Also, service suppliers are actively contacting Tuomi Logistiikka if there are some issues to be fixed, e.g. in routes, schedules, and such. The drivers know how to inform when maintenance work is needed. (E)

E continued by mentioning the upcoming procurement regarding the passenger transport management system, as Movit has been only piloted so far. According to E, they have gathered good experience from it, so now they know rather well what they want from the system. Hopefully, the procurement can start this spring (2020), but the current coronavirus situation might mess these plans. The plan is to invite companies to tender the passenger transport system, but also the management system for visually impaired customers’ transports should be soon up for tendering. These two systems will be compared to find synergetic benefits. (E)

Additionally, there is also the taxi field, through which Tuomi Logistiikka has contracted about 380 companies, around 700 vehicles. So, these works as a an “overflow field” (overlapping) in situations when routes cannot be managed by the group transport companies. They have a separate contract with these 380 companies, that can step in if needed. However, the challenge is that these two are separate systems (group transports and the separate taxi field) and are not currently communicating with each other. The plan is that sometime in the future to make these two systems communicate in order to manage ‘overflows’ better. (E)

4.3.3.6 Oulu

F gives a 4 out of 5, however, by reminding that the rating could be quite different if asked in August. The interviewee (as city logistician) stated that the transport business sector (in Oulu) is very responsible and everybody are caring about the pupils and doing more than required in the contracts. This comment also applies to the school personnel. (F)

No survey has been done of how satisfied the families are with school transports in general. Oulu has occasionally planned to do so, but not done any so far. Surveys are only done for collective traffic user satisfaction. The interviewee estimates that families are rather satisfied with the granted service benefit. More serious conflicts and issues are rare. (F)
### 4.3.4 General quality definitions

All interviewees were asked to define with own words what is a good school transport from a quality perspective; some mentioned many things while others only mentioned a couple important definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Quality definition</th>
<th>Citations from the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Espoo          | Schedule: ":[... right time, place and in the right given way."
Professional skills: ":[... friendly and skilled personnel [...] (referring both to drivers and transport company’s offices)"
"suitable special equipment and instruments"
"flow of information"
"safety"                                                                 | "[...] oikea aika, paikka ja oikealla sovitulla tavalla [...]". "[...] ystävällinen ja ammattitaitoinen henkilöstö [...]" (viitaten sekä kuljettajaan että ajotoimistoon) "kuljetuksiin sopiva erityiskalusto apuvälineineen" "tiedonkulku" "turvallisuus" |
| Helsinki       | Safety: ":Safe, that is the first."
Successful: ":Another one could almost simply be successful."
The whole picture: ":Yes, the whole picture. And safety above all."
                                                                 | "Turvallinen - se on se ensimmäinen."
"Toinen vois olla melkein yksinkertasesti onnistunut." "Joo, kokonaisuus siellä. Ja turvallisuus ennenkaikkea." |
| Vantaa         | Safety: ":It is safe."
Schedule: ":[...] goes according to schedules, staying in the schedule, that it is reliable."
No incidents: ":[...] so that no oddities happen during the school drive."                                                                 | "Se on turvallinen." (C2) "[...] kulkee aikataulujen mukasesti, et aikataulusta pystytään pitää kiinni, et se on semmonen luotettava." (C1) "[...] koulukuljetuksen aikana ei tapahdu mitään kummallisuksia." (C1) |
| Turku          | Punctuality: "It is punctual [...]
Flexibility: "[...] and flexible when needed."                                                                 | "Se on täsmällinen [...]
"[...] ja tarpeen mukaan joustava." |
| Tampere        | Punctuality: "The schedule has to be exact, or at least exact enough [...]
                                                                 | "Aikataulu täytyy olla täsmällinen tai ainakin riittävän täsmällinen [...]" |
| E, 30.3.2020 | Safety: “[...] I would indeed stress the feeling of safety regarding special children; regarding both the driver’s behavior and the car itself. The car should appeal as reliable and the driver should seem as a reliable person regarding clothing and behavior.” | “[...] kylä mä näissä erityislasten kohdalla painottaisin sitä turvallisuudentunnetta sekä sen kuljettajan käytöksen kun auton suhteen, että sen auton täytyy näyttää myös luotettavalta välineeltä ja kuljettajan oltava ulkonäön puolesta sekä käytöksen puolesta semmonen turvallinen ja luotettavan olomäen henkilö.” |
| Daily routines: “[...] of course, parents’ daily routines, so that their everyday routine works, but also special children’s daily program works, so schedules are very crucial.” | “[...] sit tietyistä siihen vanhempien arkeen että se heidän arki pelaa siellä ja erityislapsen päiväohjelma saadaan toimimaan, niin se aikatauluessa pysyminen on semmonen tosi kriittinen.” |
| Oulu (interviewee F, 13.3.2020) | Reliability, safety and routines: “[...] reliable, safe and maybe kind of flowing with everyday life [...]”. | “[...] luotettava, turvallinen ja oisko semmonen arkeen soljuva [...]” |
| Quality from a management perspective: “[...] from a contract management and planning perspective [...] quality personnel [...] willingness to be of service [...] general cleanliness and this sort of things [...] good image, appropriate temperature [...] all that is connected to the feeling [...]” | “[...] sopimuksen hallinnan ja suunnittelun näkökulmasta [...] laadukasta henkilökuntaa [...] tietylaista palvelualtiutta [...]laadukasta kalustoa [...] yleistä sisäyhteyttä ja tämän tyyppisiä asioita [...]hyvää mielikuvaa, sopivaa lämpötilaa [...]mikä voi liittyä siihen niinkö tunteeseen [...]” |
| Quality service: “[...] should be about service quality, after all, it is specifically about service.” | “[...] laadukasta sen palvelun osalta, palveluahan se nimenomaan on.” |
| Deviation management: “[...] it also tells something about quality the way deviations are then handled.” | “[...] seki kertoo niinku laadusta, että miten ne poikkeamat sitten käsitellään.” |
| Low prices: “In general, as funny as it sounds, what is cheap is good in the sense that all missteps are avoided.” | “Yleensä se, niin hassulta ku se kuulostaa, ni se hyvä on halpaa siinä mielestä, että sieltä jää ne harha-askeleet tekmättä.” |
| “Market dialogue: “In that work, indeed, the market cooperation, market dialogue with the operators. Looking in the same direction.” | “Ja siinä työssä nimenomaan se markkinayhteistyö, markkinavuoropuhelu liikennöitsijöitten kanssa. Samaan suuntaan katsominen.” |

| Table 9 Definitions for passenger transport quality. |

### 4.3.5 Feedback, monitoring and measurements

The cities were also asked to describe if, how and by who the customer (end user) feedback is monitored, measured, and possibly statistically analyzed and archived. Also, if possible, each interviewee was asked to estimate an average number of feedbacks that the city receives, if no exact numbers from previous year was available.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Feedback as a monitoring tool</th>
<th>Amount of feedback (all)</th>
<th>Who handles feedback regarding school transportation from caretakers</th>
<th>Statistical monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>Yes (all)</td>
<td>929 (in 2019)</td>
<td>Logistics and Contact Center (CC)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>A couple dozen yearly.</td>
<td>Interviewee (the procurement unit).</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>~10 – 20 per school year</td>
<td>Transport unit secretaries (including interviewee C2)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>Yes (severe &amp; reoccurring)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>The Education Division, sometimes together with the procurement unit. Partially also schools.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>Yes (severe)</td>
<td>~10 per month (more severe issues)</td>
<td>Tuomi Logistiikka Oy (Passenger transport unit)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Schools mainly and the interviewee the more challenging.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 Feedback, monitoring and measurements tools and strategies per city.

Table 11 illustrates the results of how each interviewee described different monitoring and influence tools and strategies regarding how well the city can impact what happens on the field and how possible school transport related issues are dealt with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Monitoring and influence tools</th>
<th>Penalties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>Complaint/feedback system and one key person. Audits.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>Audits: at school premises or sitting in a taxi (sometimes). Primarily issues are discussed and deliberated together with the transport company. If transports do not work at one school, then the company is changed.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>Monitoring through invoice checking by confirming that transportations are working as they should (right pupil, place and time). Procurement unit again has the responsibility over quality monitoring e.g. vehicle equipment. Procurement unit organizes a follow-up meeting once a year with each supplier.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>Irregular audits at schools. Follow-up meeting with the companies. Following repeating complaints.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schools also has some monitoring responsibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Monitoring System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>Monitoring system showing where vehicles are currently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Grapevine communication”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spot checks or vehicle inspections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All accessible vehicles and minibuses must be inspected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol interlock device calibration certificate and registration book for passenger cars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask for written rejoinder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings and hearings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>Meetings with winning tenderer during summer before school start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demanding written reply (rejoinder) to some complaints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Companies monitor each other (grapevine communication).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logistician (interviewee) and a colleague handling VPL and SHL transports are in same building → better overall picture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11  Monitoring and influence tools and strategies per city.

All informants were also asked if the city has implemented any rewarding system or incentive strategies. However, no city has implemented such methods, while some are considering these for future contracts, for example interviewee F says that the city has been considering possible rewarding to be included in the future. Positive feedback was often mentioned as one way to encourage the service suppliers by forwarding positive feedback to them. Positive feedback was mentioned by B, C1 and C2 and, D.

4.3.5.1 Espoo

A1 thinks that the city can to a certain point affect what happens on the field. Espoo logistics can through the procurement and contracts manage school transports by detailed service description in contracts. As interviewee A1 highlights, an enough detailed service description is very important during procurement and competitive tendering. The current contracts are well made, so there are no issues regarding these. Moreover, reclamations are also an effective monitoring tool as they pinpoint issues and challenges, so it is easier for the city to react. Audits are also an effective way to affect the transport companies’ performances by going out on the field. This provides the logistics unit with valuable information, discussed with service suppliers to enhance service quality. (A1)
During the interview, A1 describes the reclamation management process as a development through process phases 1 – 5.

- Phase 1: All feedback was sent directly to the transport companies, who again sent each week a summary of all received feedbacks. Usually these included none or just a single complaint being handled.

- Phase 2: All feedback was sent to group e-mails (‘school transports’ and ‘passenger transports’). The number of received feedbacks was surprising and during busier times it was challenging to manage all these feedbacks. Also, there was not enough resources to follow if transport companies were sending any rejoinders to complaints, so in worst cases some customers had to repeatedly ask for a reply. It was very challenging to compile any statistics and numbers were only approximate.

- Phase 3: A concentrated e-mail for all feedbacks (‘transport feedbacks’), reclamation processing, and collecting rejoinders, but compiling statistics was still challenging, even though numbers were more reliable.

- Phase 4: Customer service started to help with the reclamation processing and the implementation of a master Excel-table. The situation for the Logistics unit was now excellent; all feedbacks got a rejoinder and statistics were available, however, these keep the customer service too busy.

- Phase 5 (future): An ideal situation, in which a customer fills in a structured form and the customer service completes it and interacts with the transport companies. A caretaker gets a rejoinder, logistics department receives complete statistics and continues penalty dialogue with transport companies.

So currently, it is the project coordinator (A2) that manages the reclamations and makes sure that the customers get a reply. Interviewee further comments that it seems like the transport companies are getting used to this after the “initial shock”. The Timit-system in pilot could offer a solution for phase 5. Also, as mentioned before by interviewee A2 in chapter 4.1.1, the new Western Uusimaa Transport Services (Kulkukeskus) might change this setting, but the pilot is currently on hold due to the coronavirus. (A1)

A1 was asked if Espoo city’s monitoring has had any impact on the service suppliers’ performances. A1 sees that these, indeed, have had an impact on the quality of school
transport services. From the service suppliers' point of view, the city is in a way providing them with valuable field data, so some companies are e.g. rewarding their drivers for their good performances. Maybe the monitoring could somehow be further developed from a carrot-or-stick approach, as interviewee A1 ponders. Regular meetings are very important for strengthening cooperation, as well as to hear out the wishes and needs of the transport companies. (A1)

Another thing are the penalties: before they were not much used, but nowadays these are “very well used”. Now, the city has taken a more active role as a service buyer, waking up the transport companies to the fact that the city is now monitoring their performance more closely than before. (A1)

The contract itself also includes the obligation to respond to feedbacks within three days, but this is still a bit problematic as A1 comments. So, one solution could be a system that would automatically send a reminder to the transport city to respond. This could also be a more neutral way, instead of the customer services or the project coordinator constantly sending the reminders. Though, in the end a human should always be involved instead of just relying on a system. In another way, the three-day-rule is also a carrot in the sense that by replying to the feedback, they get a chance to affect the final penalty decision. If they do not respond, they will anyhow receive a notification that a possible penalty will be charged. (A1)

A1 states that it is unfortunate that the city does not yet have any rewarding system or incentives in use but would gladly accept any new idea.

The city and the service suppliers have a rather good consensus what the service should be. After all, the service has been described in the contract. However, the caretakers might understand quality in a different way. It seems, though, that new drivers do not know well enough what the service requirements are according to the contract. Maybe the city could arrange some education events for the drivers, as interviewee A1 ponders. As an improvement idea, interviewee mentions that the drivers could be better educated over what the service contracts includes. (A1)

As a summary, the monitoring and statistical follow-ups should be continued as a valuable tool and source of information. Also, the logistics unit provides the Education Division, as its internal partner in cooperation, with reliable data over how the paid service is working. Reclamations and their monitoring have the key role here. (A1)
According to the interviewee, the city can affect what happens on the field. Sometimes, there might be a situation or conflict between a family and a transport company with their respective viewpoint of the situation. When the situation is open to interpretation, the interviewee gives the final say to the matter. Sometimes the companies also ask for the interviewee's opinion. The interviewee sees that the transport companies and the city are in consensus of what is a good school transport by quality. (B)

Generally, the families contact the school or the transport company. The more severe and challenging situations are handled by the interviewee. Mostly these severe errors are situations when e.g. pupils are left outside their home alone without an adult, that is a requirement with special needs pupils. Errors might occur with newly hired drivers, but these errors are handled well by the companies when confronted. (B)

One solution regarding special needs pupils' transports in Helsinki is that Solakallio school has each year has educated transport companies how to meet special needs pupils. The school is one of the special schools in Helsinki. The school has invited many transport companies to the education, not just the contracted company. Moreover, the school has experience from 30 years of educating special needs pupils, thus is a valuable source of knowledge and experience. The city is planning to expand such education to others also by e.g. an adult education institute, thus freeing the school from responsibility. (B)

The city does monitor the quality of school transports by doing audits either by following the transports on school premises or even sitting in a taxi during actual school transports. The interviewee recommends doing such audits. (B)

The city does not maintain statistics or other measurements of feedback. Instead, they store them, but without follow-up. According to the interviewee, there is currently no need for such monitoring as the city receives early only tens of feedback. If it was in hundreds, then the city might keep statistics over feedback. As an example, one company got much negative feedback for its customer service being rude or inappropriate, thus requiring the city to reach. (B)

Feedback does also come from the transport companies regarding e.g. difficult pupils that do not sit in seat belts. This kind of feedback is rather quickly sent to the city. It is, after all, a safety risk if a pupil takes off seat belt and stands in the taxi during the drive.
This feedback is also sent by the transport companies directly to the schools, meaning that the schools must discuss a pupil’s behavior with caretakers. (B)

The alcohol interlock devices and school transport signs are rather well used by the transport companies. The interviewee has so far not seen a single vehicle with a missing device. There have been a few vehicles without a sign, but usually because the sign has fallen, or it is a subcontractor that has no sign with them. These have been confirmed in the audits. Moreover, the penalties are seldom used because some are so small that it is not necessary to use them. (B)

4.3.5.3 Vantaa

In Vantaa, as mentioned by C2 earlier, the feedback is accepted by the transport unit secretaries (also including C2). The unit does rather actively and quickly react to situations. When such information or a reclamation is received, they start to break down the matter. Usually they ask for an account from schools or the transport company. (C2)

C1 estimates that they receive around 10 – 20 feedbacks each year, thus very little. C2 adds that they are pleased that they are not receiving any more.

Transport companies are sometimes trying own boundaries, but the transport unit has good cooperation with the procurement unit, who did the invite to tendering. If the transport unit e.g. disagrees with a transport company about some matter, then the procurement unit specialists quickly solves the matter as how it should go according to the contract. (C1)

The companies have not acted upon, so C1 sees their procurement documentary rather good in the sense that they have managed well with service description of what they require from the service. Thus, it is easy for them to refer to the contract when something is unclear, e.g. who should fasten the seat belts. The contract has a very specified service description. C1 further continues that the city has really put an effort into contract building. By now they have used the same documents two- or three-times past procurement. (C1)

The city and the companies have a rather good consensus of transport quality. However, more legislative matters are better understood by the procurement unit regarding e.g. EU directives. (C2) Interviewee C1 sees that they have good consensus of quality as they have described in detail what they (they city) wants to buy and the tendering companies are thus pledge to the contract. Interviewee cannot recall that there would have been for
a while a situation when a company would have presented something outside the contract. (C1)

When the issue is more severe, the caretakers contacts either directly them (transport unit) or the school, depending how the caretakers see it. If caretakers contact the school, then the information is forwarded to the transport unit. Still, caretakers are rather well informing them also. (C2) Interviewee C1 sees that caretakers contact mainly the school. If the matter cannot be solved between the caretaker(s), school, and the transport company, then the interviewee’s unit steps in together with the procurement unit.

The procurement unit knows about monitoring matters (C1). Additionally, C2 states that they themselves do monitor the school transports through invoice checking to confirm that the transports are working properly, including right pupil, right destinations, and schedules. Moreover, the procurement unit organizes each year a follow-up meeting with each transport company, as C1 explains.

Regarding alcohol interlock devices and school transport signs that are mandatory by law, C1 says that the procurement unit also knows more about these matters. The Education and Learning Department does not get involved in vehicle equipment matters. Neither does C2 know about these. (C1 and C2)

In overall, there are no statistical monitoring over received feedback. However, all feedback is stored. It seems that because feedback is given so little, it is enough to store these feedbacks for possible future needs. They have not measured how many e.g. delays have occurred. So, no statistics have been compiled so far. (C1) Interviewee C2 confirms this by stating that very little feedback is received and that these are rather sporadic. Usually issues are resolved by simple interfering. However, interviewee C2 agreed to the interviewer’s statement that it seems to be easier to manage school transports when the city only has two contracted companies. C2 additionally states that the low staff rotations in the companies is also a reason for better management.

4.3.5.4 Turku

The city has, as a starting point, defined high standards in the invitation for competitive tendering for vehicle equipment and transporting. The schools and the families do give feedback of challenges and issues in the transports. The transport must be as it is expected to be. Turku city reacts quickly to reclamations and starts to investigate how to solve the issue and if other actions are required. D also reminds that the school transport
service is, after all, statutory or based on law, that must be produced by meeting these law-based requirements. Thus, this is also a sensitive matter to many caretakers. (D)

Regarding transport quality perspectives, the city and the transport companies have a rather good consensus of a good service without any conflicts. However, D states that when issues arise, all parties point of view should be investigated to understand what the actual situation has been. It is in the transport companies’ interest to resolve the issues. (D)

Some issues have been registered regarding too early arrival of pupils in morning care at schools. Such schedule-related matters are regarded as ‘smaller’ issues, that are sent directly to the administration (the Education Division) that resolve the matter directly with the transport company. The more severe and challenging reclamations are forwarded to the Education Division through the procurement unit, followed by negotiation how to solve the matter. Such severe matters are referred to as clear neglects, e.g. undriven transports or special needs pupils left alone without an adult. Other clear neglects are related to vehicle equipment not meeting up with the requirements in the tender invitation, e.g. wheelchair fastening. If the matter has something to do with the contract, then these matters are sorted out by the procurement and the administration together. These reclamations are working kind of as a monitoring method. Smaller matters are sometimes sorted out immediately on the school grounds, but bigger issues go to the city’s administration and to the procurement. (D)

The city makes occasionally spot checks at school premises by looking from a distance how the transports are working, equipment and schedules. Also, the school units do have their own role in the monitoring by reporting to the administration if they notice issues. D does not know how or if the transport companies are doing self-monitoring. All reclamations are stored and statistically monitored for e.g. recurring issues. The city also has regular follow-up meetings. If problems arise, then meeting are held more often. These meetings are necessary for exchanging ideas and experiences. (D)

When asked about alcohol interlock devices, D stated that these are required by law and in the invitation to tender. The city checked these devices back when the law was changed. The city also trusts that the companies have them installed. If needed, the city can request installation certificates. When the interviewer told about Espoo doing audits that include interlock device checking, interviewee D replied that they could also include
that kind of checking to their own checks. The schools also do some monitoring themselves. (D)

As a side note, the interviewee mentions that the city refers to the school transport services as ‘charter transport services so that the caretakers do not confuse the transports as a ‘private taxi service’. Another note regarding quality is the new taxi law (the Act on Transport Services, see chapter 2.4.1) that is currently being reshaped. The law has brought more actors to the taxi markets in Turku, but this is not yet visible within school transport with its own old transport companies. On the other side, old companies have provided with reliability. (D)

4.3.5.5 Tampere

Interviewee E feels like it is currently “both yes-and-no” regarding how well they can influence what happens on the field. To a certain point, they have tools to do it, but this is also a current development goal. However, the upcoming procurement of the previously mentioned management systems will include, e.g. alarm-like features. Tuomi Logistiikka Oy has currently monitoring systems that allows them to follow where a car is, but as 1,200 pupils needs transport each morning, it is not possible for them to check each pupils’ transport schedule. So, they would need an alarm system that would notice when a car might be late. Now, the drivers must inform Tuomi Logistiikka Oy if they are late, so that they can forward this and look for another vehicle. This still needs to be developed so that drivers would remember to inform them. This is problematic as it appears to caretakers that they have a (monitoring) system, so it is difficult for caretakers to understand that they cannot follow all 1,200 pupils. Yes, they do see if a child has been picked up, but when there is no alarm, then how can Tuomi Logistiikka Oy even react on delays? Such an alarm-system is already used in another service, that alarm when a route has not been signed by a specific time. Interviewee hopes that a similar system could be implemented to the school transports also. It should not be an impossible request. Many municipalities use Mobile router, but Tuomi Logistiikka Oy does not use it as it does not fit well with group transports. It is, though, an example of a system that has an alarm-feature. (E)

When asked about how well the city and the transport companies are in consensus of good quality in school transports, interviewee E stated that they initially are on the same line, but conflicts happen now and then. There are situations when something has happened, leading to smaller confusion or disagreement. These situations are, though,
rather rare. In general, E sees that drivers and entrepreneurs do see the whole picture and have an agreed view over what a school transport should be like. (E)

When things go wrong, the caretakers are quite well informed that they should contact Tuomi Logistiikka Oy, but some caretakers contact the schools instead, depending of the matter. If it is purely a transportation matter, a mistake either by the driver or themselves, then Tuomi Logistiikka Oy will solve the issue directly with the caretaker. If it is something about the school activities or decision-making, then the school will be involved. However, basically all transport-related matters go through Tuomi Logistiikka Oy. (E)

According to E, they see the so-called grapevine communication quite effective. The driver field at Tampere has drivers that reports any neglect by competitors. So, the reporting does work well on the field. Additionally, caretakers are also sending feedback. Tuomi Logistiikka Oy respond to these reports by calling in the vehicle for an inspection, or by entering the field. These inspections are only done when needed. However, no accessible vehicle or minibus may enter the field without an inspection by Tuomi Logistiikka Oy. Smaller passenger cars are not checked separately, instead, only by asking for the vehicle’s registration book and alcohol interlock device calibration certificate. Passenger cars are not checked physically. Interviewee also confirms that each vehicle in school transports must have the interlock device installed. School transport signs are not separately followed at Tampere. Again, other competitors report occasionally others that are not using these signs. Tuomi Logistiikka Oy responds to these by sending a notice of the issue. (E)

At Tuomi Logistiikka Oy, they have had plans to do more inspections on the taxi business field as well as in the school transport field, but so far not managed to do so. So far, the contracts have been shorter. As school transportation contracts started in Fall 2019 with accessible vehicle inspections and such, interviewee E sees that the companies should not have forgotten yet that much. These short contracts are also mentioned as a challenge because it is not that optimal doing this often procurement, so the plan is to have longer contracts in the future. (E)

Regarding reports or negative feedback, penalties are used, but the first step is to ask for a written rejoinder from the transport company and then decide on the measures. Companies have either a couple of days or a week to answer. By requesting a written rejoinder, it is possible to store all reclamations. Some issues are immediately leading to
penalties, or a meeting or hearing occasion for bigger issues. Tuomi Logistiikka is using penalties regarding missed drives or unauthorized absences, as the company has contracts that pays a daily compensation for cars that must be available during the day. Some cars have also own routes with route-specific penalties. (E)

Tuomi Logistiikka Oy uses minor and major issues as their classification. All issues are managed through these two classifications, but these can also be multiplied if one incident includes more than one offence. Additionally, Tampere has its own feedback management system, so they do have statistics over received feedback. When asked how many reclamation they receive, interviewee estimated that they receive very few, only around ten per month. However, these are only the more severe issues as other less significant matters are not entered in the system. Only those that really needs to be processed are entered into the feedback management system. An additional comment is that if Tampere would follow all received feedbacks, it might be that of Espoo city's number being lose to 1,000 feedbacks in a year. It would not even be possible with the current system being too time-consuming and stiff. The system has too many spaces to be filled, why only so-called “real feedbacks” are saved in the system. Interviewee further ponders that an Excel-table could even be the method to do so. (E)

4.3.5.6 Oulu

According to F (as the logistician), the city gathers all involved parties to a meeting before a new school year starts to discuss school transport-related matters. These meetings also make future communication easier. However, the interviewee feels that the city cannot affect directly what happens on the field, e.g. what kind of drivers are hired at each transport company. There is also no need for such control. The cities can, and will, react to behavioral issues e.g. talking on the phone or unacceptable language. These are discussed with the companies, who gives in return a written answer (rejoinder) to the complaints. (F)

The first tools to solve possible disputes and problems is through conciliation. The school is the first to start solving the problem together with the caretaker(s) and the transport company. Early involvement is important to avoid culmination. (F)

There are no statistics or measurement tools for feedbacks. No entity is collecting such statistics, so no such data is available anywhere. Still, it would not even be possible with current resources. The transport companies do monitor each other, and this is seen as a solution that works well in Oulu as feedback is given on a regular basis to the interviewee.
Also, neither does Oulu follow the use of alcohol interlock devices or school transport signs that are obligatory according to law. The interviewee recalls that no such feedback has even come in many years. The few law-related feedbacks are more about e.g. missing seat belts in buses. The city would possibly gladly monitor the usage of these (interlocks and signs) if it were possible, because following these would provide a tool to monitor trustworthiness and trust. (F)

Penalties have been used only a couple of times. Instead, the interviewee sees it as a matter of company image and that they do not want to be associated with negative matters. The initial standpoint is that companies want to perform well. (F)

### 4.3.6 Subcontractors

Table 12 presents the monitoring and the experiences of possible subcontractors within the school transport services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Experiences (own translation)</th>
<th>Citations from the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo (Interviewee A1, 30.3.2020)</td>
<td>Contracts already state that companies are responsible for their subcontractors as their own. It should not affect the performance quality, but this is not the case. Interviewee has the impression that subcontractors are not given all that data that a company’s own drivers are given. E.g. the data system is not accessible to subcontractors. In worst scenario, a subcontractor is ordered quickly to step in without any necessary transport-related data.</td>
<td>No recorded interview.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transports managed by subcontractors would be better if the companies would use drivers that are familiar with the routes and customer with possible special needs.</td>
<td>No recorded interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espoo (Interviewee A3, 6.4.2020)</td>
<td>“Those subcontractors, that are more often driving pupils, are performing well. They know the customers and can, thus, offer good service.”</td>
<td>“Sellaiset alihankkijat, jotka kuljettavat jatkuvasti, suoriutuvat kuljetuksista hyvin. Hetuntevat asiakkaita, ja pystyvät siten tarjoamaan hyvää palvelua.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Those subcontractors, that drive rarely, do not always know their customers, that can lead to lower service quality”.</td>
<td>&quot;Harvoin ajavat alihankkijat eivät aina tunne asiakkaitaan, mikä saattaa johtaa siihen, että palvelu ei aina ole parasta mahdollista.”</td>
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<td>&quot;Some places (schools) do appreciate the so-called regular drivers.”</td>
<td>&quot;Toimipisteiden palautteessa kiitellään usein ns. vakiokuljettajia.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki (Interviewee)</td>
<td>“[...] indeed, the city operators are using each other as subcontractors, and this has been granted them.”</td>
<td>“[...] kyllähän meillä tavallaan tekee myös liikennöitsijät keskenään nykyään vähän.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>(Interviewee C1 and C2, 18.3.2020)</td>
<td>“[...] there have been no problems with the subcontractors or substitute vehicles [...].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>(Interviewee D, 13.3.2020)</td>
<td>“[...] usually, they (companies) are very careful who they take into it. There is, of course, the image risk, so...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>(Interviewee E, 30.3.2020)</td>
<td>“[...] we live here in Oulu, yet, in a market area with a lot of different kind of operations. So, a substitute vehicle is”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>(Interviewee C1 and C2, 18.3.2020)</td>
<td>“Well, it feels like our transport companies have understood, that if they use subcontractors, then they inspect them carefully those, who are suitable [...].”</td>
<td>“No tuntuu, et meidän kuljetusyrittäjät on ymmärtäny, että jos ne käyttää alihankintaa, niin ne syyäänä tosi tarkkaan ne, et ketkä on sopivia [...].”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>(Interviewee D, 13.3.2020)</td>
<td>“Yes, there are some. I cannot say exactly now, depending of being part of a whole that how broad the package is, so there is also a subcontractor network in the background.”</td>
<td>“Kyl siellä jonkun verran niitä on. En nyt osaa tarkkaan sanoa, riippuen osakokonaisuudesta et kuin laaja paketti on niin siellä on sit alihankintaverkostoo taustalla myös.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>(Interviewee E, 30.3.2020)</td>
<td>“We have included in some contracts, or I think that we have forbidden the usage of substitutes, but that might have been something that we noted is not even allowed.”</td>
<td>“Meillä on jossakin sopimuksessa, kun mun mielest meillä on alihankinta kiellettykin, mutta se saatto olla semmonen mikä me todettiin et se ei ihan varsinaisesti oo es sallittua.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oulu</td>
<td>(Interviewee E, 30.3.2020)</td>
<td>“But at least, all substitutes must be notified, however, quite few uses them – at least what has been told to us.”</td>
<td>“Mutta pitää olla alihankkijat siis ilmoitettuna vähintään, mutta aika vähän niitä käytetään - ainakaan meille kerrottuna.”</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>(Interviewee C1 and C2, 18.3.2020)</td>
<td>“We do not know them, nor do we actively ask [...]. The contracts, though, permits them to use subcontractors, but we do not follow it.”</td>
<td>“Ei meil oo tiedossa niitä tai ei me niit aktiivisesti kysellä [...]. Et kyl sit niissä sopimuksissa on siis ihan lupa käyttää alihankki joita, mut ei olla sitä seurattu.”</td>
</tr>
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<td>Turku</td>
<td>(Interviewee D, 13.3.2020)</td>
<td>“Well, it feels like our transport companies have understood, that if they use subcontractors, then they inspect them carefully those, who are suitable [...].”</td>
<td>“No tuntuu, et meidän kuljetusyrittäjät on ymmärtäny, että jos ne käyttää alihankintaa, niin ne syyäänä tosi tarkkaan ne, et ketkä on sopivia [...].”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>(Interviewee E, 30.3.2020)</td>
<td>“We kind of manage ourselves the overflow, we do not give whole packages for them to manage one way or another [...]. if they cannot produce the vehicle for some reason [...] then the whole contract can be forwarded, so in that sense we have not had much need for subcontracting needs for the companies.”</td>
<td>“Me itse tavallaan hoidetaan se ylivuoto eikä niin että me annettaan kokonaisuus ja heidän on hoidettava se jollakin tavalla [...] jos he ei pysty sitä autoo enää syystä tai toisesta tuottamaan [...] niin silloin se voi siirtyy se koko sopimus sellasenaan sit eteenpäin, niin siinä mieleessä ei meillä hirveesti oo tullu tämmössä alihankintatarpeita ylipainaan noille yrityksille.”</td>
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available very quickly, usually for the next day.”

And then we have had a softer attitude, depending how much time the substitute needs. So, we have been, in a way, gentler with them. Less precise.”

Ja siinä on sitten pehmeämpi linja kyllä ollu, että riippuen siitä paikan ikään ku niinku aikatarpeesta, niin on oltu sillä tavalla helläkätisempiä. Että ei niin tarkkaan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Top 3 negative feedback (own translation)</th>
<th>Citations from the interview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo (interviewee A3, 6.4.2020)</td>
<td>“Transport schedules are sent too late […]”</td>
<td>“Kuljetusaikataulut ilmoitetaan liian myöhään […]”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“[…] transport schedules are not followed […]”</td>
<td>“[…] kuljetusaikataulut eivät toteudu oikein […]”</td>
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<td>“[…] and a child is dropped off or picked up at wrong place.”</td>
<td>“[…] ja lapsi jätetään tai noudetaan väärästä paikasta.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki (Interviewee B, 13.3.2020)</td>
<td>Schedule: “[…] the top two is clearly schedules […]”</td>
<td>“[…] kyl ne niin kun top kaks on ainakin ihan selkeesti aikataulut […]”</td>
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<td>Customer service: “[…] and then the customer service […] indeed, (referring to) the office […] Yes, there is …Yes, in Fall starts yet again the commotion […].”</td>
<td>“[…] ja sit se asiakaspalvelu. […] toimistoon nimenomaan (viitaten) […] (kun kysyty, että käytöksestäkö?) […]Joo, siinä on se… Joo, syksyllä alkaa se härđelli taas sitten […].”</td>
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<td>Reaching the offices: “[…] that it might have been difficult to reach the and such […].”</td>
<td>“[…] on voinu olla vaikeu saada kiinni ja niin […]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vantaa (Interviewee C1, 18.3.2020)</td>
<td>Delays: “Yes, maybe about delays […]”</td>
<td>“Joo ehkä myöhästymisistä […]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Routing: and about routing […] they do not like when someone else’s kid is always picked up first, but instead the round should be reversed.”</td>
<td>“[…] ja tosta reitittämisestä […] ei tykätä, että aina haetaan joku lapsi ensimmäisenä, vaan se kierros pitäis välillä kääntää.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occurrences: “And sometimes we get feedback about what has happened during the drive, but usually nothing that special happens […]”</td>
<td>“Ja joskus tulee sitten palautetta siitä, mitä kuljetuksen aikana on tapahtunut, mutta ei siellä yleensä tapahdu mitään kovin kummallista […]”</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Turku (Interviewee D, 13.3.2020) | Transport schedules: “[…] maybe revolving around transport schedules. We have given the transport companies free hand in the sense that they can resource routes as they want, considering vehicles and the time windows, based on law. […]” | “[…] varmaan liittyj just kuljetusaikoihin. Me ollaan annettu palveluntuottajille siinä mielessä vapaan kädet että he saa resursseid ne kuljetusreitit ja sen kaluston, sen lakiasiäteisen aiakkaan puitteissa. […]Joskus voi tulia
Sometimes feedback is given regarding why a route lasts for such a long time [...]”

Pupil behavior (during drives): “[...] challenging pupils, that e.g. do not want to sit next to some other specific pupil. This kind of squabble between pupils [...]”

Drivers: “[...] caretakers give easily feedback about drivers. But we address these very seriously if these reoccur. [...] Some caretakers can have higher demands regarding this.”

Schedule: “I would, perhaps, say schedules.”

Pick-up and drop-off place: “Then, maybe sometimes in the urban area [...] might even be at the top of the list, that the car is, like, on the pick-up location [...] the driver has the information that which is the right side of the road for the pick-up.”

Caretakers’ schedule wishes: “Maybe a little is received regarding preferred pick-up time, that if the transport and pick-up time, what we have notified them, does not match.”

Special needs pupils’ transports: “[...] they are very often related to special children [...] when the caretakers are completely dependent either of information from the operator or the school [...] the drive is late, or the pick-up or drop-off place is wrong.”

Overloading: “Why there is sometimes more pupils than was intended.”

Caretaker(s) misunderstanding of laws: “[...] caretakers do not necessarily always understand that e.g. collective traffic has different legislation than what applies to separate transport orders. Leading to overloading issues when pupils are standing with skis in the bus and such. [...] so, you can also stand in the bus. Unlike in a taxi.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tampere (Interviewee E, 30.3.2020)</th>
<th>Schedule: “I would, perhaps, say schedules.”</th>
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<th>Oulu (Interviewee F, 13.3.2020)</th>
<th>Special needs pupils’ transports: “[...] they are very often related to special children [...] when the caretakers are completely dependent either of information from the operator or the school [...] the drive is late, or the pick-up or drop-off place is wrong.”</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overloading: “Why there is sometimes more pupils than was intended.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caretaker(s) misunderstanding of laws: “[...] caretakers do not necessarily always understand that e.g. collective traffic has different legislation than what applies to separate transport orders. Leading to overloading issues when pupils are standing with skis in the bus and such. [...] so, you can also stand in the bus. Unlike in a taxi.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 Identified quality issues and challenges in the cities.

4.3.7.1 Espoo

Quality issues and challenges have been identified by A2 as the person managing reclamations and feedbacks (see chapter 4.1.1). Moreover, reclamation statistics (see
Appendix 1), audit results from fall 2019 (see Appendix 2) and the survey results from 2018 (see Appendix 3) reveal issues and challenges regarding school transports.

4.3.7.2 Helsinki

According to the interviewee, most negative feedback given by families is about schedule issues and the received quality of customer service in transport company offices. Some have experienced bad behavior or having difficulties with reaching anyone, which is a more common issue in the beginning of a school year (season). One example given was a transport company who did not have opening hours after five o’clock, so if the drive was late there was no one to contact. This matter was resolved by the company by extending its opening hours. (B)

Interviewee continues by stating that the families have been giving positive feedback mostly of drivers, maybe because it is the most visible part to the families. A good driver often encourages families to send positive feedback all the way to the city. (B)

4.3.7.3 Vantaa

When asked about what problems occur most often (top 3), C1 mentions delays. C2 again mentions the routing as some caretakers would want that the pick-up order would be sometimes reversed, so that those pupils picked up first are sometimes picked up last. Delays are more common received feedback, especially during winter. Occasionally such delays are built up, as C1 further explains. One example mentioned by C2 as a negative feedback was a school drive that took too long. The child was not late from school, but the caretakers saw that the drive was just too long. (C1 and C2)

Positive feedback has been given of professional drivers and in general, families are happy receiving this service benefit, thus general positive feedback (C1). Low rotation has a positive impact when families have the same familiar driver. This seem to be especially important for families with special needs children. (C2)

4.3.7.4 Turku

According to interviewee, most complaints are schedule related. The city has given free hands for the companies to manage the routes and vehicles within the legislative frame (maximum duration for drives). Sometimes the city received feedback regarding the duration of the school transports when the distance between home and school is shorter. However, this is because there might be many other pupils along the route. This is something that caretakers does not always understand. Another subject of complaints is
regarding pupils’ behavior, e.g. squabble in the vehicle when some pupils do refuse to sit beside each other. In these situations, the driver and the schools have some responsibility to consider who should be contacted with the issue. A third subject is drivers as some caretakers can have quite high demands regarding the drivers. Repeating complaints of a driver are taken seriously by the city. However, in general, the service has been going well, especially during this new contract period. (D)

The city has not made any surveys of customer satisfaction during this contract period. However, interviewee D believes that the families reach the transport companies well, especially through schools. No feedbacks revolving around communication challenges has been given. (D)

Interviewee could not answer when asked what kind of positive feedback the families have been giving. These feedbacks go directly to the schools and teachers. After all, the school is the main connection for the families. The estimation is that families are satisfied with the service if the schedule hold and children get to school. (D)

Thus, received feedback and reclamation are stored in different units. When asked, the interviewee stated that there are no plans to combine all feedback and reclamations in one place. (D)

4.3.7.5 Tampere

When discussing routing and scheduling processes, interviewee E explained how important it is for pupils with special needs to have regular transport routines. It can be very difficult for these children if the driver is suddenly changed to another. This is the wish of the caretakers as well as the schools. Tuomi Logistiikka has also received some message from them that the changes can be seen in the students’ behavior. Trying to maintain regularity eats away the effectiveness of the routes, after all, it is not even possible to change them all the time. Small changes occur all the time, so at some point bigger route changes must be made from an efficiency and financial viewpoint. Still, it is a lot about balancing when to stop and make new routes. (E)

Positive feedback is not often given, maybe a few times as interviewee E recalls. Some has been given for their rather quick reaction to issues by finding a solution that works for everyone. Thus, they have been able to react to problems and find a compromise somewhere in between. That kind of recognition has been given to Tuomi Logistiikka. (E)
4.3.7.6 Oulu

Oulu’s logistician (F) mentions that one challenge is that issues and problems, around one per cent of all transports, take much time to investigate and solve. Still, 99 per cent of all transports goes well.

Issues, that are described as ‘a storm in a teacup’ are usually focused on those children with special needs and children with other communication difficulties. In these situations, caretakers are dependent of the information provided by the transporter and the schools. For example, there have been issues with delays and wrong drop-off or pick-up places. Overloading was another challenge as sometimes there seem for some reason be too many pupils for a single route. These can be difficult to investigate if the feedback giver is anonymous, as sometimes happen. A third mentioned issue are those caretakers that do not understand that there are different laws applied to public transports and these kinds of charter school transports. For example, one can stand in a bus with skis, so why not in a taxi, then? Interviewee F continues to describe how the city also uses normal buses and minibuses in the school transports. (F)

4.3.8 Other highlights, issues, or challenges

The last table in the results chapter includes possible other important, interesting, or relevant highlights, issues or successes, that could not be placed in other tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Highlights/issues/successes (own translation)</th>
<th>Citations from the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoo (Interviewee A1, 30.3.2020)</td>
<td>Ongoing Timit-system piloting and the new Western Uusimaa Joint Services (piloting currently on-hold)</td>
<td>None recorded interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki (Interviewee B, 13.3.2020)</td>
<td>“Yes, we did indeed consider these as we also have the ‘Hiilineutraali Helsinki’ (carbon neutral Helsinki) goal. So, we also have to consider emissions [...].”</td>
<td>“Joo, kyllähän näitä mietitään tässä kun meilläkin on se Hiilineutraali Helsinki -tavote täällä, niin aina kuljetusten päästöjäkin joudutaan miettimään [...].”</td>
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<td>“[...] we do a little longer because [...] or as we asked in it (procurement) that there would already be in use Euro 6 vehicle classes [...] this also meant that they did investments in their vehicle equipment, so we gave a little longer contract in order for them to get rid of some vehicles, so that they don’t need just for two years make too big investments.”</td>
<td>“[...] tehdään vähän pitempi siinä koska me [...]tai niin kun pyydettiin vähän siinä että siinä ois Euro 6 -luokan autot jo käytössä [...] se tarkotti myös sitä että he tekiivät investointeja sit siihen kalustoon ja annettiin sen takia vähän pitempi sopimus että pystyy vähän myös kuolettaa sitä kalustoa siinä, että ei tarvii ihan kahden vuoden takia investoida kovin.”</td>
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<td>“A little before the taxi law reform, it occurred that our operators had not been able to anticipate correctly what kind of impact the reform would have [...]”</td>
<td>“Vähän ennen taksiuudistusta, niin siinä ehkä kävi silleen että meidän liikennöitsijät ei osannu välittämättä arvioida ihan oikein mikä sen”</td>
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</table>
problems for the companies and that way, also occasionally to the city [...]. The companies had also difficulties with hiring skilled drivers enough. I don’t even know if this current situation is that optimal for the companies even [...]."

**Vantaa**  
(Interviewee C1, 18.3.2020)  
"Hey, that’s a good idea [...] if we also arranged something alike, so that the companies’ drivers can participate, if they want."

**Turku**  
(Interviewee D, 13.3.2020)  
"We have a pricing model that includes euros per pupil, in one direction within Turku city. It is, kind of, in this new procurement a new way or model that we have implemented, so that it is always the same priced, regardless where the pupil lives within Turku city [...]."

"[...] from a management perspective, it is extremely easy [...] so that the city secretaries or anyone else does not need to start measuring any distances."

"This procurement was, anyway, rather successful."

"(regarding the upcoming clean vehicles directive) It will also have a rather significant impact on vehicle equipment requirements. It will step into force during next year’s summer (2021)."

"Here, we have a couple electric buses in use [...] (regarding self-driving buses) Well, we do not have had those yet."

**Tampere**  
(Interviewee E, 30.3.2020)  
"[...] quality level depends on the day of procurement, but also it has to be acknowledged during next procurement in some way [...] Tampere and Pirkanmaa has very high requirements... like even without the directive [...] well, yes, the directive requires a lot electricity, but Tampere and Pirkanmaa goals are for the general effect [...] we also need other means [...] we can also use other alternative fuels [...] so that everything does not have to be done with electricity."

"[...] on aina et minä paivämääränä kilpailutaan niin vaikuttaa siihen vaatimustaso, niin sitten myös sitäkin täytyy tässä huomioida seuraavissa kilpailutuksissa jollakin tavalla [...]Tampereella on muutenkin ja Pirkanmaalla hirmu kovat ympäristötavotevaatimukset... Niin kun tavoitteet ihan ilman direktiiviäkin. [...] no joo, siis direktiivissä vaaditaan paljon sähköä, et Tampereen ja Pirkanmaan tavoitteet on kokonaisvaikutusten kannalta. [...] sitten tarvii myös muita keinoja [...] voidaan tietysti käyttää vähän monipuolisemmin noita vaihtoehtosia poltoaineita [...] että ei ihan pelkällä sähköllä tarvii tehdä sitten kaikkea."
**Table 14** Other highlights from the interviews with the cities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Highlight 1</th>
<th>Highlight 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oulu (Interviewee F, 13.3.2020)</td>
<td>“During last couple of years, also the development of costs has been in a way that is has caused rather violent increase, that was during the consolidation of municipalities in 2013-2014, a little during 2015, that has been managed to be cut, kind of. And this, exactly because of putting our minds into it.”</td>
<td>“[...] viime vuosien aikana tämä myös kustannuskehitys on ollut sellainen, että se kohtalaisen raju nousu, mikä oli sillon kuntaliitosten jälkeen 13-14, vähän 15:kin, nii se on saatu niinku katkastua. Ja tuota, nimenomaan sillä, että on paneuduttu tähän.”</td>
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<td>“[...] I can now focus my work contribution to something more time-consuming work. Especially into procurement planning and preparation. And making procurement description and, kind of, producing information to support decision-making [...] cost-related data and other such data, that he city- and municipal sectors need for budgeting and such.”</td>
<td>“[...] pystyn käyttämään sitä työpanosta semmseen pikkusen pitempi jännitteisempään työhön. Ja nimenomaan siihen hankintasuunnittelun ja sen valmisteluun. Ja hankintakuvausten tekemiseen ja sitten siihen tavallaan niinku tiedon tuottamiseen sen pääösenteon tueksii. [...] kustannustietoa ja tämän tyypistä, mitä kaupunki- ja kuntasektoreilla tarvitaan budjettointiin ja muuhun vastaavaan.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;[...] we have strategically been trying out very different kind of pricing models, e.g. during procurement comparison. [...] to see what method are good for e.g. pricing or for price requests. What methods suit the best in different targets [...] so called “all inclusive” packages, in which I basically make the routes myself, draw it on a map with all stops and al. And all in between these [...]”</td>
<td>”[...] on ihan tieten tahtoon sitten niinku strategisestikin kokeilu hyvin erilaisia hinnottelumalleja esimerkiksi hankintojen vertailussa. [...]jettää mikä tapa on hyvä tapa esimerkiksi hinnottella tai kysyä hintaa. Missä kohteessa toimii erilaiset ratkasut [...]niin sanottuja all inclusive -hankintoja [...]on myös niitä, jossa minä ihan konkreettisesti teen sen reitin, piirrän sen kartalle pysähymispäikkoineen kaikkineen. Ja kaikkea siltä väliiltä [...]”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“[...] purposefully, we will have in the school year 2021, the next year, all school transport contracts on hold. And this this means that this is the first time ever situation [...] procurement planning has already started.”</td>
<td>”[...] meillä on nyt semmonen tilanne tarkotuksenmukasesti, että meillä on 21-luvun vuoden, eli känä vähän reilun vuoden päästä kaikki koululukutuuoppimukset katkolla. Ja se tarkottaa sitä, että semmosta tilannetta ei oo olla ikinä [...] hankintasuunnittelu on jo nyt käynnissä.”</td>
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5 DISCUSSION: MANAGING SCHOOL TRANSPORTS IN A SERVICE TRIAD

This chapter discusses all empirical findings from a theoretical perspective, including interviews, observations, statistics, as well as the results from the 2018 survey. The idea for this chapter is to discuss the most important findings and details. Thus, what can Espoo city learn from other cities? The attitudes, reasons and current state of school transports are discussed through the different monitoring strategies as all cities accept and manage feedbacks and reclamations in different ways. In other words: this chapter focuses on identifying differences, challenges, risks, and unique attributes of the cities by actively comparing empirical evidence with the theoretical framework and concepts. Followingly, the focus will be on service triads through a dyadic perspective, monitoring strategies combined with underlying reasoning and the environment in which the school transport service suppliers and the cities operate. As suggested by Li & Choi (2009), the optimal stage would be a so-called permanent decay. Such a state is, however, difficult and challenging as the results indicate.

The first part (5.1) discusses shortly the overall attitudes and perspectives, based Osborne’s (2007) customer strategy as the most relevant key DNA component for this study. The second part (5.2) discusses the transformation perspective by acknowledging how cities are, indeed, following the global trends defined by Pärna and Tunzelmann (2007). The third part (5.3) continues with the challenges defined by Uenk and Telgen (2019), and the additional challenge of information flow as a separate additional challenge. The purpose of the chapter is to identify if the cities have acknowledged and managed these challenges. Fourth part (5.4) discussed the suggestions by Uenk and Telgen (2019) of what the cities should be focusing on. The fifth part (5.5) analyses and summarizes all identified reasons behind the chosen monitoring strategies, while sixth part (5.6) discuss the different communication structure in each city. The seventh part (5.7) discusses quality perspectives and attitudes. The last part closing this study (5.8) will include final discussion around the study, findings, policy implications, limits, and how the study has served its purpose and how the research questions have been answered.

5.1 Roles in a service triad from a public sector point of view

Osborne’s customer strategy DNA components were introduced in Chapter 2.1, according to which citizens are also quality-defining customers. This already provides with valuable customer satisfaction data for the public sector. The public sector could
also see citizens as feedback-giving customers. (Osborne, 2007) However, none of the cities referred to them as customers.

The interviews revealed that none of the six cities informants (A1, B, C1 and C2, D, E and F) regard the citizens, or end users of the public service, as customers. Instead, all informants referred to them as pupils, children, parents, and caretakers during the interviews. Even Tuomi Logistiikka Oy (representing Tampere), as the only company in this study, did not see them as their customers but saw instead other municipalities as customers. However, A2 did refer to end users as pupils and caretakers, but occasionally also as customers during the interview, but it might be due to A2 working together with the contact center and the nature of the work (feedbacks and complaints).

These results indicate a more traditional way of seeing end users as citizens and not as customers. Thus, the studied cities have so far not adopted a more customer-citizen combined view as Osborne has suggested. It should be again reminded that the customers (end users) are eventually defining the quality standards for the public services such as time, reliability, and service quality standards. As Osborne highlights this provides the public sector with important information of customer satisfaction, thus gives a clear target to what should be aimed at, though combined with the notice that “the customer is not always king” (p.8). (Osborne, 2007) Indeed, acknowledging end users as both citizens and customers could help the public sector (also Espoo city) to focus in a more effective way on what the public service should be from a quality perspective. The results from the interviews are somewhat conflicting as the cities do not see end users as customers, but still are very aware of end user needs and demands.

Helsinki’s informant B hints that end users are instead seen as suppliers’ customers, while referring to suppliers as transport companies. Vantaa informants C1 and C2 refer to the service suppliers as entrepreneurs and companies, Turku’s informant (D) refers directly to service suppliers, Tuomi Logistiikka’s informant E refers to service suppliers and entrepreneurs, while Oulu’s informant F refers to transport companies. Finally, Espoo’s informants A1 and A2 refer to suppliers as both transport companies and companies. Moreover, some interviewees are referring to the city and themselves as an “orderer” (F), “buyer” (C1), or as Tuomi Logistiikka Oy referred to itself as a company with its own customers (E), but mostly did interviewees refer to themselves as the city, the unit, or simply as we. All cities except one have directly outsourced their school transport services through procurement. Tampere has together with Pirkanmaa hospital district founded Tuomi Logistiikka Oy to manage and coordinate passenger transports.
in the region, but also manage the procurement of service suppliers (interviewee E, 30.3.2020).

Pekkarinen et al. (2011) discuss the public sectors new role. While the public sector has the responsibility to take care of the citizens (end users), it is currently also looking at the private sector. The public sector is instead a purchaser and a buyer through new “economical action and business principles” while keeping the “old habits and the history of producing public social and health services” (p.508). (Pekkarinen et al., 2011) Indeed, this new role seems to be acknowledged by all informants, but with different levels as some cities are keeping more of the decision-making power over services while some have outsourced the service responsibility almost completely to suppliers. Oulu city has even combined both approaches with the strategy to find the best solutions by trying different approaches for different destinations, as F explains during the interview. This is a very interesting (and successful) strategy that will be further acknowledged in a later subchapter.

5.2 Following the trends

Pekkarinen et al. (2011) state that the public sector is now turning to the private sector as a service buyer, while focusing more on the users and the supporting factors. Pärna and Tunzelmann (2007) studied Finland, Estonia, the UK and Denmark and concluded that the public sector is turning to following new solutions: 1. going online, 2. service quality improving and responding to user needs, but also by 3. focusing on laws, regulations, 4. existing good examples, 5. user demand, and 6. cooperation and trust.

The current quality level of school transports in the cities is challenging to evaluate or grasp because there was no complete statistics provided by the other five cities. However, the empirical findings do give some indications of what the cities are currently focusing on and what the current service quality level is. Followingly, the so-called trends 1-5 (in same order as above) mentioned by Pärna and Tunzelmann (2007) are more closely discussed from the empirical evidence by comparing cities and findings to theory. This will light on what the other cities are currently focusing on and to what extent.

5.2.1 Going online

Espoo’s informant A1 (30.3.2020) seems pleased to inform that the city has started trying different technological solutions, e.g. Timit. Helsinki (according to B) again has outsourced the information management to the service suppliers, while doing new
orders through e-mail, compared to Espoo using a separate online system. However, B mentions that the city is needing new interface solutions. Vantaa’s informant C2 mentions a new customer data management tool, that will soon be piloted, while also highlighting their communication structure as a good solution that they been using for years. According to D, Turku is also trying new solutions within information sharing by standardizing data formats, while Tampere is pleased with the Movit-system that has improved information flow in the city. The city will soon start a new competitive tendering for a new group transport management system. (E)

Thus, the statement of Pärna and Tunzelmann (2007) regarding new technologies is true as all cities have to some extent expressed their need and interest for new digital solutions. The cities seem to be also very active by trying out new solutions and technologies. Some cities will focus on new solutions during following procurement.

5.2.2 Service quality improving and responding to user needs

Again, Osborne (2007) reminds that by gaining the customer role they gain the possibility to give feedback regarding public services, thus, providing the public sector with important information.

One finding is that most cities have not in general been doing much of end user satisfaction surveys regarding school transports. Though, Espoo and Vantaa had both surveys in 2018. Another finding is that all cities stated that they do not receive that much positive feedback – only rarely. This applies even to cities with fewer negative feedbacks. A third finding is that many cities refer to outsourcing of monitoring and feedback management. Some cities partially seem to rely on suppliers’ own monitoring and grapevine communication, some have outsourced the monitoring to another unit, while some have outsourced monitoring to schools. More interestingly is that while doing so, it seems that the unit responsible for school transports seem to have less knowledge of received feedbacks. In a way, this reminds of a structural hole in the triad, as described by Uenk and Telgen (2019). However, it is very difficult to further discuss this because those entities with the monitoring and feedback-management responsibility were not studied. Thus, it might appear difficult to respond to user needs and service quality improving when the knowledge is somewhere else. Heide et al. (2007) did, indeed, mention the nature of monitoring as an effort to measure how another party is performing. If such data is missing, then there is no way to tell how the suppliers are performing and what is the current service quality level.
It seems that caretakers only contact the city when they want to notify of changes, cancellations or give negative feedback. This is also noted by Oulu’s informant E, who ponders that it seems like people contact the city rather quickly with complaints, so nothing positive is necessarily heard at all. Also, the feedback statistics (Appendix 1) supports this finding, showing that only 12 out of 929 feedbacks were positive. On the other hand, as A2 points out, some caretakers are stacking all negative feedback to give them all at once. So, it would be good for the cities to focus on how to send the caretakers the message that they should notify the city quickly when issues emerge. The reasons behind stacking feedback can be many. End user surveys could be a good source for positive feedback to know what the city is doing right, and further encourage end users to give feedback. In general, the cities do seem aware of end user needs and aiming to improve or maintain the service quality.

5.2.3 Focusing on laws and regulations

The public sector, procurement, and the public services are heavily regulated by laws both on an international and national level. This has been discussed in chapter 2.3. For example, competitive tendering and public procurement is case-dependent, very complex with many risks (Sagawa & Segal, 2000). Moreover, many laws are affecting the school transport services as well, e.g. the Basic Education Act, New Road Traffic Act, and the Act on Transport Services (see chapter 2).

This focus was often acknowledged during the interviews when monitoring was discussed. It seems that many cities rely on — and assume — that their service suppliers do follow the law and the contracts. Espoo’s informant A1 expresses that monitoring is needed, while A2 states that the results from the audit in Fall 2010, being also the observation part of this study, showed that mandatory school transport signs were missing from many vehicles. When these finding were discussed with the transport companies, they started using them more. The results are in Appendix 2. Thus, it might seem that focus on laws and regulations could be instead supported by audits and spot checks, like in Espoo (A2) and Helsinki (B), or like Tuomi Logistiikka does (E) by demanding certificates and registration book and inspecting accessible vehicles.

From the other cities’ point of view, this focus on laws and regulations could be a matter of fact or a matter of trust. This seems as an initial standpoint; that service suppliers have installed alcohol interlock devices as the law and the contract requires it. It seems that many cities regard the laws, regulations and the contract binding enough and trusts that
service suppliers are following these accordingly. Thus, it appears more perhaps as a matter of fact rather than being a matter of trust. After all, if a company does not follow the law, it risks getting fines. That is, indeed, already a risk for the suppliers and individual drivers.

5.2.4 Existing good examples

This trend is interpreted by the researcher as being confirmed through the study itself as all requested cities participated in the study. Some interviewees also expressed separately their interest in the results. The nature of this study is also highly influenced by identifying all good examples and ideas among the participating cities, fulfilling thus the aim of sharing knowledge.

5.2.5 User demand

The end users (citizens, pupils, children, and caretakers) attitudes have also been notified during the interviews as an additional focus. Stainer and Stainer (1998) discussed the challenge of stakeholders that are comparing the public sector to the private sector. As so far been discussed, the public sector should maintain its accountability to the people as the public sector spends public funds (Osborne, 2007) while the private sector companies should focus on making profit while the social sector aims to fulfill its social responsibilities without such a profit-making purpose (Sagawa & Segal, 2000). Thus, the two sectors remain different from one another.

However, the public sector is spending public funds (Osborne, 2007) with their social responsibilities to fulfil (Sagawa & Segal, 2000), so it might be that caretakers’ attitudes are much affected by this. Additionally, Parasuraman et al. (1985) discuss service judgement as something based on the comparison of expectation and performance. Thus, expectations seem to be affecting how caretakers might perceive the actual service experience. However, the customer does not dictate everything as the service must follow the law. (Osborne, 2007)

Helsinki’s informant B states that service suppliers are sometimes giving feedback of pupils’ bad behaviour. Vantaa’s informants (C1 and C2) ponder over some caretakers that want to inform a service supplier instead of the city. Turku’s informant D states that they prefer the term “charter transport services” rather than “taxi transport” because otherwise caretakers will want to see it as a “private service”. Tampere’s informant mentions the issue with their system that enables them to follow a vehicle, but as there
are so many pupils, it is not possible for them to monitor all. This is something that the caretakers do not seem to understand as they only see that Tuomi Logistiikka Oy has the system to monitor, so they expect the company to do so. (E) Oulu’s informant F mentions how caretakers want to see collective traffic in the same way as taxi transportation, e.g. you can stand in a bus, you should also be allowed to stand in a taxi.

Thus, during the interviews, the misunderstandings, demands and expectations of the caretakers seem to be mentioned on many occasions, thus this trend (or focus) is acknowledged. Here, the researcher additionally encourages all six cities to improve the information sharing to the end users to avoid or lessen confusion among caretakers and end users. A possible end user survey could also help by pointing out what kind of information is needed.

However, as services can be regarded as performances being produced and consumed at the same time while the end user and the supplier is interacting. So, the customer is part of the production of the final service with own inputs, e.g. time, effort, and energy. (Parasuraman, 2010) Each interviewee was asked to point out most occurring issues. The results show that most issues revolved around schedules, customer service itself and drivers’ behavior. In a way, these issues create a situation that demands more inputs from the end users. Again, it would be beneficial to regard end users as also customers that define the service quality (Osborne, 2007), but within the legal framework. It is also good to remind that the possibility for a supplier to affect the service quality might be difficult in services with high level of consumer involvement. School transports are regarded as one such service demanding higher customer involvement as the end user is the one being transported from one place to another.

### 5.2.6 Cooperation and trust

Cooperation and trust can be regarded as important for the bridge decay. As Li and Choi (2009) explain, decay means that power shifts from the buyer to the supplier. This transfer is the aim of the buyer as it wants to free itself from the service operations, thus lower the administrative costs related to service operations. Instead, the supplier will interact with the customers. The buyer should maintain communication between itself and the supplier while monitoring end users and suppliers. Still, Li and Choi suggest as a better option a permanent state of decay, but this would require communication between buyer and end users while following performance feedback. (Li & Choi, 2009)
These two themes seem for the researcher to be a popular topic or reason among the five other cities, while Espoo’s informants did not refer to trust in the same way as some other cities’ informants. For example, trust-related matters and cooperation are mentioned and highlighted by Vantaa’s informants C1 and C2. Tuomi Logistiikkas’ informant E discuss trust from another perspective by underlining the importance of vehicle and driver trustworthiness and the driver cooperation contracts. However, according to Oulu’s informant F, monitoring could be an effective tool for evaluating trustworthiness of the service suppliers. Moreover, F mentioned on many occasions the importance of cooperation between the city and the companies, but also the good atmosphere between all involved parties.

Indeed, some cities seem to be mostly focusing on cooperation and trust, but with different strategies. However, the outsourcing strategies imply that the cooperation occurs somewhere else other than the informants’ own units, making this analysis difficult. Additionally, cooperation seems to be an important topic for some cities while all cities underline good consensus and all cities are involved in some level of follow-up meetings. For some cities, the legal environment seems to be a more quality ensuring matter, lowering the buyer-supplier trust aspect. The so-called grapevine communication also questions the focus on cooperation and trust.

5.3 Challenges in a service triad through a dyadic relationship

This study has acknowledged and introduces many different challenges for the public sector to manage. The focus of this study is on the school transports as a service dyad, but as the study is from the buyers perspective, this study will look into the dyadic relationship between buyers (the cities) and service suppliers (transport companies).

One general challenge for the public sector can through general knowledge be defined as providing more with less: produce quality with less money (Uenk and Telgen (2019), “to achieve the best value for money” (European Commission, 2018 p.62), or to purchase price-quality-ratio products, services and other contracting as cheap as possible (Pekkala & Pohjonen 2015). Even though financial aspects were not originally meant to be included in this study, these still emerged through the interviews, so these matters will be shortly discussed.

The interview guides did not include any financial questions. However, Helsinki’s informant B discusses costs for suppliers between different city areas and the current market situation pushing prices down. Turku’s informant D mentions the
implementation of a new pricing model, while Tampere’s informant E refers to the importance of keeping vehicle costs down when discussing changes in the transport routes and schedules. Yet, Oulu’s informant F explains their strategy of trying out different solutions and contract models, including different pricing strategies. Espoo’s informant A1 discusses how e.g. giving service suppliers the freedom to do scheduling and routing they can save money and thus, eventually offer better prices for the city as the buyer.

If looking at the study’s original focus; Uenk and Telgen (2019) suggest that the buyer (the public sector) in a service triad should focus on 1. supplier performance monitoring, 2. maintaining strong triad position, 3. building strong collaboration- and trust-based relationship, 4. outcome-based contracts, and 5. incentives alignment between buyer and supplier. These are approached as challenges for Espoo city to tackle. Li and Choi (2009) again suggest maintaining a permanent state of decay within the service triad including three entities. The researcher has put information flow as a separate additional challenge for the cities to focus on, discussed in the sixth part of this chapter. It is also one of the main challenges in Espoo city (A2), thus requiring a separate discussion.

5.3.1 Supplier performance monitoring

Heide et al. (2007) describe monitoring as an effort or process to measure supplier performance. Monitoring can help a buyer to notice possible opportunistic behavior from a supplier through service quality monitoring. On the other hand, it can impact a supplier’s motivation, thus highlighting the importance of a good buyer-supplier relationship. (Heide et al., 2007) As mentioned earlier, this is one of the main challenges acknowledged in this study by focusing on quality control, performance monitoring and access to information. However, the quality is created in the bridge between the supplier and the end user, thus the buyer has no part in this, other than e.g. providing with information (Uenk & Telgen, 2019).

If considering the data provided by A2 as well as the results from the audits and the survey from 2018, Espoo city has many sources of data available to evaluate suppliers’ performance. When looking at the other cities, e.g. Tampere (Tuomi Logistiikka Oy) has separate reclamation processing data system for severe issues, while Espoo city has not. They also classify feedback, but instead as being either minor or major, while Espoo has many classification terms. Tuomi Logistiikka Oy also asks for a written rejoinder from the service suppliers, then decides if it is a penalty matter. (E) The opposite could be Oulu
city as there are no statistics or measurement tools for feedbacks as no one is separately collecting them statistically (F). All cities are accepting and storing reclaims, but each one is not following them statistically. According to Turku’s informant D, they store all reclaims and having statistics, while Vantaa’s informant C1 says that they do receive so little feedback that it is enough to store all feedbacks. Helsinki is also on the same line as e.g. Vantaa as interviewee B says that they do not have a need for statistical monitoring as they receive few feedbacks but would consider it if they received “hundreds” of feedbacks.

Additionally, monitoring in other cities is also viewed differently and implemented with different tools and strategies. For example, Tuomi Logistiikka (E) and Oulu (F) mention the ‘grapevine communication’. How well these other monitoring tools work is something that are not further evaluated or analyzed in this study. However, Oulu’s informant F also points out the open atmosphere and cooperation, thus giving the impression of high trust. Though, the city could also consider doing monitoring, but with current resources it is not possible. (F) The interests and attitudes regarding monitoring seems to vary between the cities. Sometimes monitoring was also expressed as something negative. This can be viewed through what Heide et al., (2007) discuss about monitoring affecting the suppliers either in a positive or negative way, depending on the relationship between the two. Still, monitoring should not be regarded in a negative way but more as a necessity to avoid bridge transfer (Li & Choi, 2009). Another notice is that penalties are used but seem to be somewhat rarely used. In some cases, the penalties are not seen as worth the effort or the time, while some would like to focus more on the trust and cooperation approach.

Espoo has the highest feedback score (929 reclaims from 2019) but was also the only city that has continuous and such extensive monitoring strategy. Informant E though states that they might get the same amounts as Espoo if they statistically monitored all received feedbacks. It seems to the researcher that such intensive monitoring is maybe not necessary. Turku also has statistical feedback monitoring but is more focusing on e.g. severe and reoccurring issues.

In a way, the results hint that intensive monitoring has provided Espoo city with more information of what happens on the field by having statistics and reports available. For example, A2 can quite well describe what kind of challenges the city has currently. Also, the audits provide a chance to see with own eyes. The researcher has the impression that Espoo city aims for a strong bridge position through monitoring. However, the intensity
appears somewhat questionable. If looking at other cities, even though they have different kind of monitoring activities and strategies, it seems that the overall satisfaction is good in respective city regarding service quality, even though they do not have implemented the intensive monitoring strategy. The available data does not provide an explanation to this, thus requires more research. Some respondents replied that another unit or another entity is monitoring or handling the feedbacks. This seem to somewhat lower the knowledge for the units as some respondents appeared to be unaware of the results as well as the monitoring processes and tools. In a way, such outsourcing has created a void in the service triad from the respondent’s perspective. Thus, there seem to be lacking interaction between the unit or entity that monitors or manages feedback, and the unit otherwise responsible of school transport management.

5.3.2 Maintaining strong triad position
Service triads creates difficulties for the buyer to manage the service quality as the quality is dependent of the suppliers’ performance and the buyer is not directly experiencing the service quality. (Uenk & Telgen, 2019) As van Der Valk and van Iwaarden (2011) state, a challenge for the public sector — as the buyer — is how to control the service produced by a supplier. Even though the buyer enjoys the initial bridge position, the position can go over to the supplier if the buyer does not maintain its position, leading to loss of quality control (Li & Choi, 2009). Service triads can even create a situation in which the buyer has no direct control over the service quality. The buyer would eventually be dependent of the service supplier, that instead enjoying the bridge position. (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011) According to Li and Choi (2009) the favorable situation would be the bridge decay, because a bridge transfer would mean loss of control. Loss of control can be seen, according to Uenk and Telgen (2019), as a “structural hole” (p.8) while the supplier-end-customer link is regarded as a bridge decay.

The initial focus of this study was how Espoo city could better control the quality, or to be aware of what happens on the field. The results show that Espoo city has a high level of continuous and intensive monitoring. Some cities also seem to have continuous monitoring, e.g. Turku and Tampere (Tuomi Logistiikka Oy), but not in the same intensity as in Espoo city. In some cities it seems that things are working well and not leading to a lot of negative feedback, thus lowering the need of continuous and more intensive monitoring.
In this study, this is seen as a situation when a buyer (the city) does not know what happens on the field (school transports), or does not have access to all information that the supplier has, thus creating a void in the communication flows. However, it seems that no city is experiencing any complete unintentional bridge transfer. All monitoring activities in the cities appear to be adjusted to each city’s situation and data needs.

5.3.3 Building strong collaboration- and trust-based relationships

The aim of the public sector is to free itself from the service operations and to lower administration costs (Li & Choi, 2009) by taking on the role as an owner and a buyer (Valovirta & Hyvönen, 2009). Another term offered by Sanders et al. (2007) is full outsourcing, meaning that the supplier has full control of the service. For example, Tampere has together with Pirkanmaa Hospital district, founded Tuomi Logistiikka Oy, to manage passenger transports, while Oulu’s informant (interviewee F, 13.3.2020) explains that some contracts are so-called “all inclusive” packages. However, failing with outsourcing operations can undo the effects of lower administration costs if the public sector still must intervene in service operations (Li & Choi, 2009). It is important to keep up the buyer-supplier interaction while monitoring both end users and contracted suppliers (Li & Choi, 2009).

The results indicate different cooperation and communication strategies between all six cities, as so far been discussed. The differences are further discussed in part four (chapter 5.4). Some cities have more trust-based cooperation, some rely on laws and contracts while some aims for stronger monitoring. Some cities highlighted the need for new data solutions and interfaces, while some are already actively trying out new solutions and tools. A couple of times, monitoring appears to be something that affects relationships in a negative way. Thus, the cities seem to follow this trend by focusing on collaboration and trust-based relationships.

5.3.4 Outcome-based contracts

In such dyadic relationships within a service triad, there exists only two contracts, even though there are three entities (van Der Valk & van Iwaarden, 2011). In this study, these entities are the cities, contracted service suppliers, and the end users or citizens. The two existing contracts are: the cities–citizens, and the buyer–the supplier. Eisenhardt (1989) identified two types of contracts as outcome-based and behavior-based contracts. Uenck and Telgen (2019) described behavior-based contracts as something relying on measurable outcomes. Regarding contracts, Eisenhardt (1989) discussed the so-called
agency theory between a principal and an agent with different goals and risk preferences as a challenge affecting their relationship. Additionally, Heide et al. (2007) identified also as microlevel social contracts — a kind of an informal agreement (p.427).

The results show that no microlevel contracts are used in public procurement. Yet, there might be informal agreements between the cities and their suppliers, that remain unknown to the researcher. During the interviews, the researcher noted that very often did interviewees refer to the laws, regulations, procurement, and tendering processes as well as the contract itself as an effective tool for quality management and monitoring purposes. For example, Turku’s informant D refers to the invite for tendering and the school transports as a statutory service, while Vantaa’s informant C1 refers to well-defined service in the invite for tendering and final contracts. Thus, the researcher interprets these as a strategy to maintain a strong bridge position through well-described service and requirements in the invite for tendering and the final contracts. This also means that cities must maintain good knowledge and skilled personnel that can manage procurement and contracts well enough. Another good strategy for this is to try out different solutions. For example, Oulu’s informant F describes their strategy of trying out different contracts (services) and pricing models.

In other words, cities do strongly acknowledge the importance of contracts by defining the final service quality in detail. The researcher also has access to one contract per city. After viewing these contracts, it was evident that cities do put great effort in contracts. Moreover, Vantaa’s informant C1 comments that the city’s procurement documents are rather good and that it is easy for them to refer to the contract if something is unclear regarding e.g. responsibilities between the city and the suppliers. Also, A1 refers to such descriptive contracts as important. After all, the city is a buyer, thus a supplier’s own customer. Contracts are, perhaps, the most effective tool for service quality management when considering the interview data. All informants highlighted the importance of well-defined and structured contracts.

5.3.5 Incentives alignment between buyer and supplier

Incentives are mentioned as one conclusion for a stronger service triad. Both the buyer and the service supplier should be customer focuses, as it one of the most important attributes. Thus, the buyer should aim for an alignment of goals for both contract parties. (Wuyts et al., 2015) The buyer is assumed to have much customer knowledge that the supplier would need, giving the buyer an important role as a mentor and coach
to the supplier. However, if the buyer is not customer focused, it lacks the necessary customer knowledge and cannot act as a mentor and coach. Moreover, how strong the relationship is between the buyer and the supplier depends on customer knowledge sharing intensity. (Wuyts et al., 2015)

Thus, a common understanding and needs are essential for a strong service triad and dyadic relationship. For example, Tampere’s informant (interviewee E, 30.3.2020) seems pleased that the piloted system is working, drivers have the new application with all necessary data, and that the drivers are actively reporting issues. Thus, knowledge-sharing has been enhanced in Tampere. Also, all informants say that the city and the service suppliers have a rather good consensus of the service. Another example is provided by Helsinki’s informant B, who says that also the service suppliers are actively giving feedback regarding challenges and issues. Still, none of the six cities have any rewarding or incentive strategies to encourage service suppliers to perform better. It seems that the cities experience an agreement what a good school transport should be.

All informants were asked to define top-3 challenges and issues in the school transports. The results are presented in chapter 4.3.7. Mostly issues are more revolving around schedules, routes, and pick-up and drop-off locations. However, some mention the customer service of the offices (e.g. behavior, availability, information sharing) or driver-related issues. A good driver is often acknowledged by end users, especially permanent and familiar drivers. A couple of times is mentioned the high demands regarding drivers. If considering the feedback statistics (Appendix 1), most issues revolve around schedules and locations. However, Espoo’s survey from 2018 (Appendix 3 and chapter 4.1.4) hints that families are in general satisfied, but also here, end users are complaining about drivers’ skills and behavior. The observations (audits) also suggested some challenges in drivers’ behavior and skills (Appendix 2). For example, a couple of times some drivers appeared rude, avoiding the audits, or expressed lacking knowledge of school transports. However, most drivers appeared to be professional, polite, and highly skilled. As a reminder, the companies should train their drivers and make sure the vehicles have necessary equipment (e.g. alcohol interlock devices).

Thus, these issues point out that there might be some challenges in the alignment of service goals and what the service should appear to the end users, so this is an area that the public sector could focus more on. The contracts seem well-structured enough, so the issue might be how drivers are (not) trained or have not access to all necessary resources. This was mentioned also during the interviews.
5.3.6 Information flow

Because Espoo city has identified information flow as one major challenge, the information flow will be separately focused on by identifying other cities’ challenges and issues, making comparison easier. As discussed by Uenk and Telgen (2019), sometimes the information goes directly from the end user to the supplier, thus excluding the buyer. This is something that could be managed by maintaining a permanent state of decay instead of allowing a gradual bridge transfer (Li & Choi, 2009).

These challenges have also been identified within the data. Figure 7 is an interpretation and a map of those risks and challenges that can interrupt an information flow. These are researcher’s interpretations from the interviews with Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu. The risks are divided between all actors within a service triad. The third column includes risks associated with end users. So, if the buyer wants to ensure a stable decay, it would be good to consider these challenges. For example, if end users are not sending any feedback, even though a interface channel exists, then the reasons should be investigated: are end users enough informed, do they know how to give feedback and how do they experience the benefits of giving feedback. In this way, a possible void between the buyer and the end users could be filled with a stronger bridge.

![Figure 7: Risks for information sharing and communication.](image)

The risks for the cities are more related to own internal resources, e.g. data systems, terms, interfaces and data formats. These challenges do, indeed, appear to make it more difficult to manage a permanent decay stage by weakening the bridges to the suppliers as well as to end users. The risks associated with suppliers are somewhat similar but also include some neglect of information sharing and training of drivers.
As so far discussed, communication is one of the case city’s biggest challenges, thus, how all actors could receive correct and up-to-date information (A1). Figure 7 is an illustration of risks that can lead to false or lacking information within the communication flows, leading to possible failed transports or misunderstandings for the caretakers. Like in Figure 7, the boxes are separate risks, and not linked to each other or placed in a specific order. Risks and challenges for Espoo city has been separately compiled in Figure 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified challenges &amp; risks: service providers</th>
<th>Identified challenges &amp; risks: service buyer (Espoo)</th>
<th>Identified challenges &amp; risks: service end users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service providers not responding</td>
<td>Lack of information and guidance to end users</td>
<td>End users sending their feedback to many places instead of one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too few service providers → vulnerable operations</td>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>End users stacking their complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills: e.g. Swedish service for Swedish speaking families</td>
<td>High turnover and many itinerants in Contact Center (CC)</td>
<td>End users bypassing the official communication routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time consuming processes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complex bureaucracy (interfaces, documents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data not up to date (old data)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many actors and interfaces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Data Protection Act (1050/2018)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass communication</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8 Risks of information sharing and communication in Espoo city.**

Both figure 7 and 8 have separately those risks and challenges according to who they affect or are caused by (service suppliers, service buyers or end users). If comparing these two (Espoo city and five other cities), the service supplier challenges and risks have the information sharing and responding as a common factor. This implies to a weak decay stage as the bridges appear weaker. After all, these bridges consist of service, information and resource flows as van Der Valk and van Iwaarden (2011) explain.

However, other cities identify more risks and challenges related to drivers’ competence and resources. Regarding the cities themselves, most risks and challenges are clearly resource-related, and especially hinting of missing technological solutions. Additionally, Espoo city refers to the new stricter Data Protection Act (1050/2018) as another challenge to manage. Regarding the end users, the challenges and risks are again very
similar, referring much to the end users’ actions regarding feedback, reclamations and informing. This gives a hint that end users might be somewhat in need of interfaces, instructions, and knowledge.

### 5.4 Reasons behind the current level of monitoring

Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu have different kind of monitoring activities and processes. The reasons behind each city’s chosen strategy were identified, analyzed, and interpreted as according to Figure 9, that illustrates these underlying reasons and their higher interpreted meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons behind current monitoring strategies.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>However, the results from the interviews were difficult to interpret and affirm due to somewhat conflicting answers. For example, cities seem to get very little feedback (both positive and negative), having different strategies and levels of monitoring, very little surveys while stating that the overall satisfaction is high in the city. These results have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
been grouped according to how different challenges have been managed. The grouping is supported by Uenk and Telgen (2019), discussed earlier in part 4.

The results in Figure 9 includes the results from the interviews with all five other cities: Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu, thus excluding Espoo city. It illustrates the results, based on three different levels. The lowest boxes are interpretations of the comments from the interviews, connected by the researcher as reason groups for the current level of monitoring. The second level are reoccurring or common themes, that bind those comments beneath it together. The highest level includes the study conclusions or results of the reasons behind the reoccurring themes from a public sector’s point of view as a service buyer, based on Uenk’s and Telgen’s (2019) focuses. These are own interpretations and conclusions. The two last groups are those that the researcher finds difficult to group in any of the previous focus-groups. Though, these appear more as challenges, thus something that cities should also focus on. These seem to require their own focus theme.

5.5 Communication structures in all six cities: an overview

The communication and data flows have been identified as one of Espoo city’s main challenges, so this chapter will focus on challenges and solutions offered by the other five cities. Each city’s informant has been asked to describe and comment their communication and data flows in the city regarding school transports. Based on these descriptions, a model for each city has been mapped out, based on writer’s interpretation. These maps are further used to identify bridge position, bridge decay and bridge transfer occurrences in the next chapter. Those entities that have been highlighted in each figure is interpreted as the main monitoring unit, or as a gatekeeper.

![Espoo information and communication flow (interpretation)](image)

Figure 10 Espoo information and communication flow (interpretation).

Espoo city’s daily information flow is interpreted as Figure 10 illustrates. Also, as A2 has described, feedback goes either to the customer service or to A2, depending on the matter. Moreover, transport changes and cancellations go either directly the service
suppliers or via the customer services or via logistics department. The Education Division manages decision-related matters (e.g. if the family has moved and the benefit must be re-evaluated). However, the Education Division makes changes via the logistics department, as the two are in close cooperation. Additionally, as A1 reminds, the logistics department’s purpose is to serve as a “gatekeeper”, why it is highlighted in the figure. Additionally, when interviewee A1 was asked to comment the figure, the logistics unit and CC was combined as they are more entwined as CC could be regarded as a subcontractor assigned by logistics.

**Figure 11  Information and communication flow in Helsinki (interpretation).**

Helsinki’s informant B explains that the procurement unit is responsible for school transport service management in Helsinki as well as handling reclamations and guiding schools. The procurement unit also works as a “judge” in disagreements. Schools send timetables to the service suppliers and caretakers are directly in contact with the service suppliers. The transport companies are in contact with all other three: schools, caretakers, and interviewee B. Reclamations should be sent to the procurement unit. The unit also must monitor that schools do send the necessary timetables to the transport companies. (B) Figure 11 shows how the communication flows have been interpreted, highlighting the procurement unit as the monitoring and judging entity.

**Figure 12  Vantaa information and communication flow (interpretation).**

In Vantaa, schools and transport companies are managing the transport data. The transport unit has the management responsibly: everything from placing an order to
decision-making. The secretaries (including C2) accepts the feedback given to the city. Basically, the schools, caretakers and the transport companies are communicating intensively with each other. Caretakers are only contacting schools and the school transport unit. (C1 and C2) Thus, the school transport unit has been interpreted as the main actor in the communication flows.

Figure 13 Turku information and communication flow (interpretation).

Turku city’s model reminds that of Vantaa city. Complaints and bigger changes go through the Education Division, that has the management responsibility of school transports. Though, the responsibility of accepting changes has been given to the schools with their own key person, that is the link to the school field and transport companies. Schedules and routes are managed by transport companies. (D) As the Education Division has the main management responsibility, it is highlighted in Figure 13 that illustrates the city’s information flows.

Figure 14 Tampere communication and information flow (interpretation).

As already been highlighted, Tampere is the only city with its own company (Tuomi Logistiikka Oy) that manages the school transports in Tampere and neighbor municipalities. The company has its own call center for caretakers, transport companies and schools to contact, through which matters are forwarded to the passenger transports at Tuomi Logistiikka Oy. The company manages all transports, including routing and scheduling, but also by picking available vehicles for each route. The Education Division
is only contacted with decision-related matters. (D) Thus, the information flows have interpreted according to the Figure 14, in which the call center is a filter while Tuomi Logistiikka Oy is the main actor.

![Figure 14](image)

**Figure 15** Oulu information and communication flow (interpretation).

Oulu’s information flows are simpler than that of other cities. Interviewee F has alone much of the management responsibilities, including routing, scheduling, decision-making and reclamion processing. Moreover, the schools are the main link in the communication flows by forwarding urgent matters to the logistician, who also manages all contract-related matters. Changes can only be made by the interviewee as the city is the buyer of the service. (F)

### 5.5.1 Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the study findings within the theoretical framework as well as answering the research questions. The purpose was to identify different service quality monitoring strategies, attitudes, methods and to identify current status of school transport service in other cities. Interesting findings were identified and discussed by comparing and making suggestions.

### 5.6 Conclusion and final thoughts

This last part of this study is a concluding discussion around the study, its purpose and how well the goals have been reached as well as point out challenges, final thoughts of the researcher and future study suggestions.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how five other Kuusikko-cities manage the school transport services from a service quality perspective. Focus was on service supplier performance and quality monitoring, feedback statistics and contract management. The purpose was to focus on the case city of Espoo by comparing the city to that of other cities’ methods and strategies regarding school transport management as a public service.
The research questions are defined as:

RQ1: *How are cities managing the school transport services daily?*

RQ2: *How could school transport services be further enhanced?*

By answering these two questions through the empirical study, the aim was to provide Espoo city with suggestions and ideas for future procurement and contract management in public service triad through a dyadic relationship. The first research question RQ1 is answered in this study through the empirical study by focusing on the data from the interviews with respective city informant (Espoo, Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu). However, as discussed earlier, the results were somewhat difficult to interpret due to lacking data and somewhat conflicting responses. The researcher has interpreted the current situation in each city from the available data and the experienced bridge position by each interviewee. However, in order to answer RQ2, the study must be approached from a different angle by pointing out the reasons and circumstances of other cities for not having implemented more continuous and intensive service quality and supplier performance monitoring. This is approached from a less-is-more perspective, as the researcher sees and experiences it.

Espoo, Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, and Oulu all had monitoring activities on different levels and intensity, and with different tools, methods, as well as attitudes and experiences of monitoring. What is common for these five cities seems to be that they all seem satisfied with the current situation and the quality of school transport service, based on how informants have expressed the current situation. Also, end users seem mostly satisfied according to informants' descriptions.

The researcher finds the emotional matters as the foundation of trust as interesting. This raises the question that if the public sector would focus more on an open, cooperative, and value-based atmosphere, then could the need for continuous monitoring be lower? Thus, the case city could further analyze and investigate own buyer-supplier relationships.

Indeed, the current monitoring does provide the city with valuable end user data. However, from another perspective, Espoo city uses much of its resources on monitoring, while some cities are managing with less resources while maintaining good service quality. Though, the lack of statistical evidence makes this difficult to further comment. Still, this is something that Espoo city could further investigate.
The benefits of monitoring service quality and supplier performance are found to be many. Monitoring also helps the city to maintain its accountability to its citizens (Osborne, 2007), as it must answer to responsibility and accountability issues to the public (Stainer & Stainer, 1998) while keeping the costs low as a non-profit-making sector that uses public funds (Sagawa & Segal, 2000).

Espoo city seems to have the possibility to do monitoring from a resource perspective. Some interviewees mention that they have outsourced monitoring to another unit, or even partially relying on grapevine communication. Espoo logistics is doing the monitoring together with its Contact center, thus having more responsibility compared to other cities that are e.g. focusing on internal cooperation or service suppliers’ good intent, experience, and skills. It seems that Espoo logistics has instead focused all monitoring mainly to itself through a strong gatekeeper’s role. From another perspective, it might occur as an overwhelming task on its current level and available resources.

Espoo city is planning to make changes in the reclamations monitoring regarding how reclamations are sent, processed, and archived. Also, the Western Uusimaa Joint Services will unavoidably change the current setting, but this could not be further investigated as it is new, and the piloting is currently on hold because of the coronavirus. These future changes should be carefully evaluated, both from a resource perspective and service quality perspective. Other aspects to be considered are contracts themselves. The results indicate that service description is of high importance, so the city should maintain skilled personnel. It is also suggested that the city could try out different kind of contracts, thus enabling more different sized companies to enter the competitive tendering. This would also lower the risks related to having too few suppliers manage so many pupils.

5.7 Limitations and quality of the study

Many interesting perspectives had to be excluded, e.g. financial aspects and the viewpoint of the service suppliers as well as the end users. Possible end user satisfaction surveys would have been rich sources of data. Also, because Vantaa’s informants (C1 and C2) did not have any information of if and how the procurement unit does monitor, the results from Vantaa were weaker. In a way, outsourcing is a limiting factor for this study as some needed data is unattainable. Outsourcing additionally made analysis difficult as there was no data regarding how other units or entities are doing monitoring and how they manage feedbacks. Also, missing statistical data was another limit for the study.
5.8 Contribution to research

This study has both practical and theoretical contributions. From a more theoretical level, this study has contributed to academical discussion around public service triads from a dyadic perspective by focusing on the public sector’s point of view. As Uenk and Telgen (2019) point out, there are no such studies available. Also, it proved to be difficult to find academic literature around passenger transport service quality and quality management, especially school transport studies seemed to be missing.

Moreover, this study offers a deeper public sector perspective and different ways of the service sector to manage service triads through a dyadic buyer-supplier relationship. A deeper analysis was possible due to the researches position as an employee at Espoo city. Furthermore, the research questions suggest that information sharing within public sector units (cities) is important by sharing experience, knowledge, and ideas. Thus, this study has also served its intended knowledge sharing purpose.

Osborne’s (2007) customer strategy DNA component was partially confirmed as no city referred to end users as customers, only A2 referred to customers a couple of times. It was somewhat surprising to notice that end users are not seen as customers, even when talking about feedback and surveys. Uenk and Telgen (2019) suggest that the public sector should focus on five different matters. The results confirmed these focuses, though, the focus level varied a bit between the cities. Again, the trends introduced by Pärna and Tunzelmann (2007) were also confirmed, but some trends were more difficult to confirm than others due to e.g. outsourcing and missing more exact feedback statistics.

On a more practical level, this study has provided the city of Espoo with suggestions and ideas by identifying different strategies and methods in the other five cities. Communication flows was one of the main challenges for Espoo city, so the study has mapped out other cities’ communication flow structures for Espoo city to consider. The study has also identified additional challenges in other cities that Espoo city should also be aware of. For future procurement and contract management from a service triad perspective, this study has answered the research questions as well as answering to the needs of the city of Espoo.
5.9 Future research suggestions

This study focused on school transport benefit as a public service triad with three entities: the city, transport companies, and end users. Future research could implement this study's methods to another service triad, even to a private sector service triad.

Additionally, the study points out the way for further research: the viewpoint of the service suppliers and the end users. Moreover, a financial aspect would be a beneficial research topic. Another focus of future studies could be the contracts themselves and how services are defined as well as service requirements. Because some cities expressed the low level of received feedback, it would be highly beneficial to further investigate the different means of how end users could give feedback and especially how end users experience this process.
REFERENCES


Unpublished internal documents (used with permission)


APPENDIX 1  ESPOO COMPLAINT STATISTICS FROM 2019

Source: Espoo Logistics, 2020 (unpublished)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for complaint</th>
<th>Jan - Dec 2019</th>
<th>1.1.-21.2.2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groundless</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropped off alone</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too early</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong place/adress</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not picked up</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feedback</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration (max 60min)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notice (mix)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay (10/15 min)</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi office</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle equipment</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver feedback</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>929</strong></td>
<td><strong>157</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 300,000 trips/year

Percentage/complaints 0,003

About 1,200 pupils/year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaints per company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX 2  FIELD OBSERVATIONS (AUDIT) FALL 2019**

Based on observations and Espoo logistics, 2019 (report).

A.I.D = Alcohol Interlock Device

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of audit</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Logo</th>
<th>A.I.D.</th>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Other notice</th>
<th>Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>07:15</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A bit too early</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:12</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:14</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:16</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:19</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Subcontractor</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:25</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:26</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:30</td>
<td>10/11/2016</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Driver gave feedback about the school and systems. Subcontractor.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>07:16</td>
<td>10/22/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Light broken. Sign added when asked.</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>07:52</td>
<td>10/22/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A.I.D. will be soon installed.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>07:31</td>
<td>10/22/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Light broken. A.I.D. not yet installed.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>07:54</td>
<td>10/22/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Subcontractor. Driver said small cars like this don't have A.I.D.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:02</td>
<td>10/22/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>08:03</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A.I.D. been removed?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:04</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Placed the sign when asked to do so.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:05</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Placed the sign when asked to do so.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08:17</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>A bit indifferent attitude.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Sign</td>
<td>Note</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:50</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Has not been given a sign by the office.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:52</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:54</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:58</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:03</td>
<td>10/24/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pupils left outside without adult.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Presence</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07:42</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>New driver (unexperienced), not been given a sign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:55</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:09</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:10</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Subcontractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:11</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Uncooperative driver, not placing the sign even if asked to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:12</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:15</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Driver said this was a new car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:18</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:24</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:25</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>A.I.D. coming soon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:46</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Subcontractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:04</td>
<td>10/29/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>54 minutes late cause drove to wrong address. Driver said this was a new car.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Presence</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07:23</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:26</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:36</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:46</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:58</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Too early arrival. School personnel said they haven been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Complaining</td>
<td>Subcontractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:15</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:15</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:18</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:22</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:22</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:23</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:28</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:29</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:30</td>
<td>11/11/2019</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10  17  9  
39  32  40  

**Total sum** 49  49  49  

% yes 0.796 0.653 0.816  
% not 0.204 0.347 0.184
## APPENDIX 3  
**ESPOO CUSTOMER SURVEY FROM 2018**

Source: Espoo, 2018.

### Scale 1 - 5 (bad - good)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>28.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sent surveys</td>
<td>1162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport company A</td>
<td>31.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport company B</td>
<td>29.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport company C</td>
<td>39.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well has the transport worked</th>
<th>4.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation between home and taxi</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation between home and city</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s attitude</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How well has the transport worked?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transport company A</th>
<th>4.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport company B</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport company C</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How has cooperation worked with transport company?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transport company A</th>
<th>4.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport company B</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport company C</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How well has cooperation worked between home and Espoo

|                     | 3.9  |

### Child’s attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transport company A</th>
<th>4.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport company B</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport company C</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4 DISTRICTS IN ESPOO CITY

APPENDIX 5  ORIGINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH A2

This interview guide is for the interview with Espoo’s informant A2. The interview was not recorded.

Original interview guide in Finnish

Lyhyt yhteenveto tutkimuksesta ja sen tarkoituksesta, sekä mihin tietoja käytetään ja etttä nimiä ei julkaista.

1. Ensimmäiseksi: kerrotko työtehtävistäsi ja sen tarkoituksesta, eli esittele itsesi lyhyesti.
2. Kuvaile lyhyesti reklamaatioprosessi eli kuka käsittelee reklamaatioita ja miten reklamaatioita käsitellään käytännössä?
3. Mihin reclamaatio kirjataan?
4. Mitä ongelmia näet palauteprosessissa käytännössä?
5. Miten palauteprosessia voisi sinun mielestä parantaa/tehostaa?
6. Miksi reklamaatioit ovat tärkeitä?

Kommentti/Yhteenveto: Espoon logistiikkaa seuraa aktiivisesti kuljetusyritysten toimintaa reclamaatioitilastoa seuraamalla sekä auditoinneilla ja pitämällä säännöllisesti seurantakokouksia kuljetusyritysten kanssa.

7. Miten sinä koet, että auditoinnit ovat vaikuttaneet palvelun laatuun?
8. Miten koet, että seurantakokoukset ovat vaikuttaneet palvelun laatuun?
9. Miten koet, että reclamaatioitilastojen laatiminen ja seuranta on vaikuttaneet palvelun laatuun?
10. Miten sinä kehitteisit koulukuljetusten laadun seurantaa? Mihin olemme menossa?

Haastateltavalle kerrotaan viime vuoden reclamaatioitilastot (yhteensä 929 palautetta vuonna 2019).

11. Miten kommentoisit viime vuoden tilastoja?
12. Lopuksi vielä: miten mielestäsi yhteistyö kaikkien kolmen kuljetusyrityksen kanssa on sujunut?

Kiitos haastattelusta. Muistuta haastateltavaa, että yhteenveto tulee sähköpostiin kommentoiltavaksi.
APPENDIX 6  INTERVIEW GUIDE IN ENGLISH (OWN TRANSLATION) FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH A2

Short introduction to the study, its purpose, for what purpose data will be used, and that no names are published.

1. Firstly: could you introduce yourself by describing your duties and remit.
2. Could you briefly describe the reclamation process by mentioning who handles the reclamations and how?
3. Where are all reclamations entered?
4. What kind of problems do you think there is in the reclamation processes in practice?
5. How do you think the feedback process could be better managed or how could it be improved?
6. Why do you see that reclamations are important?

Comment/Summary: Espoo logistics unit actively monitors transport companies by managing reclamation statistics, by doing audits and keeping follow-up meetings together with the transport companies.

7. What do you think: do the audits have an impact on service quality?
8. What do you think: do follow-up meeting have an impact on service quality?
9. What do you think: do compiling and following reclamation statistics have an impact on service quality?

10. How would you improve the monitoring of school transport quality? Where are we going currently?

Interviewee is presented last year’s reclamation statistics (a total of 929 received feedbacks in 2019).

11. How would you comment last year’s numbers?

12. And lastly: how do you see the cooperation with all three transport companies has worked?

Thank you for the interview. Remind the interviewee that a summary will be sent per e-mail for further commenting.
APPENDIX 7  ORIGINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE INTERVIEWS WITH THE OTHER CITIES.

Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere ja Oulu.


Teema: perustiedot sekä haastateltavan esittely.

1. Koulukuljetuksia ajatelleen, esittelisitkö toimenkuvani eli työtehtäväsi ja vastuulluuesi?
2. Esittelisitkö yksikön jolla on vastuu koulukuljetuksista.
   a. Kuka myöntää, hallinnoi kuljetustietoja ja kommunikoivat yritysten kanssa?
      (Mihin huoltajat ja koulut ovat yhteydessä ja miten?)
   b. Mitä tämä tarkoittaa?

3. Pyydä kommentoimaan lukua, eli kuullostaako oikeanlaiselta?
4. Montako oppilasta on kuluvan lukuvuoden aikana kulkenut ryhmä- ja yksilökuljetuksissa?
5. Onko ollut minkälaisista tarvetta esteettömille ajoneuvoille, eli kulkemo paljon erityisoppilaita?
   a. Kerro haastateltavalle, montako koulua olet katsonut, että kaupungissa on.

6. Kuullostaako tämä tieto oikealta?
7. Montako palveluntuottajaa teillä on? Käyttävätkö palveluntuottajat alihankintaa?
8. Miten kuljetettavat on jaettu palveluntuottajien välillä?
   a. Kerro onko alueittain tai kouluiittain?
   b. Mitä ovat hyvät ja huonot puolet?

Teema: päivittäinen kommunikointi

1. Kaupunki ja kuljetusyhteydet:
2. Miten kuljetusten suhteen kommunikoidaan, eli miten ollaan yhteydessä päivittäisellä tasolla? Onko kommunikoittavat dedikoitut?
   a. (omat s-posti/puh./yht.henkilöt)
   b. Koska ollaan yhteydessä?
3. Miten kuljetustilaus tehdään?
4. Miten kuljetustilaus tehdään?
5. Miten kuljetukseilla pysyvät muutokset vs. Kertaluonteiset muutokset?
6. Missä on oppilaiden ajantasaiset kuljetustiedot?
   a. Palveluntäytyjät (oppilaat/perheet) ja koulut:
   b. Miten hyvin perheit ja koulut kokevat saavansa asiakaspalvelua?
5. Kaupungilta?
6. Kuljetusyhteysi?
14. Osa oppilaista kulkevat aamu- ja iltapäivähoidossa, eli miten kommunikointi sujuu aamu/iltapäivähoidon suhteen perheiden/koulujen ja kuljetusyrityksen välillä?

Yleisesti kommunikoinnista:

15. Minkä arvosanan antaisit tiedonkulun sujuvuudelle
   a. Asteikolla 1 – 5 (erittäin heikkoa – erittäin toimivaa)
16. Missä on onnistuttu ja mistä antaisitte kiitosta esim. itsellenne tai kulj yritykselle?
17. Mistä antaisitte moitteita ja mitä voisi parantaa?
18. Tulevaisuuden muutoksia/uutta tekniikkaa?
   (Digitalisaation/rajapinnat/appisovellukset)

Teema: koulukuljetusten laatu palvelunäkökulmasta

Haastateltavan ja kaupungin näkökulmasta:

19. Millainen on laadullisesti onnistunut henkilökuljetus? Mitä sanoja tulee sinulla mieleen?
   (Mitä sanoja haastateltava käyttää. Huomioi, onko vaikeaa ja miten vaikeaa on määritellä laatu)
20. Kenellä on mielestäsi laadun hallinta ensisijaisesti hallinnassaan?
   Eli, miten pystytte vaikuttamaan siihen mitä kentällä tapahtuu? Eli, miten pystytte vaikuttamaan siihen mitä kentällä tapahtuu?

Kaupunki (haastateltava) ja kuljetusyritykset:

21. Onko kuljetusten osalta ns. *hyvä kuljetus* ymmärretty mielestäsi samalla lailla teidän ja yritysten välillä? (esim. Milloin kuljetus on ajoissa, eli puhallatteko ’yhteen hiileen’)
   a. Mistä ollaa samaa mieltä?
   b. Väärinkäsityksiä?
   c. Erimielisyyksiä?

Oppilaat/perheet ja koulut:

22. Keneltä perheet vaativat parempaa laatua haasteellisissa kuljetustapauksissa/tilanteissa, teiltä vai kuljetusyritykseltä? (ns. napit vastakkain)
   a. Hyvät ja huonot puolet?
23. Keneltä koulut vaativat parempaa laatua haasteellisissa kuljetustapauksissa/tilanteissa, teiltä vai kuljetusyritykseltä? (ns. napit vastakkain)
   a. Hyvät ja huonot puolet?

Teema: palvelun laadun valvonta, eli esim. pistokokeet, kyydissä oleminen ja raportointi

24. Valvooko kaupunki ja siinä tapauksessa, miten valvoo koulukuljetuksia? Jos ei valvo, niin kuka valvoo?
25. Pyydä haastateltavaa kertomaan tarkemmin laadun valvonnasta: eli Kuinka usein/millä työvälineillä/miten laajasti/kenen toimesta?
   Yleisesti valvonnasta:

26. Miten valvonnan tulokset käsitellään/käydään läpi? (Sanktioidaanko?)
   a. Miten edellä mainittu on on toteutunut kuluneen sopimuskauden aikana?
   b. Parannusehdotuksia/ideoita?

27. Miten kannustatte palveluntuottajaa parantamaan laatu? Porkkana vai keppi?
   a. Sanktiot?
   b. Palkitsemisjärjestelmä? Kannustimet?
   c. Ideoita? Parannusehdotuksia?

**Teema: paikkoautot ja alihankkijat**

28. Onko teillä tiedossa kaikki palveluntuottajan käyttämä(t) alihankkijat?
29. Miten varmistatte palveluntuottajan käyttämän alihankkijan toimittama laatu?

**Teema: asiakaspalautteet/reklamaatiot**

30. Miten palvelunkäyttäjät (eli oppilaat ja heidän huoltajansa) voivat antaa palautetta tai reklamoida epäkohdista/virheistä?
31. Millaisia negatiivisia palautteita tulee huoltajilta eniten? TOP 3. (onko tilastojen tai mututuntemaa/oma arvio)
32. Miten hyvin mielestäsi kuljetusyrityksen alihankkijan toimintaa laatu?
33. Mistä perheet antavat eniten kiitosta?
34. Miten koulut voivat antaa palautetta tai reklamoida epäkohdista/virheistä?
35. Millaista palautetta koulut antavat? (positiivista ja/tai negatiivista?)

Yleisesti palauteprosessista:

36. Miten palautteet hoidetaan/korjataan teidän toimesta, eli miten palautteet käsitellään ja millaisella aikaikunnalla?
37. Miten koet palauteprosessin toimivuuden ja tehokkuuden, eli onko palautteilla mitään vaikutusta koulukuljetuksiin?
38. Miten koko palauteprosessia (sisältäen perheet ja koulut) voisi parantaa? Suunnitelmia? Ehdotuksia?
39. Onko statistiikkaa saatavilla kaikista palautteista?

**Teema: yhteenveto**

40. Millaisia ajatuksia tämä haastattelu herätti?
   Esim. palautetta haastattelun sisällöstä? Jääkö jokin asia käsittelemättä?
41. Miten koet koulukuljetusten tulevaisuuden kaupungissasi? Mihin ollaan menossa? (Mikä on huomisen juttu?)
42. Tuleeko seuraaviin kilpailutuksiin muutoksia laadun vaatimusten suhteen?

Kiitos haastattelusta. Muistuta haastateltavaa, että yhteenveto tulee sähköpostiin kommentoitavaksi.
APPENDIX 8 INTERVIEW GUIDE IN ENGLISH (OWN TRANSLATION) FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH THE OTHER CITIES.

Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere and Oulu

Short summary of the study purpose, what it includes, how and for what purposes the data will be used. Introduce the study questions. Remind the interviewee that no names are published. Also, ensure that it is acceptable to send interview records to a third-party company (incl. name of the company) for transcription.

Theme: basic information and introduction of the interviewee

1. Considering school transports: could you introduce your job description or your duties and remit?
2. Could you introduce the unit that is responsible of school transports?
   a. Who grants, manages transport data and who communicates with the transport companies? (Who caretakers and schools contact and how)

   Tell interviewee about Vipunen-statistics from 2018 including the number of pupils with granted transportation benefit.

3. Ask interviewee to comment the number. Does it appear as right?
4. How many pupils are in group- and individual transports this school year?
5. What kind of need is there currently for accessible vehicles, or how many special need pupils are there in school transports?

   Tell interviewee how many schools you have summarized that there is in the city (currently).

6. Ask interviewee to comment the number. Does it appear as right?
7. How many service suppliers have you? Do they use subcontractors?
8. How are the pupils divided between the service suppliers? E.g. According to area or school? Pros and cons with this solution?

Theme: daily communication

The city and the transport companies:

9. How do you communicate daily regarding the transports? Is it dedicated (e-mails, phone number, contact persons)?
10. How is a new transport order placed?
11. How are permanent changes made vs. temporary changes?
12. Where is all pupil-related transport data stored? (times e.g.)

Service end users (pupils/families) and schools:

13. How are the families and the schools experiencing customer service?
   a. From the city?
   b. From the transport companies?
14. Some pupils are in morning- and daycare, so how well does the communication work regarding these pupils between the families/schools and the transport companies?

Generally, about communication:

15. How would you rate the communication flow?
   a. From 1 - 5 (very weak – very well working)
16. Where have you succeeded and what would you acknowledge regarding e.g. yourself or perhaps the transport companies?
17. What would you criticize and what could be improved?
18. Future changes/new technology? (Digitalization/interfaces/applications)

**Theme: school transports form a service quality perspective**

From the interviewee’s and the city’s perspective:

19. How would you describe a successful school transport? With what words? (What words the interviewee uses. Notice if it is difficult to define quality) (Adjectives, e.g. flexibility, or perhaps other words)
20. Who do you think has first and foremost quality in their hands? So, how well do you think that you can affect what happens on the field?

The city (interviewee) ja transport companies:

21. Has the so-called good transport been understood in a common way between you and the transport companies? (e.g. when a transport is on time, so do you work for a common goal?
   a. What do you agree upon?
   b. Misunderstandings?
   c. Disagreements?

Pupils/families and schools:

22. From whom do families demand better quality during challenging transport issues: from you or the transport companies?
   a. Pros and cons?
23. From whom do schools demand better quality during challenging transport issues: from you or other transport companies?
   a. Pros and cons?

**Theme: monitoring service quality, e.g. spot checks, field observation and reporting.**

24. Does the city monitor, and how does the city monitor the school transports? If not, then why not and who perhaps monitors instead?
25. Ask interviewee to describe the monitoring process; how often/tools/how much/by who?
Generally about monitoring:

26. How are the monitoring results processed/managed? (Penalties?)
   a. How has monitoring been fulfilled during current contract period?
   b. Improvement suggestions/ideas?

27. How are you encouraging service suppliers to enhance quality? Carrot or stick?
   a. Penalties?
   b. Rewardings? Incentives?
   c. Improvement suggestions/ideas?

Theme: substitutes and subcontractors

28. Do you know all subcontractors being used by service suppliers?

29. How do you ensure the service quality by subcontractors?

Theme: customer feedback/reclamations

30. How can service end users (pupils and caretakers) give feedback or send reclamations regarding flaws and errors?

31. What kind of negative feedback do you receive from caretakers? Top 3. (do you have any statistics/own gut feeling/estimation)

32. How well are the service suppliers using alcohol interlock devices and school transport signs?

33. What kind of positive feedback do families give?

34. How can schools give feedback or send reclamations regarding flaws and errors?

35. What kind of feedback do you receive from schools? (positive and negative)

Generally, about the feedback process:

36. How do you handle all received feedback and reclamations, or how are these handled and how fast?

37. How do you experience the functionality and the efficiency of the feedback process? Are feedbacks having an impact on the school transports?

38. How do you think that the feedback process could be enhanced (including families and schools)? Plans? Suggestions?

39. Do you have any feedback statistics available?

Theme: summary

40. What thoughts did this interview provoke? E.g. any feedback? Was some topic missing?

41. How do you see the future of school transports in your city? Where are you going? (What is the next thing?)

42. Will there be something new in future procurement?

Thank you for the interview. Remind the interviewee that a summary will be sent per email for further commenting.
APPENDIX 9 ORIGINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH A1.

This is the original interview guide in Finnish for the interview with Espoo's informant A1. The interview was not recorded.


Teema: perustiedot ja kuljetettavat.

1. Espoossa on keskimäärin (tällä hetkellä 1,200 kuljetusoppilasta). Pyydä haastateltavaa kommentoimaan lukua.
2. Mitä mieltä olet siitä, että Espoolla on kolme sopimusta, eli kolme palveluntuottajaa?

Teema: muiden kaupunkien ratkaisut

3. Mitä ajatuksia Oulun ratkaisu herättää? (20 sopimusta ja kokeillaan aktiivisesti eri ratkaisuja ja malleja)
4. Mitä ajatuksia Turun ratkaisu herättää? (12 pakettia)
5. Mitä ajatuksia Vantaan ratkaisu herättää? (2 sopimusta, ja kuljetettavat jaettu kahteen kuljetusryhmään/palveluntuottajien välillä)

Teema: päivittäinen kommunikointi

6. Mitä mieltä olet tiedonkulusta Espoossa, eli kaikkien osapuolten välisestä päivittäisestä tiedonvaihdosta?
7. Missä haasteita tiedonkulussa on sinun mielestäsi?
8. Miten nämä haasteet voitaisiin ratkaista? Ideoita?
9. Missä mielestäsi pitäisi olla saatavilla kokonaisuudessa? Ideoita?
   a. Mitä haasteita näet tällä kokonaisuudessa? Ideoita?
10. Missä on onnistuttu ja mistä antaisitte kiitosta esim. itseläisten kuljestytimekseksi?
11. Miten nämä haasteet voitaisiin ratkaista? Ideoita?
   a. Asteikolla 1 – 5 (erittäin heikkoa – erittäin toimivaa)
12. Miten antaisitte moitteita ja mitä voisi parantaa?
13. Tulevaisuuden muutoksia/uttua tekniiikkaa?
   (Digitalisation/rajapinnat/appisovellukset)

Teema: koulukuljetusten laatu palvelunäkökulmasta

15. Miten hyvin mielestäsi Espoon logistiikka voi vaikuttaa siihen, mitä kentällä tapahtuu?
16. Mitä mieltä olet siitä, että kuinka hyvin logistiikalla ja yrityksillä on ymmärretty laatu samalla lailla, eli konsensus?
Teema: asiakaspalautteet/reklamaatiot

17. Millainen ymmärrys sinulla on siitä, että miten hyvin mielestäsi perheet ja koulut kokevat saavansa palvelua yleisellä tasolla?

Mainitse haastateltavalle, että viimeisin olisi tietääksesi tehty 2018.

18. Onko uusi tutkimus tulossa tai suunnitteilla?
19. Mitä mieltä olet reklamaatioprosessista tällä hetkellä?
20. Miten reklamaatioprosessia tulisi kehittää? Mitä uusia muutoksia on tulossa?
21. Miten tuleva Kulkukeskus tulee vaikuttamaan reklamaatioiden käsittelyyn ja laadun seurantaan?
22. Miten sinä koet, että onko laadunvalvonnan (audioinnit, reklamaatiotilastot, palaverit) ollut vaikutusta koulukuljetusten laatuun?
23. Millaisia haasteita aamu- ja iltapäivähoidon oppilaat ja huoltajat mielestäsi kohtaavat?
24. Entäpä sanktiot sitten, vaikuttavatko ne palvelun laatuun ja käytetäänko niitä mielestäsi hyvin/oikein?
25. Ennen kuin koordinaattorimme (haastateltavav A2) aloitti reklamaatiourakan, niin miten reklamaatiot hoidettiin ennen?
26. Tulisiko mielestäsi meidän koordinaattorin reklamaatiotyötä, tilastointia ja auditointia jatkaa?

Teema: yhteenveto

1. Millaisia ajatuksia tämä haastattelu herätti?
   Esim. palautetta haastattelun sisällöstä? Jäikö jokin asia käsittelemättä?
2. Miten koet koulukuljetusten tulevaisuuden kaupungissasi? Mihin ollaan menossa? (Mikä on huomisen juttu?)

Kiitos haastattelusta. Muistuta haastateltavaa, että yhteenveto tulee sähköpostiin kommentoitavaksi.
APPENDIX 10 INTERVIEW GUIDE IN ENGLISH (OWN TRANSLATION) FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH A1

Short summary of the study purpose, what it includes, how and for what purposes the data will be used. Introduce the study questions. Remind the interviewee that no names are published. Also, ensure that it is acceptable to send interview records to a third-party company (incl. name of the company) for transcription.

Theme: basic information and transport pupils

1. There are currently around 1,200 pupils with school transport benefit. Ask interviewee to comment the current number.
2. What do you think about Espoo city having three contracts, thus three service suppliers?

Theme: the other cities’ solutions

3. What thoughts does Oulu city’s solution evoke? (20 contracts and actively trying out new solutions and models)
4. What thoughts does Turku city’s solution evoke? (12 packages)
5. What thoughts does Vantaa city’s solution evoke? (2 contracts, and all pupils are divided into two groups/between two transport companies)

Theme: daily communication

6. Mitä mieltä olet tiedonkulusta Espoossa, eli kaikkien osapuolten välisestä päivittäisestä tiedonvaihdosta?
7. What kind of challenges do you see in daily information flow?
8. How could these challenges be solved? Ideas?
9. Where should all transport-related data be stored, in real-time? (currently they are spread between many places: logistics, transport companies, schools, CC, SITO)
   a. What challenges do you see in this setting? Any ideas?
10. In Oulu city, all daily communication goes through the schools (e.g. changes and complaints), and only severe matters go via the logistician. What do you think about this solution?
11. How would you rate the communication flow?
   a. From 1 - 5 (very weak – very well working)
12. Where have you succeeded and what would you acknowledge regarding e.g. yourself or perhaps the transport companies?
13. What would you criticize and what could be improved?
14. Future changes/new technology? (Digitalization/interfaces/applications)

Theme: school transports form a service quality perspective

15. How well do you think that Espoo logistics unit can affect what happens on the field?
16. How do you see the consensus between logistics and the companies regarding quality? Is quality seen in a similar way?
Theme: feedback/reclamations

17. What do you think of how are the families and the schools experiencing customer service?

Mention to the interviewee, that the latest end user survey was from 2018. At least for what I know.

18. Is a new survey coming or being planned currently?
19. What are your thoughts about the current reclamation process?
20. How do you see that the reclamation process should be improved? Are there coming any new changes?
21. How will the new Western Uusimaa Joint Services affect reclamation management and quality monitoring in the future?
22. Do you see that quality monitoring has had any impact on school transport quality?
23. What kind of challenges are there regarding morning- and daycare pupils and their caretakers?
24. How about penalties? Do they have an impact on service quality and is the city using them well/correctly?
25. Before our coordinator (interviewee A2) started working with reclamations, how were reclamations managed?
26. Should the work of our coordinator be continued also in the future, regarding reclamations, statistics, and audits?

Theme: summary

27. What thoughts did this interview provoke? E.g. any feedback? Was some topic missing?
28. How do you see the future of school transports in your city? Where are you going? (What is the next thing?)
29. Will there be something new in future procurement?

Thank you for the interview. Remind the interviewee that a summary will be sent per e-mail for further commenting.