Martin Thrupp
Piia Seppänen
Jaakko Kauko
Sonja Kosunen   *Editors*

Finland's Famous Education System

Unvarnished Insights into Finnish Schooling

OPEN ACCESS

Springer

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Editors
Martin Thrupp (iD)
Division of Education
University of Waikato
Hamilton, New Zealand

Piia Seppänen (iD)
Department of Education
University of Turku
Turku, Finland

Jaakko Kauko (iD)
Faculty of Education and Culture
Tampere University
Tampere, Finland

Sonja Kosunen (iD)
Faculty of Educational Sciences
University of Helsinki
Helsinki, Finland

Preface and Acknowledgements

As the editors of this substantial book, we see it as a response to over-excited and misleading views of Finnish education. Here, Sonja Kosunen and Jaakko Kauko describe some of the challenges of being Finnish educational researchers when Finland's PISA reputation was at its peak:

> Sonja: When I was working as an intern at the Centre of Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) at the OECD in Paris I was repeatedly asked informally by other interns why I was not working in the PISA-unit, as I am Finnish. In the very international OECD-frame the Finns were somewhat regarded as people who presumably discussed education policy and practice even on their lunch breaks. More recently I was interviewing policymakers across multiple Nordic countries. When I asked questions about the relevance of quality and performance in education, the interviewees very often turned the question into a matter of PISA, and positioned me as an expert of good quality education because I was from a Finnish university. This was really confusing at times, as it turned the roles in the interview situation upside down.

> Jaakko: During the heyday of Finnish PISA hype, going to conferences abroad often meant answering a series of questions that usually had little to do with your own presentation but rather about validating or debunking theories of Finnish success in the PISA international large-scale assessment. Being a researcher from Finland connotated authority in the topic. In one sense this book is a very long and delayed answer to many of these questions. Then again, it is not: as a researcher interested in Finland, my aim is not to try to explain why children got their answers right to the questions that the OECD thought would be relevant to measure, but rather to understand how education as a societal and political phenomenon works.

At the same time as Finnish education was being lauded, we could see it becoming criticised in a commercially-led 'crisis' account that was just as blinkered as the PISA hype. Piia Seppänen was following this development:

> Piia: Around 2015 I started to research commercial actors that wanted to make products under the slogan of "Finnish education" drawing on PISA tested 'quality'. It was clear that Finland's educational reputation was becoming an international cash-cow but with little concern for the impact within Finland. What also struck me as contradictory was that the commercial actors were often not only celebrating the strengths of Finnish education but criticising schools in Finland as being old-fashioned and in need of change. One side of this

criticism was their aim to open up business opportunities, because the same people making the criticisms also claimed to provide the products and services that would be the solution.

It was apparent to the editors that both the story of Finnish success in PISA results and the growing edu-business criticisms had narrowed down visions for possible critique or problems in the Finnish educational system that were genuinely related to equality and social justice. There was the need for a book that would provide a wide-ranging picture of comprehensive schooling that went beyond the simplistic celebratory or crisis accounts that had dominated Finnish education. This book draws on the critical traditions of sociology and policy studies that have existed all along but have not been given the same limelight as some success stories. It shows that as well as supporting many students in a wonderful way, the Finnish education system also includes points of exclusion, marginalisation and the construction of educational inequalities. The two exist side by side in such a way that the Finnish education system is not a secret nor a miracle either there are just lesser-known sides of the story. Another requirement in the circumstances was that the book would not itself be yet another attempt to make money off the Finnish education 'success story' or the solutions to its supposed shortcomings: hence, we have made it Open Access.

The book was also helped along by an international collaboration that typically crossed 11 time zones. While most of the authors and editors are Finnish, Martin Thrupp is a New Zealand academic who also worked in England for a time. Hosted mainly by the University of Turku, he visited Finland a number of times between 2016 and 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic, attending various conferences and seminars and becoming involved in an Academy of Finland-funded research project on private actors in comprehensive schooling in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand. There were also Erasmus+ mobility programmes and some other opportunities that allowed Martin to travel to Finland and Piia and Sonja (and some of the other contributors to this book) to visit New Zealand:

> Martin: Having worked on New Zealand education policy for years I was looking for something different. Finland captured my imagination as another small country with people who have a similarly self-deprecating and quirky sense of humour as New Zealanders. (The expression *Suomi Mainittu*—'Finland Mentioned' works very much like our own 'World Famous in New Zealand'.) I also found that the academics I was meeting had a refreshingly more critical view of Finnish education than what I had come to expect from my previous reading.

Clearly, a book like this needed detailed knowledge of the potential Finnish authors and these were identified and arranged by the Finnish editors. After that chapters went back and forth across the globe to suit the daytime working hours of whoever was working on the latest draft.

Now that the book is finished, there is always a risk of how it will be used. No matter what we write in this preface, the book's text can be used to support different and even opposing political agendas. Small signals have already emerged that the public narrative of Finnish success is turning into a narrative of past success. This book could be used to argue for the reasons for the decline in learning outcomes. The catch is that whatever the reasons for success or failure are, they are the same. For this

reason, the book is, in our opinion, much-needed. It presents, hopefully in a reader-friendly way, the depth of societally oriented educational research in Finland and helps to navigate the basic mechanisms of schooling in society. If it helps anyone interested in the questions of education to broaden their perspective, it will have served its purpose.

While editing this book, we have seen a number of long-term trends culminating. The COVID-19 outbreak gravely affected societies and their education systems around the globe and raised questions about how the loss of biodiversity is linked to pandemics. In February 2022, Russia escalated its 2014 invasion of Ukraine to an even more ruthless war, which will affect many generations to come. Record heat waves, droughts and flooding are showing how bad climate change already is with present-day carbon emissions. In the face of these momentous developments, it is our challenge as educational researchers, teachers, leaders and policymakers to understand the social and political conditions under which current and future generations will be educated. We can hold on to hope, but we also need realistic accounts such as those provided in this collection to show the way forward.

Hamilton, New Zealand	Martin Thrupp
Turku, Finland	Piia Seppänen
Tampere, Finland	Jaakko Kauko
Helsinki, Finland	Sonja Kosunen
August 2022	

Guide to Endnotes

In this book, we have chosen to use numbered notes at the end of each chapter and these are used for both references and further information. Our intention is that the book can be read with or without looking at the endnotes, depending on the preference of the reader.

Readers who do engage with the endnotes will find an abbreviated approach that we have employed for its brevity but as it is not so common today and we explain it here for readers who are not familiar with it:

op. cit., the work already cited. Look further up the list of endnotes to find the reference by the same author or authors.

Ibid., the same source. The reference is the same as in the endnote immediately above.

et al., and others. This stands in for the multiple authors that will be mentioned in a previous endnote.

Lastly and again because of space constraints, we have not provided English translations for Finnish references in this book. We hope the main text will provide some context of what the reference must be about and for those who need more detail online translation services or a Finnish speaker could be consulted. Many official and academic sources in Finnish also have names and abstracts in Swedish or English, which can be found by searching the title with an internet search engine.

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Martin Thrupp is Professor of Education at the University of Waikato. His research interests are in education policy, especially the lived effects of policy across diverse primary and secondary schools and their communities. He has undertaken related educational research in Europe, especially England, as well as in New Zealand, and has won several awards for his research and publications. He has worked in Finnish education circles since 2016 including visits to Finland in all four seasons. In 2022, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Turku.

Piia Seppänen is Professor of Education, especially on comparative education and education policy at the University of Turku and also works as Vice-Dean for research in its Faculty of Education. Her research with research groups at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE) focusses on pupil selection, urban social segregation and classed practices within comprehensive schooling as well as on commodification in public education systems and its connections to the global education industry.

Jaakko Kauko is Professor of Education Policy at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, where he co-leads the research group EduKnow (Knowledge, Power, and Politics in Education). His research focuses on the fields of education policy and comparative education. He is currently leading the Academy of Finland-funded project 'Transnational Knowledge Networks in Higher Education Policymaking' (KNETS).

Sonja Kosunen is Associate Professor of Education (tenure-track) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, where she leads the research unit Social studies in Urban Education (SURE). Her research focusses on the fields of sociology of education and urban studies. She is currently leading five research projects focusing on diversity, inequality and segregation across early childhood, comprehensive, secondary and higher education.

Contributors

Piia af Ursin Department of Education/Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Venla Bernelius Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Johanna Ennser-Kananen Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Tuuli From Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies, Åbo Akademi University, Vaasa, Finland

Jenni Helakorpi Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Hanna Helander Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland

Ninja Hienonen Centre for Educational Assessment, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Gunilla Holm Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Heidi Huilla Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Markku Jahnukainen Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Tero Järvinen Department of Education/Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Sara Juvonen Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Mira Kalalahti Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Jarmo Kallunki Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Jaakko Kauko Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Pigga Keskitalo Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland

Iida Kiesi Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Erja Kilpeläinen Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Sonja Kosunen Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Elina Lahelma Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Jukka Lehtonen Gender Studies, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Sonia Lempinen Department of Education, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Meri Lintuvuori Centre for Educational Assessment, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Xiaoxu Liu Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Tiina Luoma Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Marja-Liisa Mäkelä Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Reetta Mietola Department of Cultures, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Pia Mikander Department of Education, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Niina Mykrä Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Anna-Maija Niemi Department of Education, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Nina Nivanaho Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Riikka Oittinen Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Terhi Pasu Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Marja Peltola The Unit of Social Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Petteri Hansen Tampere Institute for Advanced Study, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland;
Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, NTNU, Trondheim, Norway

Hannele Pitkänen Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Oren Pizmony-Levy Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

Saila Poulter Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Mikko Puustinen Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Isabel Ramos Lobato Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Inkeri Rissanen Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Taina Saarinen Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Janne Säntti Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Piia Seppänen Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Martin Thrupp Division of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Jenni Tikkanen Department of Education/Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Auli Toom Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Tuija Turunen Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland

Heidi Vaarala Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Janne Varjo Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Chapter 1
Introduction

Martin Thrupp, Piia Seppänen, Jaakko Kauko, and Sonja Kosunen

Over recent decades, the Finnish education system has become regarded by many as the best in the world, generating international fascination. An obvious manifestation of this has been the rise of 'PISA tourism'. Finland topped some of the first round of the OECD's PISA international testing programme in 2001 and over the subsequent decade international delegations increasingly flew into Helsinki, Finland's capital, for brief visits intended to find out the secret of Finland's success. Many Helsinki schools were getting international visitors on an almost daily basis. More than a decade later politicians, policymakers, educators and business investors from around the globe continue to show interest in many of the specific features of the Finnish education system, for instance the way that children don't start school until they are older than in most countries, and the general absence of high-stakes testing. Sometimes these are still discussed in relation to PISA success, but for many countries Finland also just acts as the exotic 'other': a reference society that allows those in other parts of the world to imagine a different kind of education system.[1]

Unsurprisingly, there have been plenty of texts extolling the virtues of Finland's education system. Pasi Sahlberg's books on *Finnish Lessons* are best known, and have

M. Thrupp (✉)
Division of Education, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand
e-mail: thrupp@waikato.ac.nz

P. Seppänen
Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: piia.seppanen@utu.fi

J. Kauko
Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Åkerlundinkatu 5, 33014 Tampere, Finland
e-mail: jaakko.kauko@tuni.fi

S. Kosunen
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: sonja.kosunen@helsinki.fi

underpinned his work 'on the circuit' explaining Finnish education to international audiences.[2] There are also a number of others, often written by international visitors to Finland, for instance Eduardo Andere.[3] Academic accounts are also written having Finland's education success in mind, for instance Hannu Simola's anthology *Finnish Education Mystery*[4] with a sociology of education perspective and Hannele Niemi, Auli Toom and Arto Kallioniemi's edited volume *Miracle of Education*[5] focusing on pedagogical aspects. This edited book, subtitled 'Unvarnished insights into Finnish schooling', has a distinctive purpose compared to all of these. With a focus mainly on comprehensive schooling for 7 to 15-year-olds, the editors and authors, who are nearly all academics in Finnish universities,[6] offer a 'warts and all' account of education in Finland. The perspective is contemporary and is not an attempt to explain the success of an education system, but to provide a nuanced analysis of its problems and possibilities. The 28 chapters here cover diverse aspects of comprehensive schooling in Finland, and all of them are intent on addressing the challenges facing education in this Nordic country in a rigorous and balanced way.

A Sociological and Education Policy Perspective on Finland

Why are we writing such a book, you might ask? Is it an attempt to tarnish Finland's educational reputation? The impetus for the book came from concern that the grand international narrative on Finnish education seems to be disproportionate. There are some details that have become explanations of Finnish education success, but which seem irrelevant or superficial based on Finnish research and scholarship. Then there are long trajectories and large societal shifts forming education that are disregarded in the international debates due to their complexity and lengthy timeframes. They are just too difficult to sum up in a catchphrase or a slogan.

It is important to recognise that stories of success and problems in an education system are not mutually exclusive. There are rich stories reported through research: that the foundational idea of equality in Finnish comprehensive education has been undermined by policies de facto pushing segregation between and inside schools; that the schools' success can be explained with a history of institutional robustness and political compromises; that edu-business is changing the landscape of public education in Finland.[7] If, based on these observations, we were to conclude that education in Finland is a success or failure, we would be oversimplifying the matter. We need to look at how the comprehensive school system has developed with regards to social justice and its outcomes, which can be measured either by learning outcomes and skills (as in PISA), which are often translated into 'quality' in the public discussion, or through measures of equality of opportunity, which relate to questions of systemic differentiation and stratification.

Another concern that gave rise to this book is that many of the key problems in public and political debates over "Finnish education" derive from methodological nationalism.[8] This is the viewpoint that informs international large-scale assessments, PISA being the most obvious example, which build an understanding of

different nations competing with each other in the international forum and the possibility of ranking their order. Yet something being Finnish does not make it a success or failure. Indeed, the proposition of a wholesale national success and failure is oversimplifying and artificial, and thus mostly uninteresting for research. Rejecting methodological nationalism, we pay more attention to schools, as sociological and political phenomena. In this book the focus is certainly on contexts, including national contexts, but we are wary of being too interested in the uniqueness of Finland or whatever we think that is. Hence this book is not only about Finland, rather it highlights how education is enacted in policies and practices in Finland. It draws on a more universal sociology and politics of education and to some extent on comparative education.

Finally, we are also concerned about the motives for the utopian account of Finland's education system, as well as its impact. Put simply, there is money to be made in peddling a glossy version of any successful approach to education, in this case Finnish. Individuals, institutions and indeed nations, including Finland and those it exports to, all benefit financially from overlooking complexity and contradiction. But as the chapters here will often illustrate, ignoring such detail causes many problems for students, teachers and others in Finland, as well as in countries around the world where products and services sold under "Finnish education" get applied uncritically and without enough attention to the local context or vernacular into which they are being enacted. We hope this book will also give insights into the field of travelling policies and practices and the educational export of any education: how deep one needs to look in order to understand the construction of an education system, and what needs to be accounted for when adopting policies and practices into other contexts. The contributors to this book shed light on the mechanisms that are embedded in the Finnish setting.

General Background to Finnish Schooling

What is now described as Finland was forged in the fault line of the Swedish empire in the west and the Russian empire in the east. When Russia took the land area from Sweden in 1809, there was a need to soothe the new subjects by giving Finland the status of an autonomous archduchy. The church-led education during the Swedish rule was expanded and secularized during the Russian era. Finland gained independence in 1917 in the turmoil of the Russian revolution. The moderate expansion of formal education was heavily boosted by industrialisation. The era after the Second World War saw the rise of a Nordic-style welfare state and the economic growth was able to support expansion of education at all levels.[9] Finland joined the European Union in 1995 and started using the Euro in 2002. Following global trends, the 1990s were also a sea change in Finnish education, recognised in historical and policy research.[10] Finland started to become influenced by the market-liberalist view of equity which emphasised "difference among pupils and everybody's right to receive schooling that fits his or her capacities, needs and individuality".[11] This

challenged the social-democratic agrarian tradition of equality in Finland, with its emphasis on similarity of pupils and the right to receive education independently of background. At the time of writing, policy borrowing in the Finnish education system has remained limited, in contrast to the dramatic marketisation developments in the Swedish or Estonian education systems, for instance. The Finnish system remains largely organised according to the equality idea: education is universally provided and funded by the state. While the Finnish education system is still managing relatively well in reaching this goal,[12] the chapters in this book along with previous research and scholarship by these authors and others illustrates that inequality remains a problem in relation to socio-economic and class backgrounds, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, language and special educational needs. Inequality often reflects multiple of these dimensions and varies across different urban and rural geographic settings within Finland as well.

The main focus of this book is on comprehensive schooling. The relationship between the state and its 309 municipalities (in 2022) forms the basic frame for the education system in Finland. According to legislation Finnish municipalities provide the comprehensive schooling from age 7–15, any other arrangement needs specific clearance by the state and in practice are mostly supervised by municipalities. (The proportion of fully-subsidised independent schools, typically Christian or Steiner, is less than 3% of all provision). The legal frameworks for setting the educational aims and managing the outcomes are uniform, but due to the municipal autonomy the state cannot interfere with municipal autonomy through decrees and thus its statutory power is limited in relation to implementation. The main means of national steering take place via the core curriculum, division of lesson hours by subjects, quality evaluation and funding. The state frames the core curriculum with the help of professional teachers, a professional culture is emphasised given the fact that there are no mandatory standardized tests or inspections. Quality evaluation draws on soft tools: education providers are required to evaluate their education and they are also subjected to national evaluations with a development purpose. Funding is the strongest steering mechanism in the state's toolbox: it is largely limited to the non-earmarked lump sum distributed to municipalities as well as project-based funding.[13]

In 2020, there were 2130 comprehensive schools in Finland. Comprehensive schooling typically educates children in primary schools (ages 7–12) and lower secondary schools (ages 13–15) but more than a fifth of them (471 schools) teach across all year levels.[14] In the primary phase children generally study with the same class teacher throughout their school week whereas in lower secondary there are subject-specific teachers in all disciplines. There are training schools for teacher education that are controlled by universities.

Recent Debates Over Finnish Schooling

Discussion of Finnish schooling in recent times has taken place at a variety of levels, these sometimes interact and sometimes ignore each other. Here we first characterise the place of Finland in global policy debates, second, consider the popular and policy debates about schooling that go on within Finland, and third, note some of the concerns of Finnish educational researchers and scholars, such as those who have contributed to this book.

As noted earlier, much of the discussion of Finnish schooling from a global perspective over the last two decades has been around its stellar PISA results and what might cause them. Compared with other countries and regions, Finland was first in PISA in reading (2001), mathematics (2003), and science (2006) and then dipped slightly in reading to second (2009), in science to fifth (2015), and more dramatically in mathematics to twelfth (2012).[15] By 2018, Finland had dropped further in science to ninth, while reading and mathematics did not change much but did not improve either. While these declining results have caused some consternation within Finland, the international discussion quickly moved on to other countries and regions that were now topping the PISA league tables, for instance Estonia.[16] Such is what Margaret Brown has called the "Tyranny of the international horse race".[17] The authors in this book would often argue that losing the PISA crown provides an opportunity for a less-hyped consideration of the advantages and challenges facing Finnish education.

Some accounts over the last few years have continued to extoll the virtues of the Finnish school system. There have been new editions of Pasi Sahlberg's book *Finnish Lessons* mentioned earlier, as well as academic and more popular articles written from outside Finland and reporting favourably on features of Finnish education.[18] There have also been some international critiques.[19] What is interesting about some of the critiques is the way they have sought to discount the academic performance and progressive elements of Finnish schooling as a means of undermining those who use the case of Finland to argue against the excesses of neo-liberal education policies elsewhere. For instance Gabriel Sahlgren's monograph about Finnish education[20] is published by the Centre for Policy Studies, described on its website as "Britain's leading centre-right think tank … founded in 1974 by Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher, and … responsible for developing the bulk of the policy agenda that became known as Thatcherism".[21] It has the mission 'to develop a new generation of conservative thinking, built around promoting enterprise, ownership and prosperity'.[22] Together with colleagues, one of us (Jaakko), has been involved in debating with the viewpoints of Sahlgren in Finnish and Swedish media[23] as well as when teaching UK students, which is indicative of the power of a 'counter' narrative in the media. It is not just the assemblage of ideas expressed in international critiques of Finnish education that are important, but how they are subsequently used. One of us (Martin) has experienced a policy analyst at a right-wing think tank drawing on a blog by a cognitive psychologist to argue that Finland's success in reading tests was only because the Finnish language was significantly less complex than English. On

further investigation the blogpost included commentary that disputed this claim but this critique had been ignored.[24]

Some ways that Finland has recently become involved in global educational debates may be less expected. One is the form of some of the Finnish state's involvement in international bodies. For example, the first OECD "Global Education Industry Summit", an event being held annually, was hosted in Helsinki in 2015. This enthusiasm for edu-business was not inconsistent with the centre-right Sipilä Government in power in Finland at the time but it is not what many people would associate with Finnish education. Similarly, there are Finnish private actors who are reaching out to the globe. One example, HundrED, originated as a Finnish organisation with a social enterprise model: using business principles and practices to try to "help improve education through impactful innovations" nationally and internationally.[25] In 2017, when Finland was celebrating a century of independence, HundrED sought 100 educational innovations from around the world. The international innovations it chose were primarily private companies or consultants or social enterprises rather than an endorsement of innovations that originated within public education systems. It is clear that private actors like HundrED gain unwarranted advantage from being associated with Finland's reputation for having a strong public education system: again it is not what global audiences would usually have in mind when they think about Finland's famous education system.[26]

Within Finland there is also much interest in education amongst the public and in political and policy discussions. There have been various working groups to develop comprehensive schooling in Finland over the last decade, involving an extensive range of societal actors, including academics (one of us, Piia, has been involved in them all, Sonja in the most recent one). These groups have also involved different type of public hearings. For example, over 2014–2015 the Ministry of Education and Culture's *Basic education of the future—Let's turn the trend!* appointed a working group on "the flagship themes" competence and learning and motivation and teaching. This group, including 45 professors and researchers from various fields of education, put together a description of the current status of basic education, the phenomena associated with it and possible reasons for deteriorating learning outcomes. Development proposals were published as "Tomorrow's comprehensive school".[27] This work also had a steering group that contained representatives of the eight parliamentary parties and the Trade Union of Education in Finland, the Association of Finnish Principals, the Association of Finnish Independent Education Employers, the Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Finnish Parents' League, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children as well as secondary level student organisations. As part of the project, the Ministry of Education and Culture organised a national web-based survey in 2014, in which nearly 7000 people took part[28] and six regional events in cities to foster extensive public discussion on the future of basic education. This was followed by various similar groups during the next government and also the current one. At the time of writing the centre-left Marin Government had put out public consultation for an education policy report with broad aims to reform education policy and a report was being considered by the Finnish Parliament.[29] In short,

Finnish education policy processes are characterised by a great deal of consultation and discussion with different stakeholders, even if the outcomes of this openness to a range of perspectives is nearly always uncertain.

Global and national discussions about Finnish schooling do not always draw on Finnish educational research and scholarly work. Yet Finland has a significant work-force of educational researchers based mainly at its 14 universities. There is a Finnish Educational Research Association (FERA) and a number of Finnish educational journals. It is a lively scholarly community comprising experienced researchers and good numbers of emerging scholars and doctoral students as well, with many represented in this book.

Finland's educational scholars have discussed Finnish schooling from numerous sociological and political angles. The history has been examined in relation to greater societal trends such as industrialization,[30] as a struggle for equality,[31] a continuous debate of a few central dilemmas,[32] or in terms of the different epochs of time.[33] Education policy is analysed from a system perspective[34] or from the point of view of dynamics formed in history and discourses,[35] and through the differentiations such as gender.[36] There is also increasing interest in the relationship between urban segregation and school segregation.[37]

Globally speaking, Finland is a privileged place to teach and learn in schools. Societal settings are generally designed to support an egalitarian society and highly trained professionals work every day in schools educating and raising children. To ward off future problems, we need an understanding of emergent problems. This collection avoids simple solutions, and also seeks to broaden the debate on what constitutes good education. In Finland, as elsewhere, it is much more than is measured by global tests. Each chapter in this book offers nuanced analysis and opens up the complexities of education and the way they require long-term political programmes, skilled professionals, a broad take on society, good resourcing, and a critical understanding of the current situation.

In this book, chapters refer to equality, equity and social justice in many ways. The Finnish language has three words for describing how people are related to others in terms of economic, social, and other resources: *tasa-arvo, yhdenvertaisuus* and *oikeudenmukaisuus*, and they all intersect differently with similar English words. In the public debate in Finland these three concepts could all be referred to by a single word in Finnish, tasa-arvo. However, there are more specific concepts used in research for these. Equality can be translated either as tasa-arvo or yhdenvertaisuus in Finnish, jämställdhet in Swedish (particularly as in gender equality). Equity as a concept has developed throughout the years, referring to an equal or fair share of goods according to one's need. It could as well be called tasa-arvo in Finnish and jämlikhet in Swedish. As the categories based on which socially-just division of resources could emerge have increased only from binary gender into more intersectional approaches in research, the use of equity has increased during the past years. Social justice is easily translated into sosiaalinen oikeudenmukaisuus in Finnish and social rättvisa in Swedish, but it may sometimes be used in parallel with equity in the debate. In short the conceptual debate between equality, equity and social justice is somewhat fluid and continually developing in the Finnish context, and there is a lot of context

dependency between these concepts in the Finnish research literature, which is also a feature of this book.

The Chapters in This Book

After this introductory chapter the book proceeds as follows. Part One 'Politics, policy, teachers and edu-business' looks at a range of areas that are relevant to Finnish comprehensive schooling as a whole. The emphasis here is on understanding the workings of the system and recognising that many national patterns and processes are not as straightforward nor successful as the mythology around Finnish education would often suggest.

Opening this section, Mira Kalalahti and Janne Varjo challenge any simple view of Finnish schooling as monolithic (Chap. 2). They look at the changing relationship between national decision-making and authority and that which occurs at the more local level in municipalities. Kalalahti and Varjo illustrate that local governance at municipality level has become more important in Finland over time but that municipalities also differ widely in size and approach. This leads them to suggest that the previously more uniform education system is transforming into diverse local systems with important challenges for equality and fairness. This chapter contains descriptions of three municipalities which highlight some of the diverse circumstances under which Finnish schooling is provided.

In Chap. 3, Jarmo Kallunki, Jaakko Kauko and Oren Pizmony-Levy discuss Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture and provide insights into policy-making processes within it. They analyse the membership of the working groups that the Ministry of Education and Culture now often uses to undertake policy work, having moved away from a committee model. The analysis by Kallunki and colleagues indicates the strong role of external working group members especially in linking between departments. This invites new questions about the application of networked governance and New Public Management in Finnish education policymaking. Again, it is an analysis which calls into question widely held views of how Finnish education policy gets made.

Finland's education union, OAJ, is the focus of Chap. 4. Here Nina Nivanaho and Martin Thrupp ask whether OAJ influences Finnish education policy as it claims to given there has been little evidence of it contesting government policy in any overt way. To look at this they review education policy during the period of the centre-right Sipilä Government in power in Finland from 2015–19 and investigate the interests and responses of the OAJ over the same period. Nivanaho and Thrupp suggest that the OAJ prefers to work 'inside the tent', a positioning which Finnish educational politics continues to encourage and makes extensive provision for. This in turn reflects the way consensus-seeking remains key to political success in Finland.

Hannele Pitkänen looks at Finland's distinctive quality evaluation discourse in Chap. 5. Instead of high-stakes approaches to testing or monitoring, the Finnish approach to quality evaluation rests mainly on sample-based testing approaches and

self-evaluations undertaken in municipalities and schools. Nevertheless, Pitkänen's analysis shows that the more typical approaches to quality evaluation seen internationally are also under discussion in Finland and she questions the extent to which the Finnish system will be able to continue to resist the power of global quality evaluation discourses. This chapter provides a reminder that while the Finnish education system is often distinctive, it is by no means immune to international pressures.

At a time of environmental crisis across the planet, Chap. 6 by Niina Mykrä is about the way Finnish comprehensive schools are being steered towards global goals of sustainability education. She argues that Finnish government policies and Finland's national core curriculum for basic education have a range of weaknesses in relation to sustainability education that mean that they often fail to translate into concrete actions by the time they become enacted in the day-to-day life of Finnish schools. Mykrä argues for better steering that enables ecological sustainability as a more comprehensive activity in schools: multi-voiced, multidisciplinary, and multilevel.

The Finnish approach to teacher education is examined by Janne Säntti, Mikko Puustinen and Petteri Hansen (Chap. 7). They question the notion of Finnish teacher education being research based and discuss how this has alienated teacher education from the day-to-day work of schools and has led to the decline of contextual studies within teacher education. Finally, Säntti and colleagues discuss Finnish teacher education in the changing context of university work. Overall this chapter provides a view that is far from the hype around Finnish teacher education which has occurred within the context of Finland's PISA success story.

Sara Juvonen and Auli Toom are also concerned with teaching and teacher education in Finland in Chap. 8. They provide a think-piece about the relationship between teachers and Finnish society as a whole. The focus is on expectations: Finnish societal expectations of teaching as a profession and the expectations of teachers themselves, often drawing on their own experiences as students in schools. Juvonen and Toom question whether Finnish teacher education prepares teachers enough to assume their teacher role in Finnish society and to keep up with continual changes in the field of education.

In Chap. 9, Piia Seppänen, Iida Kiesi, Sonia Lempinen and Nina Nivanaho look at the rise of edu-business in Finnish comprehensive schooling. Although Finland has a reputation for having the most public of education systems, they show that government collaboration with edu-business positions comprehensive schooling as a tool for a platform economy and a place where profit can be made. Drawing on interviews with key commercial actors, Seppänen and colleagues go on to investigate the rationalities, logics and modes of operation of edu-business in Finland and argue that this is a space that needs to be watched very carefully as it threatens democracy and Finland's commitment to public education.

Iida Kiesi further investigates the relationship of commercial actors and public actors in edu-business in the final chapter in this first part of the book (Chap. 10). Kiesi illustrates how edu-business networks that cross and blur the boundaries between public and private are the key to understanding how edu-business impacts education policy in Finland. She concludes that the shift to network governance is a matter

of concern because such networks lack commitment to transparent decision-making and accountability to the public.

Part Two 'Equity, inequality and the challenges of diversity, language and inclusion' begins with a focus on social class inequality and segregation within and between schools in a series of chapters that show Finnish educational provision is grappling with its own versions of these international problems. This is followed by numerous chapters that look at particular populations and contexts in Finnish education, all of them raising the need for greater social justice in the areas under discussion. Part Two concludes with several chapters about inclusion, another area in which Finland is generally perceived to have great strengths but where there are further important problems and gaps between perception and practice.

In Chap. 11 Venla Bernelius and Sonja Kosunen draw on their long-term research in the Helsinki area to provide a wide-ranging picture of how residential segregation and processes of school choice create significant and growing inequalities between schools in urban Finland. They argue that processes operating at a range of macro and more micro levels create vicious circles of segregation where segregation in schools and neighbourhoods feed into each other. Their research demonstrates that not even a relatively egalitarian educational system with high overall quality of schools is entirely shielded from segregation tendencies and they argue this may lead to a decline in equality and greater risks of educational exclusion.

Piia Seppänen, Terhi Pasu and Sonja Kosunen examine the wide range of pupil selection processes used in urban Finland in Chap. 12. They examine how urban comprehensive schools select and track their pupils through different admission criteria for teaching classes within schools. Selection processes for admission to emphasised teaching classes are fiercely competitive with schools not just evaluating pupils' aptitudes for certain subjects but applying wider criteria. Such approaches to including or excluding students reinforce social and economic inequalities in Finnish schools and society.

Everyday life in schools in disadvantaged areas is the topic researched by Marja Peltola, Heidi Huilla, Tiina Luoma and Riikka Oittinen (Chap. 13). They add to our understanding of the effects of segregation using interview data with students at five comprehensive schools in Helsinki. Drawing on the idea that most youth represent their lives as ordinary rather than adopting 'in-risk' positions, they argue that young people are attached to their residential areas and schools despite their awareness of local problems and inequalities. Their work highlights the need to understand the particularities and connections between schools and residential areas in discussions of segregation and attempts to address it.

In Chap. 14 Isabel Ramos Lobato and Venla Bernelius look at needs-based resource allocation as an important policy response to segregation used in Helsinki. They suggest that in a segregating society, the traditional egalitarian and universal "same level for all" approach of Finnish education no longer works so well. Rather the Finnish education system needs stronger support mechanisms that systematically allocate resources towards the individual needs of schools. Although they raise various problems of enacting such a policy, Ramos Lobato and Bernelius also report

favourable effects on pupils' learning. They suggest that targetting resource allocation schemes to disadvantaged schools is one way to counteract the risk of deepening cycles of educational segregation, deprivation, and inequality.

Tero Järvinen, Jenni Tikkanen and Piia af Ursin examine the significance of socioeconomic background for the educational dispositions and aspirations of Finnish school leavers in Chap. 15. Drawing on a study of 15-year-old lower secondary school students in the city of Turku and surrounding municipalities, they find that students with high-level literacy skills have positive dispositions towards learning and education despite their socioeconomic background but that this is not the case with educational aspirations. Järvinen and colleagues argue that self-exclusion of gifted low socio-economic status Finnish students from higher education decreases their future labour market opportunities and outcomes and also means a loss of potentially talented and skillful employees.

Recounting developments during a long academic career, Elina Lahelma provides a wideranging account of the history of gender discourses in education in Finland (Chap. 16). Supported by the first equality projects, gender research in Finnish education took the first steps in the late 1980s. A constant task was to challenge the simple juxtaposition of girls and boys that is sometimes evident in the concerns about boys' achievements. Using numerous bodies of data as well as her own experiences, Lahelma describes and analyses the interlinked histories of gender equality work, feminist studies in education, and the boy discourse, and provides reflections on change and sustainability in Finnish education policies.

In Chap. 17 Jukka Lehtonen looks at sexualities and gender diversity in Finnish schools, questioning the utopian image of Finnish education system as a 'rainbow paradise'. He discusses legislation, curricula, teachers, school textbooks, experiences of non-heterosexual, trans and intersex youth as well as LGBTI human rights organisations' work and the influence of COVID-19. Lehtonen notes several advancements in acknowledging sexual and gender diversity within Finnish education but points to serious everyday problems remaining for making schools safe for LGBTI students and teachers and treating everyone equally despite their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

Pia Mikander provides an analysis of racism in Finnish history, social science and geography school textbooks in Chap. 18. She finds that, in a range of ways, many portray the West as superior to the rest of the world. History textbook passages sometimes include images of racist caricatures to show the explicit racism of an era but Mikander asks whether they really belong in history teaching if they do not encourage a discussion about continued racism. Using textbooks with racist content requires that teachers are aware of racism and able to safely lead critical reflection. Particularly during a pandemic, when students are alone with textbooks, there is a concern about the democratic task of educating for anti-racism.

Hanna Helander, Pigga Keskitalo and Tuija Turunen look at Saami language online education (Chap. 19). After centuries of assimilation policies the teaching of Saami languages has begun to receive government support. The main challenge at present is to avoid the continuing loss of language. This chapter showcases how Saami languages are regaining their status via maintenance and revitalisation measures.

It also demonstrates Saami online language education as a solution for children and young people living outside the Saami homeland in the North. Helander and colleagues argue that starting to recognise Saami language education as an opportunity and a resource rather than a problem would be a key shift in language attitudes needed for comprehensive education based on social justice for Saami children and young people in Finland.

In Chap. 20 Jenni Helakorpi, Gunilla Holm and Xiaoxu Liu focus on the education of pupils with a migrant background in Finland. The chapter begins by discussing the structural issues and mechanisms behind the lower academic performance and poorer health of the pupils categorised as "pupils with migrant background" compared to other pupils in Finnish schools. Not only do migrant students and students with migrant background perform more poorly, but they are also bullied more in school. Helakorpi and colleagues treat the findings of inequalities between pupils with and without a migrant background as symptoms of a systemic failure not of failing students, families or teachers. They draw on critical race and whiteness theories and intersectionality research to argue the need for analysis of structural racism and an intersectional analysis of race, racialisation, whiteness, gender and social class in Finnish schools and society.

Marja-Liisa Mäkelä and Mira Kalalahti discuss immigrant origin girls and post-compulsory educational transition in Finland in Chap. 21. They conceptualise educational decisions as negotiations where families, teachers, counsellors and peers try to push adolescents to choose educational paths they see valued and preferred, and away from the choices they see as unfitting or less valued. Mäkelä and Kalalahti also illustrate with three 'transitional stories' the key challenges that girls with immigrant backgrounds encounter when making their educational decisions and integrating to education: structural boundaries, social boundaries and acculturation.

Johanna Ennser-Kananen, Erja Kilpeläinen, Taina Saarinen and Heidi Vaarala have written about access myths in language education policy in Finland (Chap. 22). They seek to debunk three myths: that multilingualism is politically valued, that the curriculum promotes multilingual education, and that the Finnish education system offers equal opportunities to all, regardless of language. Ennser-Kananen and colleagues conclude with a mixed picture. While relevant initiatives have been put in place, the societal status of national languages and constitutional bilingualism have also strengthened monolingual ideologies. They propose reforms in teacher education and a more systematic, long term, national supervision of (language) education policy to achieve equitable multilingual education.

In Chap. 23 Tuuli From looks at how Finland is an officially bilingual country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Within this language context the separation of Swedish- and Finnish-medium schools has been presented as a precondition for protecting Swedish language. Nevertheless in both Finnish-medium and Swedish-medium schools, the linguistic backgrounds of pupils are increasingly diverse. In the past decade, an increasing demand for bilingual educational solutions has emerged and discourses of profit and commodification of language are starting to unfold. From concludes that the question of state bilingualism in Finnish schooling may be heading towards increasing differentiation in relation to the national languages.

Inkeri Rissanen and Saila Poulter discuss "the problem" of religions and worldviews in Finnish schools in Chap. 24. They introduce the foundations of worldview education in Finnish basic education, and analyse negotiations about the inclusion of worldview plurality in the every-day life of schools. Rissanen and Saila Poulter argue that, despite the official multiculturalist and inclusivist ideals, unrecognised monoculturalism prevails in Finnish schools as majority worldviews are not seen as worldviews but deemed universal and therefore neutral. While more superficial cultural differences are celebrated, recognition of diversity at a more profound level would demand willingness to question the universality of the core values and ideals of the education system.

Markku Jahnukainen, Ninja Hienonen, Meri Lintuvuori and Sonia Lempinen provide an analysis of inclusion in the Finnish school system (Chap. 25). There are problems around defining inclusion as well as a quite polarised debate about putting students with support needs in regular classrooms. Jahnukainen and colleagues discuss the historical development of Finnish inclusion and contrast myths and realities of the Finnish model in supporting students with support needs in the light of international trends in inclusive and special education. They also discuss possible future trends of inclusive education in Finland.

In Chap. 26 Anna-Maija Niemi and Reetta Mietola also look at inclusion especially the divide between special and mainstream education in the Finnish education system. Drawing on six studies to do with educational choice-making and pedagogical arrangements and practices, they analyse how this divide runs through educational experiences, opportunities and pathways of students receiving special education. Niemi and Mietola illustrate how distinct educational cultures make it challenging to move across the divide of special and mainstream education, and that this divide contributes to students understanding of themselves as learners.

Piia af Ursin, Jenni Tikkanen, Markku Vanttaja and Tero Järvinen are concerned with student disengagement in Finland's comprehensive schools in Chap. 27. Students who disengage from school are at risk of a range of adverse outcomes and may leave school early. Various findings about Finnish students' school engagement have raised concerns along with the question of why Finnish students repeatedly rank lowly in international comparisons of happiness at school. This chapter draws on a range of research and survey data to better understand student disengagement. af Ursin and colleagues characterise the process of student disengagement and argue that it is crucial to identify early signs of disengagement and individual, social, and institutional factors associated with it.

Finally, by way of an epilogue, the editors report a roundtable discussion with emeriti professors Sirkka Ahonen, Ari Antikainen, Leena Koski, Elina Lahelma, Risto Rinne and Hannu Simola (Chap. 28). These very experienced academics were asked about the greatest achievement of societally-oriented educational research in Finland as well as their biggest disappointment or mistake in this line of research. The resulting conversation is full of insights into the historical roots of critical studies of Finnish education particularly sociology, politics, and the history of education. The rich discussion also provides a moment to pause and reflect before thinking about schooling in the years to come.

Overall, this book, drawing on more than 50 educational researchers and focussed on Finland, provides an important corrective to the over-celebratory accounts of the last two decades. We hope it contributes to educational debate both within Finland and internationally, and that it plays an important role in creating more insightful perspectives on schooling in this Nordic nation.

Notes

1. See Waldow, F. 2019. Introduction: Projection in education policy-making. In *Understanding PISA's attractiveness*, ed. F. Waldow and G. Steiner-Khamsi, 1–21. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
2. Sahlberg, P. 2011. *Finnish lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* New York: Teachers College Press.
    Sahlberg, P. 2015. *Finnish lessons 2.0: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* New York: Teachers College Press.
    Sahlberg, P. 2021. *Finnish lessons 3.0: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* New York: Teachers College Press.
    See also Sahlberg, P., and T.D. Walker. 2021. *In teachers we trust: The Finnish way to world-class schools.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
3. Andere, E. 2014. *Teachers' perspectives on Finnish school education: Creating learning environments.* Gewerbestrasse: Springer.
4. Simola, H. 2017. *The Finnish education mystery. Historical and sociological essays on schooling in Finland.* London: Routledge.
5. Niemi, H., A. Toom, and A. Kallioniemi. eds. 2015. *Miracle of education. The principles and practices of teaching and learning in Finnish schools.* Rotterdam: Sense.
6. Martin Thrupp is a New Zealand academic but has worked with Finnish educational researchers for several years, see preface.
7. For school choice policy see for instance Seppänen, P. 2006. *Koulunvalintapolitiikka perusopetuksessa: Suomalaiskaupunkien koulumarkkinat kansainvälisessä valossa.* Research in Educational Sciences 26. Turku: Finnish Educational Research Association.
    Also Kosunen, S. 2016. *Families and the social space of school choice in urban Finland.* Institute of Behavioural Sciences, Studies in Educational Sciences 267. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
    For the history of institutional robustness and political compromises see Kauko, J. 2019a. The Finnish comprehensive school: Conflicts, compromises, and institutional robustness. In *Great policy successes: How governments get it right in a big way at least some of the time*, eds. P. t' Hart and M.E. Compton, 122–142. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198843719.003.0007.
    For edu-business in Finland see Seppänen, P., M. Thrupp, and S. Lempinen. 2020. Edu-business in Finnish schooling. In *Privatisation and commercialisation in public education: How the public nature of schooling is changing,* eds. A. Hogan and G. Thomson, 101–118. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429330025-9
8. Wimmer, A., and N. Glick Schiller. 2002. Methodological nationalism and beyond: Nation–state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks* 2: 301–334.
9. See Leino-Kaukiainen, P., and A. Heikkinen. 2011.'Yhteiskunta ja koulutus'. In *Valistus ja koulunpenkki. Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa 1860-luvulta 1960-luvulle,* eds. A. Heikkinen and P. Leino-Kaukiainen, 16–33. Helsinki: SKS.
10. E.g., Ahonen, S. 2003. Yhteinen koulu: Tasa-arvoa vai tasapäisyyttä? Tampere: Vastapaino.
    Lampinen, O. 2003. *Suomen koulutusjärjestelmän kehitys,* 3rd ed. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
    Simola, H., J. Kauko, J. Varjo, M. Kalalahti, and F. Sahlström. 2017. *Dynamics in education politics. Understanding and explaining the Finnish case.* London: Routledge.

11. Ibid., p. 33.

12. Kauko 2019a, op. cit.

13. See Kauko, J. 2019b. Government, policy, and the role of the state in Primary education (Finland). In *Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies*, eds. J. Kauko, I. Menter, and M.T. Tatto. London, UK: Bloomsbury.

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15. Kauko 2019a, op. cit., p. 125.

16. Jeffreys, B 2020. Pisa rankings: Why Estonian pupils shine in global tests. https://www.bbc.com/news/education-50590581. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

17. Brown, M. 1998. Tyranny of the international horse race. In *School effectiveness for whom?* eds. R. Slee and G. Weiner, with S. Tomlinson, 33–47. London and Bristol, PA: Falmer.

18. Nauman, A.D. 2018. Could it ever happen here? Reflections on Finnish education and culture. i.e.: *Inquiry in Education* 10(1). https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/ie/vol10/iss1/7.

19. Sahlgren, G. H. 2015. *Real Finnish lessons: The true story of an education superpower*. London: Centre for Policy Studies.
    Oates, T. 2015. *Finnish fairy stories.* Cambridge Assessment. https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/insights/finish-fairy-stories-tim-oates/. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

20. Sahlgren, op. cit.

21. https://www.cps.org.uk/about/

22. Ibid.

23. Kauko, J., and F. Sahlström. 2015. Pisa-valttimme on koulujen välisten erojen kapeus. *Finnish daily newspaper Helsingin Sanomat*, 21.11.2015.
    Kalalahti, M., J. Kauko, F. Sahlström, and J. Varjo. 2015. För snabba slutsatser om finska skolan. *Swedish daily newspaper Dagens nyheter*. 24.4.2015.

24. See http://www.danielwillingham.com/daniel-willingham-science-and-education-blog/the-pirls-reading-result-better-than-you-may-realize. Accessed 23 Jan 2022.

25. https://hundred.org/en#d7451a49 Accessed 23 Jan 2022.

26. Thrupp, M. 2018. Does private education actor HundrED gain advantage from Finland's global example? Paper given at JUSTED conference 22–23 May, Helsinki.

27. Ouakrim-Soivio, N., A. Rinkinen, and T. Karjalainen, T. eds. 2015. *Tulevaisuuden peruskoulu—Uuteen nousuun! Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö* 2015:8. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-340-8. Accessed 23 Jan 2022.

28. Almost one half of the respondents were guardians of pupils. In addition to structured questions, the survey contained three open-ended questions. In the over 15,000 freely worded responses received in total, as strengths of the Finnish basic education came up openness of education, offering equal opportunities to all pupils regardless of their background, and basic education provided free of charge. In addition, the teachers' high standard of education, motivation and strong professional competence were highlighted in the responses. (Ouakrim-Soivio, Rinkinen, and Karjalainen, 2015).

29. Ministry of Education and Culture. n.d. *Consultation round for the education policy report, aiming to ensure access to education and educational quality and equality.* https://minedu.fi/en/-/consultation-round-for-the-education-policy-report-aiming-to-ensure-access-to-education-and-educational-quality-and-equality. Accessed 16 Jan 2022.
    Eduskunta. Sivistysvaliokunta. Valtioneuvoston koulutuspoliittinen selonteko. Valiokunnan mietintö SiVM 19/2021 vp VNS 1/2021 vp.
    https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Mietinto/Sivut/SiVM_19+2021.aspx Accessed 7 Jan 2022.

30. Leino-Kaukiainen and Heikkinen, op. cit.

31. Ahonen, op. cit.

32. Salminen, J. 2012. *Koulun pirulliset dilemmat.* Helsinki: Teos.

33. Lampinen, op. cit.

34. E.g., Lehtisalo, L., and R. Raivola. 1999. *Koulutus ja koulutuspolitiikka 2000-luvulle.* Porvoo: WSOY.
35. Kauko, J. 2011. *Korkeakoulupolitiikan dynamiikat Suomessa.* Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto. Simola et al., op. cit.
36. E.g., Mietola, R., E. Lahelma, S. Lappalainen, and T. Palmu. eds. 2005. *Kohtaamisia kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen kentillä: Erontekoja ja yhdessä tekemistä.* Suomen kasvatusti-eteellinen seura.
37. E.g., Bernelius, V. H., and M.K. Vaattovaara. 2016. Choice and segregation in the "most egalitarian" schools: Cumulative decline in the urban schools and neighbourhoods of Helsinki, Finland. *Urban Studies 53*(15): 3155–3171. See also Bernelius and Kosunen in this book.

Martin Thrupp is Professor of Education at the University of Waikato. His research interests are in education policy, especially the lived effects of policy across diverse primary and secondary schools and their communities. Thrupp has undertaken related educational research in Europe, especially England, as well as in New Zealand, and has won several awards for his research and publications. He has worked in Finnish education circles since 2016 including visits to Finland in all four seasons. In 2022 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Turku.

Piia Seppänen is Professor of Education, especially on comparative education and education policy at the University of Turku and also works as Vice-Dean for research in its Faculty of Education. Her research with research groups at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE) focusses on pupil selection, urban social segregation and classed practices within comprehensive schooling as well as on commodification in public education systems and its connections to the global education industry.

Jaakko Kauko is Professor of Education Policy at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, where he co-leads the research group EduKnow (Knowledge, Power, and Politics in Education). His research focuses on the fields of education policy and comparative education. He is currently leading the Academy of Finland-funded project 'Transnational Knowledge Networks in Higher Education Policymaking'(KNETS).

Sonja Kosunen is Associate Professor of Education (tenure-track) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, where she leads the research unit Social studies in Urban Education (SURE). Her research focusses on the fields of sociology of education and urban studies. She is currently leading five research projects focusing on diversity, inequality and segregation across early childhood, comprehensive, secondary and higher education.

Part I
Politics, Policy, Teachers and Edu-business

Chapter 2
Municipal Governance of Comprehensive Education: The Emergence of Local Universalisms

Mira Kalalahti and Janne Varjo

Abstract The governance of Finland's comprehensive school system has historically evolved from centralised governance into a blend of national and local (municipal) decision-making authority. The two-fold model of governance was launched in the 1970s according to the planning economy logic, where the national education policies were enacted and regulated through strict and detailed legislation, a redistributive and 'earmarked' state subsidy system and a uniform national core curriculum. At an ideological level, comprehensive reform was tied firmly to the principle of equal opportunities. However, changes in administrative thinking since the 1990s have created a new balance between governmental and local governance of the education system. In this chapter we portray key changes occurring in the relationship between central and local administration as well as the most significant changes in the education system by comparing three case municipalities. We compile various register and document data about the education systems of these municipalities and assess whether we should talk about diverse municipal basic education in Finland instead of a single, uniform basic education system. We conclude that the national, previously more uniform basic education system is transforming into diverse, local basic education systems. We argue that local self-government and varying service accessibility pose a challenge to the equality of the service system at the national level.

In this chapter, the ideology of Finland's comprehensive school system is contextualised as part of the idea of universalism. In the Nordic welfare state, the idea of universalism has generally been associated with a strong commitment to the objectives of equality and social integration. It has also been characterised by the redistribution of economic resources undertaken at a high level, extensive investment in

M. Kalalahti (✉)
Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: mira.m.kalalahti@jyu.fi

J. Varjo
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: janne.varjo@helsinki.fi

education, and active labour market policy.[1] In Finland's education policy, universalism has been enacted through regional accessibility, a progressive financing basis, a distribution of resources, the levelling out of conditions, and detailed regulation. Universalism has manifested as the uniformity of schools, moderate differences in learning outcomes between schools, neighbourhoods and socio-economic groups, and the inclusion of pupils in special needs and general education.[2] Finland's universalist comprehensive school system has been constructed on a nationally extensive network of schools that ensures provision in proximity to students' homes in cities and safeguards tax-funded school transport for pupils living in sparsely populated areas.

Although public education may be the oldest welfare state system that is based on universalist principles,[3] universal systems are not static or permanent. They involve constant balancing between the efficient and fair redistribution of resources, and the sufficiency of resources.[4] The governance of Finland's comprehensive school system has historically evolved into a blend of national and local (municipal) decision-making authority. As a result of a national basic education reform carried out in the 1960s, Finland's municipalities became tasked with carrying out reform at the local level during the following decade. This involved carrying out education policy with the help of centralised and highly detailed legislation, an 'earmarked' system of central government transfers to local government, and a uniform national core curriculum for basic education.[5] In the context of the basic education reform in the 1970s, most of Finland's private schools were transferred to municipal ownership to safeguard equality and uniformity in education in accordance with the agenda of the political left.[6]

Since the 1990s, however, the rearrangement of the relationship between central and local government has resulted in transforming the cohesive universalism of the welfare state into several local universalisms, which are increasingly sensitive to financial and population-related preconditions.[7] The universalism principle has been re-theorised using terms such as 'decentralised universalism', 'local universalism' or 'neo-universalism'. These new concepts have been used to analyse the consequences of the decentralisation of national welfare state systems for local systems.[8] Universalism has also been interpreted to be weaker or stronger according to the extent to which the criteria of public (tax-based) funding, statutory basis and equal accessibility of services are in place.[9] The diversification at the local level measures the ability of local decision-makers to respond to changes in resources and population base.[10] However, these decision-makers tend to respond to local changes in a uniform manner.[11] Local practices for the provision of basic education have formed within the uniform basic education system, simultaneously reflecting both cohesive local solutions and conditions as well as the priority areas of national education policy.

The idea of local universalisms is highly significant for understanding the Finnish comprehensive school system because it challenges our understanding of Finland's municipalities as a cohesive whole, in which all have the same, actual opportunities for the provision of basic education for children and young people of compulsory education age, and in which everyone is provided with the same education opportunities in practice. Finnish municipalities (N = 309) all have, *de jure*, the same

obligations to provide basic education to all children of compulsory school age in their jurisdiction. Yet in practice, as we illustrate here, they differ substantially in terms of size and population, and the influence of this can not be overlooked.

Municipal education policies have become increasingly separate from national education policy from the early 2000s, but few studies have explored the provision of basic education at the municipal level. This chapter aims to breach the gap through multiple case studies.[12] We use three case municipalities in Finland to describe the local preconditions for the provision of basic education and interpret the cases based on the universalist principles of uniform basic education. We begin by presenting the general changes implemented in the governing system for education from the 1980s to the present. We highlight key changes occurring in the relationship between central and local administration related to governance as well as the most significant changes in the education system. The three municipalities we have selected, Espoo, Tornio and Keitele, serve as examples of these changes. The municipalities are not intended to be typical, but instead, to represent the variety of municipalities. The municipalities were carefully selected based on their regional and demographic features as well as indicators describing the basic education provision and needs for change in the school network. The case municipalities illustrate large cities as well as urban and rural municipalities located in Southern, Central and Northern Finland. We draw on various data concerning different municipalities and their education systems particularly utilising the registers of *Statistics Finland*, the *Finnish National Agency for Education* and the *Association of Finnish Municipalities*.

By comparing the three municipalities, we assess whether we should talk about diverse municipal basic education instead of a single, uniform basic education system in Finland. As a whole, our study seeks an answer to the question of whether the municipal basic education systems continue to be based on a uniform, universalist principle, and whether they offer equal education opportunities. We start our description by drawing on the work of Ulf P. Lundgren[13] to present four sets of instruments used to govern education (legal, economic, ideological and evaluatory). Subsequently, we will examine overall development in the municipalities, and use the three case municipalities to focus on comparing municipal basic education systems set apart by changes that have occurred at the national level. Finally, we summarise the changes that have taken place in municipal basic education systems and discuss whether these continue to be guided by an ideology following the universalism principle.

Decentralised and Diversified Instruments to Govern the Basic Education System

The relationship between central and local administration began to change in Finland in the mid-1980s: government authority was reduced at the same time as the autonomy of municipalities was increased in line with the administrative decentralisation

ideology prevailing at the time. During the 1990s a transition was made to a new, increasingly decentralised governing system for basic education as a result of the adoption of the new Basic Education Act, a calculus-based system of central government transfers to local government and the national core curriculum providing more leeway for local application.[14]

Lundgren[15] has presented an analysis of the approaches that governments can use in governing and managing their education system which we draw on here. In this model, instruments of legal governance—the most traditional and binding instrument of governance for public services—include the acts, decrees, provisions and guidelines used by public administration to ensure the uniform implementation of services provided as subjective rights, including basic education, across the nation. Highly detailed normative governance has been particularly characteristic of the post-World War II reconstruction period in the welfare regimes described by Gøsta Esping-Andersen.[16] In turn, the development trends of decentralisation and deregulation in administration that started in the 1980s have resulted in reducing the rights of government officials to issue regulations, and the consolidation and harmonisation of legislation.

In the late 1990s, abundant and fragmented legislation based on different educational institution types was replaced by more concise and centralised legislation based on learning objectives and content.[17] The Basic Education Act (628/1998) entered into force at the start of 1999, and has significantly affected the opportunities of municipalities to serve as education providers. The reduced regulation provided particularly large cities with an opportunity to profile their schools based on various emphases. Similarly, municipalities were left to make decisions on the number and location of educational institutions in their area in practice.[18] Providing municipalities with the freedom to independently modify their school networks resulted in extensive closure of small schools: on average, 80 comprehensive schools have been closed down each year in Finland since the recession of the early 1990s. In some places, the closed schools have been replaced with larger comprehensive schools covering years 1–9 of basic education.[19]

The second set of instruments to govern education presented in Lundgren's[20] analysis—*the instruments of economic governance*—was subject to major changes in the early 1990s. The system of central government transfers to local government introduced in 1993[21] was calculus-based instead of task- and cost-based like its predecessor. The grounds for the reform included the need to provide municipalities with an opportunity to allocate their resources appropriately in order to achieve stated goals. The reform also required increasingly unrestrained abandonment of regulations preventing resource use; in fact, provisions limiting the use of central government transfers to local government for a specific purpose were removed from the relevant acts.[22]

As a whole, the resources used in education in Finland can be characterised as moderate: while Finland's student-specific costs of education are above the OECD average, they are the lowest in the Nordic countries. Nevertheless, the most recent statistics indicate an exceptional reduction occurring over the period 2012–2017 (1.5% on average) even though the number of students has remained nearly

unchanged.[23] Moreover, the costs of pre-primary and basic education increased moderately in the period 2010–2018.[24] At the municipal level, the transition to the system of central government transfers to local government based on imputed unit prices has led to increased disparity in the financial opportunities for providing basic education. A report by the Ministry of Finance[25] indicates that the cost of basic education per student is highest in municipalities with under 2000 inhabitants and lowest in municipalities with between 20,000 and 40,000 inhabitants.

As a result of disparities in financial opportunities, there are considerable differences in basic education provision practices. A regional comparison reveals that the average size of a group for instruction in Grades 1 and 2 varied by up to 4.8 pupils (national average: 18.3). On average, the largest instruction groups were located in the Uusimaa region (20.0) and smallest in the Central Ostrobothnia region (15.2). In sparsely populated regions, the average size of instruction groups is smaller compared to densely populated areas. In 2019, the largest instruction groups were located in urban municipalities (19.7) and the smallest in rural ones (14.1).[26] The number of available lesson hours was another indicator that can be used to assess segregation caused by financial conditions. There are growing disparities in organising education and providing instruction. One fifth of education providers had reduced the amount of instruction provided during basic education when the school year 2010–11 was compared to 2015–16.[27] During the 2016–17 school year, 9% of education providers offered only the minimum amount of instruction.

A third instrument in Lundgren's model,[28] is that curricula are part of *ideological governance* enacted based on learning objectives and content. In Finland, the Finnish National Agency for Education prepares the national core curricula based on the distribution of lesson hours issued by the Government. The core curricula guide education providers in making arrangements on education and the preparation of school-specific curricula. The level of detail in the national core curricula has varied. For instance, the 1970 national core curriculum for basic education was highly detailed, while the 1994 curriculum tended to outline key objectives and content without more detailed definitions.[29]

In the early 1990s, increasing the number of study options was considered to produce significant positive effects. The idea was that the national 'talent reserve' would be increasingly well utilised through this approach as "pupils are likely to select subjects that they are personally interested in or assume that they will succeed in". Meanwhile, the opportunities for raising the overall level of education were also expected to improve as providing pupils with more freedom of choice was considered to "help pupils have a more positive regard of studying and exerting themselves for accomplishing learning objectives they consider meaningful".[30]

Today, a decree on the distribution of lesson hours determines the minimum number of hours for basic education. Education providers are left to decide how education is provided under the valid legislation. In practice, there is variation in the number of hours of basic education provided by municipalities due to issues such as the available opportunities for language studies. There may also be variation between the schools in a municipality, as the number of lesson hours may be greater, for instance, in schools offering weighted-curriculum education.[31]

The joint effect of the decentralisation of administration and increasingly lax regulation has resulted in putting more weight on collecting, analysing and publishing assessment data on education. According to Lundgren,[32] the *quality assessment of education* has evolved into the fourth instrument to govern education from the 1980s. In addition to legislation and central government transfers to local government and national core curricula, the public authorities also use evaluation data as the basis for governing basic education providers. This has made detailed governance of day to day operations redundant, as focusing on results and impacts is considered sufficient.[33]

Finland's Basic Education Act requires education providers to evaluate the education they provide and its impacts, and to participate in external assessment of their operations.[34] Education providers do have the freedom to select evaluation methods and targets. In the 2000s, the evaluation of education occurring at the local level in Finland was largely described as unplanned and inconsistent, and criticised as lacking versatility and transparency.[35] For instance, a survey by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre about the self-evaluation and quality assurance practices in basic education and general upper secondary education in the period 2015–2016 indicated that many education providers had not introduced a well-functioning self-evaluation system or a systematic evaluation culture as part of their quality assessment activities.[36]

Several sample-based studies have indicated that, overall, the learning outcomes of young people have declined in Finland. Despite the fact that the PISA studies indicate minor differences in learning outcomes between Finland's regions, there is greater variation in the PISA results in the Helsinki metropolitan area compared to other parts of the country.[37] This can be interpreted to reflect segregation between neighbourhoods and schools, which is known to occur in large cities (see Bernelius and Kosunen; Lobato and Bernelius; and Seppänen, Pasu and Kosunen chapters in this book). In addition, the impact of pupils' socio-economic backgrounds on their learning outcomes gained prominence in the most recent PISA study.[38]

Population, Regions and the Segregation of Municipalities

Finland's municipalities have been growing increasingly different in terms of their demographic developments, and conditions for service provision and vitality for some time now. According to population projections, this development will also continue in the future. Over the coming decades, the number of people over 65-years of age will continue to grow in all Finland's municipalities, and the share of those over 85-years-old will climb especially. At the same time, the number of children has taken a dramatic downward turn in nearly all of the country's municipalities. In 2019, around 15,400 children were born in Finland; this is nearly a quarter less than in 2010. According to the population projection, the share of under 15-year-old children will continue to decline in all regions, on average by slightly over 20% by 2040.[39]

The increasing density of the school network resulting from declining population development and a crisis of local government finances is a key issue to consider from the perspective of accessing basic education. According to an assessment of basic services, around 90% of children aged between seven and 12 live within a five-kilometre radius from a school, but the range was between 65 and 94%. Accessibility has declined somewhat at the national level when compared to the situation in 2017. Of pupils aged between 13 and 15 in comprehensive education, around 80% live within a five-kilometre radius from a school. The range was between 65 and 90%. At the national level, there is a small (2%) change in accessibility compared to 2017.[40]

According to a classification based on the 2018 statistics by the Ministry of Finance,[41] Finnish municipalities can be divided into *large cities* (21), *urban* (36), *semi-urban* (65) and *rural* (172). Over half of Finland's population lives in the large municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants; 12–18% of the population live in the other types. Even though the majority of Finland's municipalities are rural, only around 13% of the country's total population live in them.[42]

The three case municipalities in our study, Espoo, Tornio and Keitele, respectively represent a large city, an urban and a rural one under the Ministry of Finance. Information about the municipalities are presented in Table 2.1, with overall figures for Finland also provided for comparison, and then we look at each municipality in turn.

Espoo: Diverse Education Opportunities in Finland's Metropolitan Area

As a case municipality, Espoo represents one of the populous cities in the south of Finland, which are among the country's few regions with positive net migration. Espoo is a large city in the Uusimaa region located in the Helsinki metropolitan area in Southern Finland. It has 289,731 inhabitants, which makes it Finland's second largest city. Compared to the previous year, the city's population grew by + 2.2%. Espoo has an exceptionally favourable dependency ratio: the share of under-15-year-old residents is 19%, while only 17% are pensioners. The city's social and healthcare costs are clearly under the national average. Espoo is known as the hometown of enterprises such as Nokia, the Fortum energy company, the Rovio video game company that developed Angry Birds, and several other technology companies. Thanks to the local business structure, the share of inhabitants aged 15 and over with a higher education degree is at a record-high level at 47% and employment is at 75%. The share of foreign citizens is also considerably high at 12%.

In 2019, Espoo had 31,422 pupils in basic education. The municipality has 89 education institutions providing basic education, of which two are private (Steiner School and Christian School), one provides education in English, and 11 in Swedish. The pupils per education institution ratio in Espoo is on average 361 (excl. private

Table 2.1 Characteristics related to the population and provision of basic education in the case municipalities and Finland as a whole

	Espoo	Tornio	Keitele	Whole Finland
Population (2019)[43]	289,731	21,602	2202	5,525,292
Change in population since previous year (2019, %)[44]	2.2	−1.2	−1.9	0.1
Share of under-15-year-olds in population (2019, %)[45]	18.9	17.1	11.3	15.8
Share of foreign citizens in population (2019, %)[46]	11.6	2.6	1.2	4.8
Share of people with a higher education degree of population aged 15 and older (2019, %)[47]	47.3	26.0	17.4	32.2
Social and healthcare costs €/inhabitant (2019)[48]	2156	3582	4258	3482
Share of pensioners in population (2018, %)[49]	16.8	27.4	41.8	25.9
Employment rate (2018, %)[50]	75.4	69.8	66.0	72.1
Local income tax (2020, %)[51]	18.0	21.0	20.5	20.0
Basic education pupils (2019)[52]	32,168	2367	169	557,908
Basic education operating costs/pupil (2019)[53]	10,359	9038	12,663	9893
Educational institutions providing basic education (2019)[54]	89	12	1	2 279
Share of accommodation and transport costs of operating costs (2019, %)[55]	1.1	6.2	11.3	3.8
Transported pupils (2019, %)[56]	6.6	32.4	48.8	20.9
Total number of lesson hours based on the distribution of lesson hours as weekly lessons per year (Years 1–9) (2019)[57]	229–239	227–230	224–236	224

schools). The rate is clearly above the national average (243 pupils/education institution). The average size of a group of instruction for classroom teachers in the urban municipalities similar to Espoo in the Uusimaa region is higher than other regions in this comparison (21 pupils). The languages provided in Grades 1–6 in the comprehensive schools in Espoo include English, Swedish, Finnish, French, German and Spanish.[58] In Grades 1–9, Espoo provides between 229 and 239 weekly lessons per year of instruction in accordance with the distribution of lesson hours for basic education. This is at least five hours above the national minimum. As one weekly lesson per year amounts to 38 lesson hours, pupils in Espoo receive at least 190 h of instruction above the national minimum during their nine-year basic education. Offering extensive weighted-curriculum education ('teaching with a special emphasis') is characteristic of this municipality.[59] The municipality offers education with an emphasis on various subjects, including mathematics and natural sciences, music, dance, sports, information technology, visual arts, and performance arts. During the school year

2021–22, pupils can choose between 24 groups which begin at the start of the 7th year of basic education. Weighted curriculum education is provided in a total of 15 education institutions.[60]

The basic education operating costs are €10,359 per pupil. The share of accommodation and transport costs of total education operating costs is only 1%, as just 7% of basic education pupils are transported to school in Espoo (Table 2.1.) Espoo offers plenty of opportunities for upper secondary education: 11 upper secondary schools and three vocational education and training institutions are located in the municipality. Metropolia and Laurea Universities of Applied Sciences and Aalto University campuses are located in Espoo. Several other higher education institutions are also located in the Helsinki metropolitan area.

As a result of high birth rates, and internal and external migration, the city has been required to make considerable investments in extending its school network. Arguably, it is to fulfil the expectations of its exceptionally highly educated families, that the city offers a lot of emphasised teaching[61] and multiple extra lesson hours. Together, these practices have increased the operation costs of basic education. From the perspective of education paths available for young people, Espoo offers plenty of opportunities for upper secondary and higher education. There are also several education institutions in the Helsinki metropolitan area, which can be easily accessed from Espoo as well.

Tornio: Simplified School System in a Medium-Sized Regional Town

Tornio represents a regionally significant town whose key ratios concerning population, the economy and school network are relatively close to the national averages. It is an urban municipality located in the Lapland region of North Finland, in the northernmost shore of the Bay of Bothnia at the border between Finland and Sweden. Tornio has 21,602 inhabitants, which makes it Finland's 46th largest municipality. It is also a municipality with a negative net migration rate: decreasing by around 1% per annum. Tornio has an average dependency ratio: the share of under 15-year-old residents is 17%, while the share of pensioners is 27% of the population. Local social and healthcare costs are also average (Table 2.1). The local industrial structure is undergoing a transformation: tourism and related services have emerged as a significant sector alongside the traditional brewery and steel industries. Those inhabitants over 15 with a higher education degree are 26% of the population and the employment rate (70%) is slightly below the national average. The proportion of foreign citizens in Tornio is very small (3%).

In 2019, Tornio had 2331 pupils in basic education. The local school network consists of 12 education institutions providing basic education. The pupils per education institution ratio in Tornio is below the national average (194/243) and the average size for an instructional group in the (urban municipalities) in the Lapland region

is close to the national average 20. English and Swedish are the foreign languages provided in Grades 1–6 of basic education.[62] In Grades 1–9, Tornio provides between 227 and 230 weekly lessons per year of instruction in accordance with the distribution of lesson hours for basic education, at least three hours above the national minimum.

The basic education operating costs per pupil are the lowest among our case municipalities. The share of accommodation and transport costs of total education operating costs (6%), as well as the share of basic education pupils transported to school (32%) is slightly above the national average (Table 2.1.) From the perspective of local opportunities for further studies, the municipality has one upper secondary school, one vocational education and training institution, and one folk high school. One of the Lapland University of Applied Sciences units is located in Tornio, and the distance to the Universities of Lapland and Oulu is less than 150 kms.

Regardless of the municipality's negative net migration rate, the local dependency ratio in Tornio has remained reasonable. The size of the child and youth age groups has allowed the continuation of a relatively comprehensive basic education network, which has kept the need for school transport reasonable. From the viewpoint of young peoples' education paths, the municipality offers limited opportunities for obtaining upper secondary education qualifications. The long distances in North Finland mean that those who aim to study in a higher education institution will typically have to move out of Tornio.

Keitele: A Remote Municipality with a Negative Net Migration Rate and Increasingly Sparse School Network

Keitele illustrates the small rural municipalities in Central, Eastern and North Finland, which have been heavily affected by rapid post-WWII urbanisation and changes in the industrial structure. The municipality has 2202 inhabitants (2019), making it one of the smallest municipalities in Finland. Keitele is one of Finland's many municipalities with a negative net migration rate: compared to the status last year, the population changed by −2%. The local dependency ratio is exceptionally problematic from the perspective of the provision of basic services in the municipality: the share of under 15-year-old residents is 11% of the population, while the share of pensioners is as much as 42% of the population. As a result of the large share of pensioners, the municipality's social and healthcare expenditure is the highest among our case municipalities. Keitele's economy has traditionally been reliant on the industrial and primary sectors, and the local education level (percentage of inhabitants over 15-years of age with a higher education degree: 17%) and employment rate (66%) are low. The share of foreign citizens is only 1% (Table 2.1.)

In 2019, there were 243 pupils in basic education living in Keitele. The municipality's school network now includes only one comprehensive school, as three others have been shut since 2001, a major change occurring in just two decades. The number of students per educational institution is 243, which is exactly equal to the national

average. The average size for an instructional group for a classroom teacher in a rural municipality such as Keitele in the North Savo region is below the average (18/20). English is the only foreign language provided in Grades 1–6 of basic education.[63] In Grades 1–9, Keitele provides between 224 and 236 weekly lessons per year of instruction in accordance with the distribution of lesson hours for basic education. The national minimum is 224 weekly lessons per year.

The basic education operating costs (€12,663/pupil) in Keitele are well over the whole-country average (€9,893). The share of accommodation and transport costs as a proportion of total education operating costs is exceptionally high (11%) compared with the whole-country average (4%). These high costs can be accounted for by remote geographical conditions, indeed 49% of basic education pupils are entitled to school transport (whole-country average: 21%) (Table 2.1.) Local opportunities for further education are limited: there are no upper secondary schools, vocational education and training institutions or folk high schools located in the municipality. The distance to the nearest university of applied sciences (the Iisalmi campus of Savonia University of Applied Sciences) is 80 km and the nearest university (the Kuopio campus of the University of Eastern Finland) is 100 km away.

Many municipalities like Keitele, with low birth rates, an ageing population, and a demographic dependency ratio poses a big challenge from the perspective of providing basic services, including basic education. For instance, school transport required due to long distances results in very high costs. This, in turn, creates pressure to save costs through measures such as reducing the school network. From the perspective of the pupils, attending school in remote municipalities with negative migration is marked by long distances to school, few options related to education, and limited future prospects of finding employment.

Conclusion: From Governmental Universalism to Local Models

Changes introduced in governance in the 1990s such as decentralisation and deregulation essentially contained a message to develop local education systems based on local modifications of the principles of universalism. The case municipalities in this chapter exemplifies the ways in which the national, previously uniform basic education system in Finland has transformed into multiple diverse, local basic education models. Some municipalities have opportunities for constructing local education policy detached from national authorities, while the boundary conditions to the operations of other municipalities result in higher dependency on central government and the resources this offers.

Taekyoon Kim describes the institutional adaption of welfare states as either confirming economic constraints or political requirements.[64] The adaptation of municipalities to the changes occurring in government policies and factors concerning local conditions can also be perceived as either adaption to financial

conditions e.g., responding to a reduction in central government transfers to local government by scaling down the school network or, alternatively, as a response to the political will of the local inhabitants by offering different education alternatives based on the wishes of highly educated families.

The idea of a universalist, nationally strictly regulated, (primarily) government-funded and centrally governed and locally organised basic education continues to be prevalent in all the case municipalities examined in this chapter. However, instead of universalism determined at the national level, the case municipalities also reflect different local universalisms. These are locally separated school systems, whose education services are different in terms of aspects such as weighted-curriculum education, available language studies, and the number of weekly lessons per year.

Nevertheless, statistical data indicate that the variation in the practices for arranging basic education in municipalities is not random, but includes certain regularities. According to Kim[65] *institutional isomorphism* causes similar institutions to seek uniform solutions when faced with new conditions that collectively affect them. The case study of Keitele presented here advances the understanding of, for instance, how rural municipalities located in remote regions are particularly prone to scaling down their school networks. Changes in the population number and age structure will create a pressure for institutional isomorphism and finding new solutions related to the school network, particularly in line with the development of population under the age of 15. Similarly, large urban municipalities have a shared pressure to provide weighted-curriculum education in an effort to respond to the demand of highly educated families to select a school other than the local school that their municipality would assign to their child.[66]

According to Anneli Anttonen,[67] the universalistic principle for service provision is bound to deteriorate as a result of the breakdown of the redistributive system of central government transfers to local government, highly detailed legislation and the equal accessibility of services. In the context of the basic education system, governing through the system of central government transfers to local government and legislation has reduced, and there is increasing heterogeneity in the availability of education services between regions and municipalities.

We should not, however, categorically perceive diversification of local welfare systems such as basic education as inequality or development of injustice. On the one hand, the decentralisation of the management of the welfare state could have potential for supporting local adaptation to the changes in the population structure and economic situation.[68] On the other, local self-government and varying service accessibility pose a challenge to the equality of the service system at the national level. In Finland's basic education policy, this is apparent through examining the case municipalities in areas such as the amount of basic education provided to pupils in terms of weekly lessons per year, the extent of options provided to the pupils in their studies, the size of the schools and classes in which the pupils study, and the amount of time the pupils spend on school transport each day. To paraphrase Dietmar Rauch, decentralising school administration and municipal autonomy in the provision of basic education can be—at least partly—interpreted as a means to cut funding to education and shift the responsibility for regrettable decisions onto municipalities.[69]

Will the quality of Finland's basic education provided by municipalities continue to be high when the number of lesson hours is decreasing, the school network is becoming sparser, distances to school are growing, and remote education is becoming increasingly commonplace as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic? It is worth noticing that the quality assurance model for basic education used in Finland does not involve the central government collecting comprehensive, school-specific data or following systematically the diversification within municipalities. Hence, the current state of municipal differences remains rather unknown. The Ministry of Education and Culture has recognised the differentiation and diversification of learning environments and supported the provision of basic education with project-based supplementary resources. Nevertheless, the potential of these resources to respond to the diversification is yet unknown, since it favours the large municipalities and the ones engaging in active regional collaboration.[70] Arguably, the balance between national universalism and local models of provision of basic education is not set yet. Quality assurance and project-based development can be comprehended as novel tools to govern municipalities—and to 're-universalise' the central–local relations.

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Mira Kalalahti is Associate Professor of guidance (tenure-track) at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä. Her research and writing focuses on equality and agency in education and education politics. Kalalahti's recent research has been on the issues of justice within guidance counselling and she also has a continuing research interest in the relational expertise of guidance.

Janne Varjo is Associate Professor (tenure-track) of Research on Education, Society and Culture in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. His research interests include the sociology, politics, history and administration of education, especially in Finland, and he is widely published in these areas.

Chapter 3
Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture in the Light of Its Working Groups

Jarmo Kallunki, Jaakko Kauko, and Oren Pizmony-Levy

Abstract The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) has traditionally been considered as the most central actor and the powerhouse in the education policy field in Finland. While the position of the MEC in the Finnish education policy system seems stable, there have been several organisational changes within the MEC over the past three decades. One of these is the disintegration of the committee system and its replacement by the working groups system, a trend that is part of a more general change from governing to governance since the 1990s. In this chapter we analyse data containing the MEC's working groups and their members with social network analysis in order to understand the ways in which the working group system affects the MEC and its operation. Our analysis suggests that the MEC is organised rather strongly by departments: early childhood and general education, vocational education and training, higher education and research, culture and arts, and youth and sports. Analysing the network through the individual working group members we observed that, in addition to public officials, individuals representing interest organisations such as labour and trade unions were important links between the working groups.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC)[1] has been seen as a central, if not the most important powerhouse in the education policy field in Finland. It has had an independent and strong position in this field and, aiding this, the field itself has not experienced major party-based political struggles in recent decades. In other words, around and after what Janne Varjo calls the "policy turn in education"[2] of

J. Kallunki (✉) · J. Kauko
Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Åkerlundinkatu 5, 33014 Tampere, Finland
e-mail: jarmo.kallunki@tuni.fi

J. Kauko
e-mail: jaakko.kauko@tuni.fi

O. Pizmony-Levy
Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University, Box 55, New York, NY 10027, USA
e-mail: op2183@tc.columbia.edu

the 1990s, the MEC has been viewed as an independent actor consisting of public servants and professional bureaucrats, instead of a mere instrument for implementing government policies. For example, Osmo Kivinen and colleagues[3] go as far as to say that the prominent figures responsible for the long-term higher education policies in Finland are public servants working in the MEC. Similarly, Osmo Lampinen[4] argues that schooling policies are led more by public servants than by elected politicians, and that the ideological politics in education have been in decline. Consensus is also emphasised by Liekki Lehtisalo and Reijo Raivola[5] who claim that since the mid-1970s no profound differences of opinion have surfaced in the Finnish parliament or government regarding the main pathways of education policy development. Nevertheless, despite its independence and power, it is important to recall that the MEC and its policies are still subordinate to the general politics of the government, as noted by Lehtisalo and Raivola, and later also by others. For example, government programmes had a strong impact on the development plans for education and research over 1987–2016.[6] Similarly, the MEC's press releases about PISA results are influenced more by government programmes than by the PISA test results themselves.[7] Moreover, the importance of the government programme has recently increased, after the government discontinued development plans as a steering instrument in 2015.[8]

Given the importance of the MEC in the education policy field in Finland it is surprising how little its structure and internal functioning has been studied. It also seems that previous research might not have fully recognised the conditions under which policies are being formed inside the MEC, which in turn risks a glossy image of what is taking place in everyday policymaking. The most comprehensive analysis has been made in the MEC's own history series, the last part of which was published before the turn of the millennium.[9] It can be assumed that the MEC's operating methods have changed amidst international trends. Political steering has changed globally and especially in Europe since the 1980s. The first wave of reforms were described as New Public Management[10] and since then changes have been sought to be understood using concepts such as the Neo-Weberian state or networked governance or meta-governance.[11] Similar trends have influenced the field of education policy in various countries.[12] On a European scale, differences in the degree of change have ranged from a radical dismantling of the system in England[13] to more moderate reforms in Norway, Finland and Iceland, where the unifying factor has been decentralisation.[14] Nevertheless, research-based understanding of whether these international trends have had any impact on the MEC has been very limited.

The strong role of the MEC in the education policy field in Finland is related to the state-centric tradition, supported by the idea of a Nordic universalist welfare state. Simply put, the great change in the education policy field in Finland in the nineteenth century was secularisation away from church-led education, whereas in the twentieth century the roles of the state and local municipalities increased.[15] After the 1950s, the MEC has grown from a "post office-sized" office[16] to an organisation that employed 255 staff by 2019 and has annual staff costs of around €40 million.[17] Public sector growth became politicised and its contraction was brought up for debate in the 1980s, and reforms in the 1990s changed the mindset from centralised control to strategic and service-based management.[18] The idea of a New Public Management

had an impact on the sector of the MEC, but there has been little indication that the power of the MEC would have substantially decreased.

To summarise, few accounts of education policy research in Finland can ignore the MEC as an actor or as a subject, but until now the focus has not been in the MEC itself. Since the mid-1970s, the work of the MEC has been organised more and more through working groups, and the preceding committee-type organisation has been run down.[19] The committees were researched in the past, but since their dissolution research focusing on political preparation and planning has diminished.[20] Anne Maria Holli notes that the current common usage of rapporteurs can be seen as a way to outsource political preparation in accordance with the New Public Management, and problems might occur when political preparation and preparation by public servants are separated.[21] These ideas are probably to some extent generalisable to the MEC's working groups. Overall, there is both a need to research the working groups, but also a need to perceive the working groups as an established part of MEC's operating structure, rather than a completely new phenomenon.

In this chapter we seek to understand the MEC and its operation through social network analysis of the MEC's working groups and their members.[22] We aim to understand the ways in which the working group system affects the MEC and its operation. We began by briefly reviewing the activities and the role of the MEC in the education policy field in Finland, and in the next section we describe the MEC as an organisation. We then move on to present our results, and in the concluding section we offer potential interpretations for our results.

The Ministry of Education and Culture as an Organisation

The Ministry of Education and Culture operates as a part of the government, at the highest level of the three-tier administration in Finland. The responsibilities of the top administration include the enactment and implementation of laws, and general policy planning. Of these, the ministry's work includes the preparation and implementation of laws and general plans. The middle tier is administered by six Regional State Administrative Agencies and the Åland Government Agency, whose tasks include, for example, supervision of basic services, guidance of private providers of early childhood education services and various licensing and legal supervision tasks. Local government in Finland consists of around 300 municipalities (311 in 2019), which are responsible for organising basic education and early childhood education. In 2019, the MEC received 11.6 per cent of public expenditure, making the MEC the third largest user of public expenditure after the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Finance.[23]

The administrative branch of the MEC covers all sectors of education and training, from early childhood education and care to non-formal adult education. The rules of procedure of the MEC[24] define the departmental organisation of the ministry and the subject matters belonging to them. The departments are (1) the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care, Basic Education and Non-Formal Education,

(2) the Department of Vocational Education, (3) the Department of Higher Education and Science Policy and Upper Secondary Education, (4) the Department of Culture and Arts Policy, and (5) the Department of Sports and Youth Policy. Departments' subject matters are specific responsibilities within the remit of each department, such as "university education" or "archives administration", both of which belong to the Department of Higher Education and Science Policy and Upper Secondary Education.[25]

The options for the MEC to steer education vary by the type of education and by the means of steering available. Financial and performance-based management are MEC's key tools in steering higher education institutions, even though universities have constitutional autonomy and polytechnics are independent legal entities.[26] In secondary education the MEC uses its financial power by providing unit price funding to education providers.[27] MEC's toolkit in secondary education also includes steering of the content of the qualifications both by controlling the distribution of classroom hours of the upper secondary curriculum, and steering the content and scope of vocational qualifications. In early childhood education and care, the MEC takes care of general planning and steering. The Finnish National Agency for Education under the MEC uses significant power in coordinating and setting frameworks for the curricula for early childhood education and care, primary education, and secondary education.

The relationship between the political steering and the public servant-led steering of and within the MEC is part of a more general change of administration. The idea of New Public Management[28] is that in public administration the top management focuses on strategic decision-making. Following this, the national political steering of the ministries has been geared towards strategic political leadership. Minna Tiili[29] has studied the early days of this development in Finland. During Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen's two governments (1995–2003), in addition to the government programme that was considered too superficial, a government strategy document was compiled to enforce the 'implementation' of key government policies.[30] Strategic thinking and framework budgeting were riddled with ministry-specific sectoral interests, which complicated the implementation of a wholesale programme.[31] Tiili assessed that Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's government (2003–2007) had the same problems in strategic steering.[32] Of the later governments, the clearest strategic emphasis was sought by Juha Sipilä's government (2015–2019), whose programme was subtitled "strategic government programme".[33] Conflicts in strategic steering are caused by the limiting effect of the framework budgeting and the rigidity of the government programme.[34] In the field of education policy, the changes in policymaking and administration have led to increasingly complex networks covering different groups of actors, and in some cases in Finland we can also talk about networked governance. The New Public Management differs from networked governance in that the latter's operating principle relies on complex community governance.[35] Networks are self-organising, although at times they need an external stimulus.[36] There has been little research on network-based governance in the education policy field in Finland. Pirre Seppänen[37] concluded that the national network working within Finnish university policy is dense and intensively interactive but not very concentrated, although the

MEC, the Minister of Education and the Chief of Staff of the MEC stand out as the most important actors.

Seppo Tiihonen[38] describes how the internal organisation of ministries has changed. Since the late 1980s, the New Public Management-related performance-based practices and changes in human resources management have affected ministries. The abandonment of the classical bureaucratic approach has materialised in the abolition of central agencies and committee structures, which has led to diminished professional resources for the ministries. Tiihonen believes that this has increased the problems related to the management of ministries by adding technocratic demands to the already existing political pressures. One of the reforms to support the political leadership of the ministries was the creation of the offices of political secretaries of state in 2005. In the field of education, education committees have had an important role in responding to the needs of different eras, and they played a key role especially in resolving the problems arising from educating the baby-boomer generation.[39] In the peak years of the mid-1970s, the number of reports of education committees accounted for 22% of all committee reports, but by the late 1980s reports of education committees fell to only 5% as a result of cuts to committee structures. Meanwhile preparation in working groups gained more ground[40] and the trend of increased use of rapporteurs and working groups in education policymaking has continued.[41] Observing the work of government in the UK, R.A.W. Rhodes[42] has noted that several historical administrative layers exist after administrative reforms, meaning that past practices remained active within the organisation for some groups or for certain issues. This kind of research is not available in Finland, but it can be hypothesised that the change in administration is similarly layered within the MEC.

The Social Organisation of the MEC as a Network of Working Groups

Our data is based on a publicly available government project register (*Hankerekisteri*) supplemented with desk research,[43] and it consists of information about 643 working groups (including their members) that were active under the MEC between January 2010 and November 2018 (see Table 3.1). We used social network analysis[44] to study the ways in which the working group system affects the MEC and its operation. In this chapter, we focus on a two-mode network that affiliates individual working-group members with different working groups and treats, in turn, both the individuals and the working groups as actors in the network. We analysed the data using UCINET and visualised the networks using NetDraw.[45]

Around one-third (35.6%) of the working groups belong in the general or interdepartmental category. Next largest categories, roughly of equal size, are culture and arts policy (22.1%), and higher education and science policy and upper secondary education (19.8%). Other department categories have significantly fewer working groups in this data. The size of the working group varies across departments, but the

Table 3.1 Working group data categorised according to the MEC's departments: the number of working groups and information about the members (2010–2018)

Name of the department	Number of working groups N (% of total)	Average number of members in a working group	Number of working groups with less than three members
Early childhood education and care, basic education and non-formal adult education	50 (7.8%)	10.0	19
Vocational education	36 (5.6%)	13.5	12
Higher education and science policy, and upper secondary education	127 (19.8%)	10.2	47
Culture and arts policy	142 (22.1%)	8.7	62
Sports and youth policy	59 (9.2%)	9.4	29
General or interdepartmental	229 (35.6%)	11.1	72
Total	643 (100.0%)	10.3	241

The differences in the means are not significantly significant, $F(5, 637) = 1.23$, $p = 0.29$

pattern is not statistically significant. The vocational education department has, on average, larger groups: there are fewer groups of less than three people (12 or 33.3%) and the average group size is larger (13.5). About one-fifth (20.2%) of the working groups includes no members. A similar share of the working groups (17.3%) includes one or two members. These groups are more likely to be isolated from other groups.

First, we analysed the network of MEC working groups. Two groups are linked if they share members. The resulting network is very extensive. A vast majority of the working groups in the data are part to the main component (496 out of 643 [total number] = 77.1% or 496 out of 513 [with at least one member] = 96.7%). For a deeper analysis we set the threshold for connection between working groups to four, meaning that two working groups are connected if they share at least four members. Figure 3.1 shows the result, but only focussing on the main component, leaving out other, smaller, and disconnected elements (e.g., dyads, triads, etc.).

The working-group network organises mostly according to the MEC's departments, as illustrated in Fig. 3.1. At the centre of the network, we find working groups in the category "General or Interdepartmental" (black square) and Vocational Educational and Training (grey circle). These groups are located in the centre because they have connections to many other groups. Particularly clear is the separation of the departments not linked to education: Culture and Art (white square), and Sport and Youth (grey square). Two other departments can be clearly distinguished from the

○ Early childhood education and care, basic education and non-formal adult education
● Vocational education
● Higher education and science policy, and upper secondary education
□ Culture and arts policy
▣ Sports and youth policy
■ General or interdepartmental
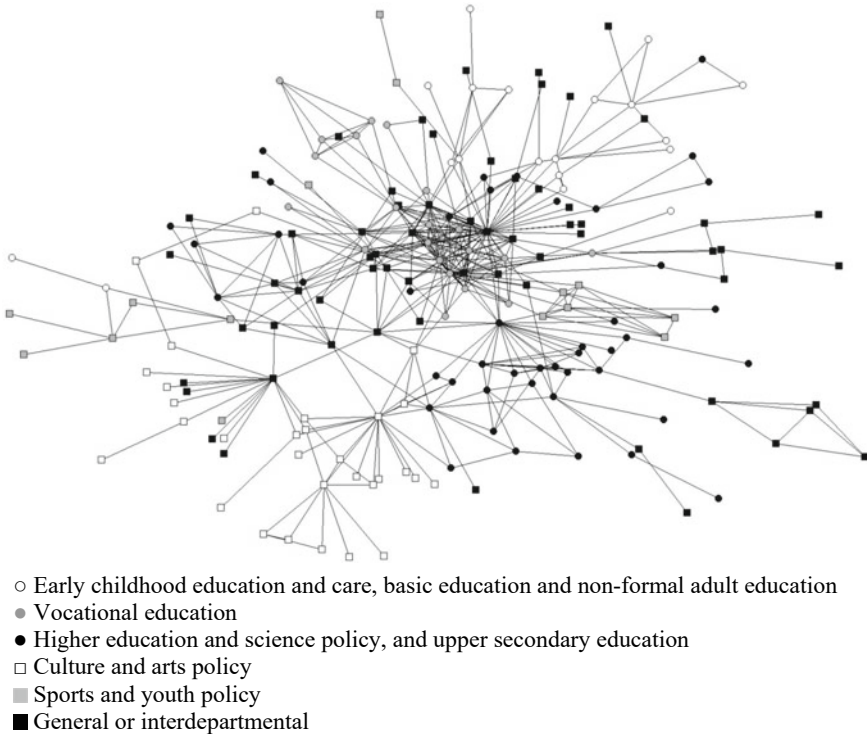
Fig. 3.1 Network of working groups within the MEC (main component, link threshold: four shared members)

network as well. These are the Department for Early Childhood Education, Comprehensive School Education and Adult Education (white circle) and the Department for General Upper Secondary Education and Higher Education and Science Policy (black circle).

The second part of our analysis addresses the network of individual members in the working groups. The strength of the relationship between two individual members reflects the number of times they serve together in a same working group. We assume that when two individuals serve together on multiple working groups, the likelihood of exposure to same types of knowledge, experience, and agenda increases.[46] Our data includes 3,483 individual members. Slightly more than two-thirds (68.1%) of them serve on one working group, and additional 16.1% serve on two working groups. A small minority, 57 individuals (1.6%), serve on 10 or more working groups. Here we focus on the strong relationships, meaning that we study individuals who are connected by at least five working groups and the network that emerges among them. Moreover, we take a closer look at the most connected individuals in the network; to this end, we identified the 99 most connected individuals and coded them according to their background organisation (either the MEC, National Agency for Education,

□ MEC ■ National Agency for Education ■ External △ Not coded
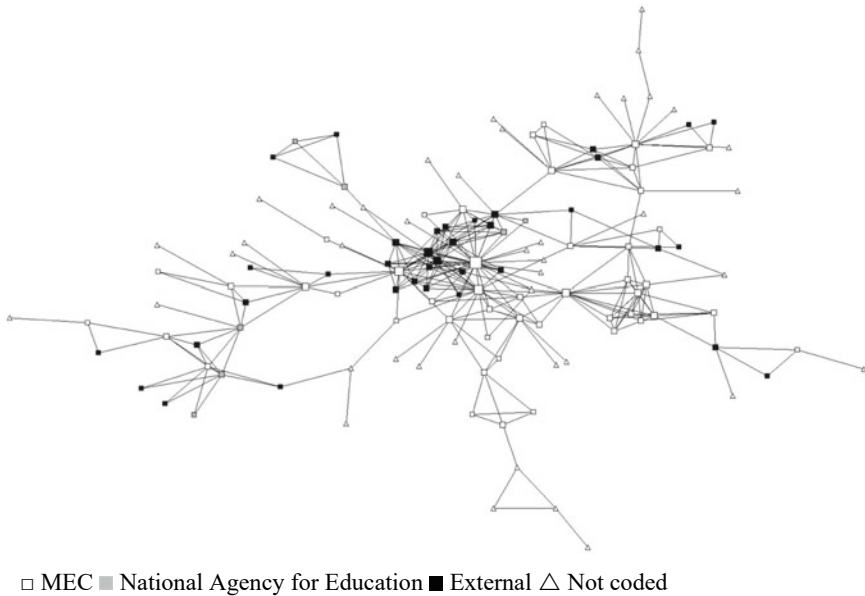
Fig. 3.2 Network of the individual working group members within the MEC (main component, link threshold: five shared memberships), background organisation highlighted

or external organisation). Figure 3.2 presents the network, with the size of the nodes representing their overall connectedness (degree centrality).

We find that central members come from the MEC and the National Agency for Education, but also from the external organisations. The core of the network includes a concentration of actors from external organisations such as the Finnish Association for the Development of Vocational Education and Training AMKE and the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences. When we compared the backgrounds of the individuals to the departments in which the working groups they served in belonged to, we found that individuals who served in working groups from different departments are affiliated with external organisations. This suggests that the MEC officials are limited in the tasks of the ministry protocol for different departments and members that are external to the ministry are the links between these departments.

We conducted yet another analysis on the background organisations of the 99 key individuals who had most connections in the network. The background organisations are listed in Table 3.2. It illustrates the centrality of organisational backgrounds outside from the MEC. Most working group memberships from individuals in this outsider group are from the Ministry of Finance (44), National Agency for Education (43), Finnish Association for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (33), Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (30), Confederation of Finnish Industries (21), Trade Union of Education (19) and IT Centre for Science (19). In addition, the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

(Arene) seems like a powerful organisation given its number of connections (17), albeit it has fewer memberships (14) than the other organisations listed here. The reason for this might be that there is only one person representing Arene in all of these groups.

These 99 central individuals in Table 3.2, who are central nodes in the network represent mostly public governance (ministries, government agencies), labour markets, universities and other educational institutions and their interest organisations, and cultural organisations. In addition, there is one representative from the Association of Finnish Municipalities and two Members of Parliament. External representation outside MEC is thus formed mostly by public sector, labour market and education providers' organisations and interest organisations.

Drawing on the MEC working group analysis with the help of networks we conclude that the MEC is relatively strongly organised in departmental sectors. The exceptions to this rule are the general and interdepartmental working groups and the Department for Vocational Education and Training. Particularly strong sectors operating on their own are the Department for Art and Cultural Policy and the Department for Youth and Sport policy. Analysis of networks of individuals showed that the links between the different departments are MEC officials only in part. External members from public sector, labour market and education providers are in a more prominent role here.

Conclusion: The Myth of the Traditional Monolithic MEC?

Our analysis reveals that the structure of the network of the MEC's working groups conforms to the MEC's departmental division prescribed in the MEC's Rules of Procedure. Additionally, the network formed on the basis of individual members of the working groups showed that the external members have an important role in the social organisation of the MEC network. We conclude that the social organisation of the MEC is multi-layered,[47] having at least two layers: on one hand, the working group-based analysis shows that MEC has a traditional Weberian bureaucratic and sectoral organisation within it, but on the other hand the individual-based analysis shows that MEC also has a cross-departmental networked form of organisation that includes a host of external stakeholders in it. Lacking temporal dimension in our analysis, we cannot assert that this is a change to some previous mode of MEC's organisation, but we can state that both of these layers were present in our data. Thus, our analysis of the MEC's working groups offers a rather traditional picture of the MEC's operation on one hand, but on the other hand the strong role of the external working group members especially as interdepartmental links invites new questions about the application of networked governance and New Public Management in Finnish education policymaking.

The traditional Weberian picture of the sectoral MEC includes the idea that the MEC is organised rather strongly according to its five departments that are focused on their subject areas of work: (1) the Department of Early Childhood Education and

Table 3.2 Most connected working group members per organisation: number of individuals (N), sum of working group memberships (SM), and sum of connections (SC)

Organisation	N	SM	SC
Ministry of education and culture	49	573	307
Finnish national agency for education	7	43	34
Finnish association for the development of vocational education and training AMKE	3	33	34
Rectors' conference of finnish universities of applied sciences Arene	1	14	17
Central organisation of finnish trade unions SAK	3	30	16
CSC—IT center for science	4	19	16
Ministry of finance	2	44	14
Confederation of finnish industries EK	2	21	13
Parliament of Finland	2	8	13
Ministry of economic affairs and employment	2	13	11
Trade union of education OAJ	2	19	8
National union of vocational students in Finland SAKKI	2	15	8
University of applied sciences students in Finland SAMOK	2	15	6
Finnish providers of apprenticeship training	1	6	6
National library	1	5	6
Academy of Finland	1	12	4
Association of Finnish municipalities	1	6	4
The central union of agricultural producers and forest owners MTK	1	6	4
Finnish literary copyright society Sanasto	1	6	4
University of Tampere	1	4	4
Confederation of unions for professional and managerial staff in Finland Akava	1	8	3
Helsinki culinary school Perho	1	6	3
Haaga-Helia university of applied sciences	1	5	3
Finnish heritage agency	1	10	2
Finnish folk high school association	1	7	2
Finnish national gallery	1	6	2
Finnish musicians' union	1	6	2
Social insurance institution KELA	1	4	2
Research and innovation council	1	3	2
City of Helsinki	1	2	2
National audit office of Finland	1	2	2
Sum	**99**	**951**	**554**

Care, Basic Education and Non-Formal Education, (2) the Department of Vocational Education, (3) the Department of Higher Education and Science Policy and Upper Secondary Education, (4) the Department of Culture and Arts Policy, and (5) the Department of Sports and Youth Policy. The main sectoral division was the extent of separation of the Department of Culture and Arts Policy and the Department of Sports and Youth Policy from other departments' activities. The other three departments were clearly more connected through the networks of both working groups and individuals. This traditional picture is easily fitted to the continuum of the research literature reviewed at the beginning of this chapter that views Finnish education policy as being public servant-led and state-centred. We should note, though, that our focus was on the strong links—four or five connections—which may lead us to overestimate the importance of the public servants: public servants often serve in pairs or triplets simultaneously in several working groups as chairs, secretaries or rapporteurs, and in our analysis they are therefore easily interpreted as central nodes or strong links. This overestimation in turn could lead us to over-emphasise the importance of public servant-led policy formulation.

The traditional picture was challenged by the strong NGO and interest group representation in the working groups. The interpretation of the function and meaning of this representation remains partly open and a subject for further research. For example, one interpretation of the role of the NGOs and interest groups might follow the lines put forward by Seppo Tiihonen,[48] who argued that the abolition of a system based on central agencies for governing and committees for preparing legislation necessitated a technocratic mode of governance, which presumably requires broad range of stakeholders to be involved in policymaking. It is also conceivable that individuals and interest groups external to the MEC can bring their own ideas to the MEC's processes, which is strengthened when these individuals act as links between different departments. Yet another possible interpretation is that our results point to a shift from traditional form of government to a networked governance model, where stakeholders are involved in policy formulation and decision-making from start to finish. In this case, working groups could be an important tool for the MEC to commit external stakeholders to policymaking in such a way that it is easier for MEC to push reforms and harder for the stakeholders to oppose the reforms since they have been part of the preparation process from the start.

Another option is to consider the strong position of the external stakeholders along the lines presented by Anne Maria Holli[49] when she studied the usage of rapporteurs: analogically to Holli, we may ask whether the working groups represent a tacit shift to (at least partial) outsourced policy planning and preparation, and if so, has it strengthened the link between policy preparation and political-electoral cycle. For further research it is noteworthy that our requirement for strong links focuses our analysis into individuals who are key representatives of their organisations and leads to omission of those individuals and organisations that are less prominently represented in working groups. We may underestimate especially organisations that have a broad representation that is delegated to a relatively large number of individuals. These less or dispersedly represented individuals and organisations, or "weak ties",[50] can still be significant, but our exploratory analysis here cannot reveal this.

This means, in effect, that our results may under-estimate the overall role and impact of external organisations.

In the social organisation of working groups, a core group of individuals participating in working groups—'professional working-groupers'—can be identified, some from within the MEC and some external to it (see Table 3.2). These people have strong formal one-to-one ties to one another, as they have to share four or five working group memberships. Thus, while even strong formal ties do not guarantee personal ties, we can be fairly sure that these professional working-groupers know one another by name or by reputation, which is likely to facilitate communication and knowledge transfer between both the individuals and working groups. This indeed can steer the actors towards joint understanding of and consensus about 'real problems' and 'appropriate solutions'.

Another aspect of professional working-groupers is that over the eight years that our data covers, the MEC's two to three hundred employees have had 643 working groups to take part in and to run. The MEC's officials form a central subgroup of people in the network of these working groups (Table 3.2). Thus, it can be argued that participating in working groups is an important aspect of work for the MEC officials, especially those of the subgroup, and thus working groups are a significant form of operation of the MEC. Considering that, as part of the government, the MEC's main task is to implement the government programme, is the extensive allocation of human resources to working group work one way to engage and commit external actors into the programme's implementation? This observation is supported by the fact that steering by information is also an important tool for the MEC in those areas over which it has no direct influence.

Finally, it is worth considering the constellation produced when we put together the emphasis on the leadership of public servants, the lack of party politics in education policy observed in previous research, and the centrality of external actors in the network observed in this chapter. It might be argued that the long-term leadership by public servants in the education policy field in Finland has resulted in limited initiative from the party-political side, and for their part the public servants of the MEC focus on their respective policy area in one sector within their departments. If the policymakers stay without grand initiatives and the public servants are divided by sectors, the fact that external actors are key links in the network might mean that external stakeholders wield significant power over the broader perspective and coordination of the education policy field in Finland. As a result, external actors could be important systemic visionaries of Finnish education policy. All in all, our results seem to suggest that the MEC and its operations are not as traditional and monolithic as it has usually been conceived in the past.

Notes

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    palities, which are also used to finance the education organised by the municipalities. In 2019,
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    sestä (30.4.2019), A 441/2017 Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön asetus opetus- ja kulttuurimin-
    isteriön työjärjestyksestä annetun opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön asetuksen muuttamisesta ja
    väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta, and A 806/2018. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön asetus opetus-
    ja kulttuuriministeriön työjärjestyksestä annetun opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön asetuksen
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    Board, the Academy of Finland, the Matriculation Examination Board, and the National
    Repository Library. In the field of cultural policy, these organizations under the MOE are
    the National Audiovisual Institute, the Finnish Heritage Agency, Celia (the library for the
    visually impaired), the Governing Body of Suomenlinna (a maritime fortress and a Unesco
    heritage site), and the Arts Promotion Centre Finland. The MEC also governs CSC – IT
    Center for Science Ltd. and Ypäjä Equine College Ltd. (For further details, see Opetus-
    ja kulttuuriministeriön hallinnonala (https://minedu.fi/hallinnonala. Accessed 10 Oct 2019)
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41. Kauko, op. cit.
42. Rhodes, op. cit.
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Jarmo Kallunki is Doctoral Researcher at Tampere University. His dissertation in sociology focuses on cultural reproduction in Finland. He is currently working on the 'Transnational Knowledge Networks in Higher Education Policymaking' (KNETS) project funded by the Academy of Finland.

Jaakko Kauko is Professor of Education Policy at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, where he co-leads the research group EduKnow (Knowledge, Power, and Politics in Education). His research focuses on the fields of education policy and comparative education. He is currently leading the Academy of Finland-funded project 'Transnational Knowledge Networks in Higher Education Policymaking'(KNETS).

Oren Pizmony-Levy is Associate Professor of International and Comparative Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Trained as a sociologist, his scholarship explores the interplay between global social movements and education policy/practice, with emphasis on international large-scale assessments (ILSAs), and environmental and sustainability education (ESE). Pizmony-Levy is exploring the emergence and development of ILSAs (e.g., TIMSS, PIRLS, and PISA) and their implications to public discourse and public opinion on education. He leads a research-practice partnership between Teachers College and the New York City Department of Education, which seeks to improve schools' engagement with sustainability.

Chapter 4
A Progressive Force in Finnish Schooling?: Finland's Education Union, OAJ, and Its Influence on School-Level Education Policy

Nina Nivanaho and Martin Thrupp

Abstract The Trade Union of Education in Finland, OAJ, is a large organisation covering early childhood education through to adult education and training. OAJ claims to have a key role in influencing education policy and often takes up progressive stances in the media. At the same time, there has been little evidence of it contesting government policy in any overt way. To explore whether OAJ really influences Finnish education policy and in what ways, this chapter looks at education policy concerning comprehensive schooling during the period of the centre-right Sipilä Government in power from 2015–19 and then at the interests and responses of the OAJ over the same period. Employing a thematic analysis of OAJ press releases and other publications, the authors argue that whereas the Sipilä Government's education policy emphasised a more neo-liberal and individualistic approach to educational equity, the OAJ often sought to highlight a version of educational equality and its challenges associated with a democratic ideal of social justice. The OAJ also sought a longer-term perspective in Finnish education politics than was manifested in the various projects of the Sipilä Government. Overall, the chapter provides insights into Finnish education policy-making processes that involve decision-makers and working groups operating at both national and local (municipal) levels and the related positioning of the OAJ.

Since the introduction of the Finnish comprehensive school system in the 1970s, Finland has often been regarded as a country offering equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of individuals' socio-economic background or locale. However, particularly over the last decade, the Finnish comprehensive ideal of educational equality has been challenged by neo-liberal values, policies, and practices as

N. Nivanaho (✉)
Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: nina.j.nivanaho@utu.fi

M. Thrupp
Division of Education, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand
e-mail: thrupp@waikato.ac.nz

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economic prosperity has become the driving force of Finnish education policy.[1] Neo-liberal education policy sees education treated more as a commodity than a public good, with the key goal of creating human capital for the market.[2] The centre-right Finnish government led by Juha Sipilä, in power 2015–2019, often promoted neo-liberal values such as efficiency, flexibility, entrepreneurship, customer orientation, and innovation, including digitalisation.[3] Tuomas Tervasmäki and Tuukka Tomperi suggest that the education policy of this government was crystallised in the perception of the obsolescence of Finnish education and the need to reform the operating culture, pedagogy, and learning methods of education, primarily using digital applications and learning environments.[4]

Our concern in this chapter[5] is how OAJ (Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö) positioned itself in relation to the Sipilä Government, as a centre-right government promoting neo-liberal policies that education unions in many countries would be opposed to.[6] Did it support those values or contest them, and what kinds of influence did it seek to have? By investigating these questions, we hope to address something of a puzzle about how Finnish education policy gets made. In many countries, progressive developments in education are won because of the actions of teachers and other educators working through their unions. Sometimes union opposition to government policy is rather obvious, involving strikes, protests, and the like. But in Finland's more consensual tradition for exercising power,[7] such overt struggles are rare. Is this because the OAJ tends to fall into line with the government policy of the day or because it wants to keep its position at the centre of Finnish 'routine corporatism'?[8] Certainly, the OAJ claims to be 'a key influencer of education policy'[9] and yet Mirka Räisänen suggests that OAJ has always been committed to 'conservative expediency':

> Questions concerning the very foundations and legitimacy of education and schooling are dissociated from the core interests of the union. Since teachers are depicted as apolitical pedagogical experts, the OAJ's mission seems to be the execution of 'apolitical politics'.[10]

Studying the response of the OAJ to the Sipilä Government offers good insights into this conundrum. Our chapter starts by characterising the Sipilä Government's education policy, drawing on the Strategic Programme called "Finland, the land of Solutions",[11] and paying special attention to key project No. 1 "New learning environments and digital materials to comprehensive schools".[12] The project outlined five objectives for the reform of comprehensive school and the measures to support them.[13] We then move to examine what kind of response OAJ had to the education policy of the Sipilä Government using a thematic analysis of news, press releases, reports, and blog posts published in the "current affairs" section in the OAJ website during the period of the Sipilä Government.[14] Finally, we discuss the extent to which OAJ views aligned with Sipilä Government views and what this can tell us about the role of OAJ in Finnish education politics. The analysis will be linked to the tradition of corporatism[15] and especially consensus-seeking[16] which have been identified as guiding principles in policy making in Finland since the time of the autonomy of the Grand Duchy of Finland.[17] This background must be understood to make sense of how the OAJ exerts influence in contemporary education politics.

Characterising the Sipilä Government's Approach to School-Level Policy

"Finland, the land of Solutions", published in May 2019, was a "new kind of government program" aimed at "clarifying the political will of the government and the implementation of the program and restoring collectivity to ministry work".[18] According to Juri Mykkänen, the Finnish government program is an institution that determines the content of the policy pursued by the government, as well as its operating methods. He notes that while the contents of the Finnish government programs have become more detailed, they have also become binding documents, with outcomes monitored by both the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office.[19] The Sipilä Government's Strategic Government Programme defined employment and competitiveness; knowledge and education; wellbeing and health; the bioeconomy and clean solution, and digitalisation, experimentation, and deregulation as the government's strategic priorities.[20] Each was guided by what the government called 'key projects', for which the Sipilä Government issued an action plan (PMO 2015) and three further revised action plans in subsequent years.[21] According to the Parliament of Finland's Audit Committee a total of EUR 1 billion"change funding" was directed to putting the Sipilä Government's key projects in place, of which a total of EUR 300 million was budgeted for the key projects of knowledge and education.[22]

The vision of the Sipilä Government's education policy was that by 2025 Finland would be:

> … a country that encourages people to continuously learn something new. Skills and education levels in Finland have risen, promoting the renewal of Finnish society and equal opportunities. Finland is in the vanguard of education, skills and modern learning techniques.[23]

In order to develop comprehensive education (key project 1), the "New Comprehensive School" project was established, to make Finland:

> a leading country in education, competence and modern and inspiring learning by modernising the learning environments of comprehensive education, utilising the opportunities of digitalisation and new pedagogy in learning, and strengthening the skills of teachers.[24]

The New Comprehensive School Program was guided and supported by a steering group for reforming comprehensive schools chaired by Minister of Education Sanni Grahn-Laasonen.[25] There were five objectives set for this key project, along with measures to support them.[26] The first objective was "Vision work by Comprehensive School Forum". This forum, consisting of a cross-party parliamentary group (also chaired by Minister of Education Sanni Grahn-Laasonen),an action group, and a researcher group, was to clarify the goals and visions for the future of comprehensive education. It published the *Finnish Basic Education—Excellence through Equity for All*[27]—commitment in the spring of 2018 which in turn led to four priority goals: (1) management and competence development; (2) long-term development,

funding, and support for curriculum implementation; (3) learning support, individualised learning pathways and more flexible basic education; and (4) the school as a promoter of well-being.[28] The aim was to put these goals into practice through the Paras koulu -kampanja ("Best School campaign") to build the highest quality and most equal comprehensive schools in the world. In addition, the Comprehensive School Forum brought together different actors and partners to envision the future of Finnish comprehensive schooling in workshops organised around Finland. In these workshops, the "new comprehensive school" and its goals were envisioned through six themes: learner-orientation, new learning environments, new curriculum, renewed operating culture of the school, the digitalisation of teaching, and the development of teachers' skills. These themes were each accompanied by a vision and some goals and ways to achieve them.[29]

Objective 2 was "Developing teachers' skills throughout their careers". The Ministry of Education and Culture set up a Teacher Education Forum of more than 60 teacher educators and others to create guidelines for the development of teacher education and to promote its reform process. It drew up a Teacher Education Development Programme for the reform of initial and in-service training of teachers that argued they must continuously develop their skills, e.g., by using their creativity and experimenting, making extensive use of new learning environments and research, and being part of national and international networks. To increase collaboration and networking, the Teacher Education Forum launched a total of 45 different "teacher education development projects" and networks intended to strengthen links between initial teacher education and in-service training, cooperation, the teacher education curriculum, the ability of teachers to innovate, digitalisation and career development.[30]

A third objective was "reform[ing] the comprehensive school to meet the needs of the 2020s"[31] by promoting, coordinating, and reforming the experimental, development, and innovation activities of schools. On top of the previous developments, Kokeilukeskus ('Innovation Centre') was established to promote "systemic change" in the operating culture of education and to accelerate innovation activities. This Innovation Centre, which was established under the auspices of the National Board of Education and began operations in 2017, was based on the idea that educational issues cannot be solved within the field of education alone.[32] It aimed to support the "renewable ecosystem" and allow "best practices" to spread nationally.[33] It has had cooperation projects with both Finnish and foreign researchers, the Finnish think-thank Demos-Helsinki,[34] Majakka ("The Lighthouse"[35]) and Loisto ("The Brilliance")[36] networks of the National Board of Education, the HundrED social enterprise (see the introduction to this book) and the Finnish municipalities.[37] The Innovation Centre concluded that "there is a lack of deliberate pilot action in the field of education; alongside traditional project development, a new kind of deliberate experimental development and co-development is needed".[38] To promote this "change in operating culture", the Innovation Centre launched a one-year pilot program in 2018, where the selected projects will have the opportunity to develop their innovations through peer support and feedback.

Objective 4 was a "Tutor teacher for each school".[39] This continued "digi-tutor" experiments of the previous government whereby tutor teachers promoted the digitalisation of teaching and supported new pedagogies. In order to promote the networking and development of tutor teachers, regional coordinators were appointed and national tutor days and workshops were organised. In addition to tutor teachers, many municipalities also involved "student agents" in tutoring activities.

The fifth and last objective was "The internationalisation of Finnish education". This sought to accelerate the connection of Finnish education and teachers to the world and to promote Finnish education exports.[40] A report about 'Global Education Brand Finland' was prepared[41] and the goal of internationalisation was promoted through participation in international networks such as the Atlantic Rim Collaboratory (ARC), a global think tank network for education systems led by Andy Hargraves which includes what the MEC described as "thought leaders" such as Sir Ken Robinson, Michael Fullan, and Pasi Sahlberg.[42] There were also many other forums intended to "provide international partners with information about Finnish comprehensive school, teacher education and their continuous development".[43] The 2019 MEC report lists a total of 44 different international conferences and meetings in which the New Comprehensive School program was involved or where the program and its implementation were presented.[44]These conferences and meetings included visits to Finland by educational delegations from different countries, the World Bank's visit to Finland, the International Summit on the Teaching Profession 2019[45] and the BETT Conference in 2018.[46]

From this broad summary, we can conclude that the Sipilä Government's policy with regard to comprehensive schools centred on 'modernising' reforms, around innovation, digitalisation, internationalisation, and the like.[47] In this respect, it was not dissimilar to the aspirations of reforming governments in many other countries, with two exceptions. First, there is little overt discussion of privatisation and reducing the role of the state. The state remains firmly at the centre of policy, albeit drawing on alliances with private actors. Second, there is a great deal of consultation with and involvement of those within the education sector. Both of these reflect longstanding corporatist features of Finnish politics and policy. What is not clear from this overview is the nature of the discussion and debates that went on within the various fora, whose arguments held sway in the contest of ideas, and what the OAJ might be most concerned about.

How Did the OAJ Respond?

In order to look at the concerns of the OAJ during the term of the Sipilä Government, we examined all news, statements, press releases, reports, blog articles, and other publications published in the "current affairs" section of the OAJ website over this time (i.e., 29.5.2015–6.6.2019).[48] Here we describe all of these as 'releases' of one kind or another. Unfortunately, redesign of the website means that some releases for 2015 and 2016 had been lost but the years 2017–19 were complete. In total, we

found 644 different releases that were published by the OAJ during the time of the Sipilä Government, of which 178 were about comprehensive education. Ten main concerns were represented in 140 of the releases as presented in Table 4.1 (note that some were themed under more than one concern).[49]

We now turn to a discussion of these main OAJ concerns. As with our account of the views of the Sipilä Government, we stress that these are only the most public of OAJ perspectives, we expect that much policy work is being achieved 'behind the scenes' in countless networks and meetings that we do not have access to (see Kallunki, Kauko, and Pizmony-Levy in this book). It would require a different methodology, for instance retrospective interviews with policy makers, to uncover a richer picture.

The Realisation of Educational Equality in Finland

Many of the OAJ releases in this area (26) were to do with educational financing and "education cuts" by the Sipilä Government. Concerns were expressed about spending cuts under the Katainen Government and Stubb Government (both prior to the Sipilä Government) and the Sipilä Government itself, which according to the OAJ totalled €2 billion.[50] These funding cuts were seen to be more prominent in the government programme than others. The OAJ considered the reduction of permanent core funding for education and, at the same time, the increase of various fixed-term development funding to be especially concerning:

> Education has core funding, targeted funding, and development funding. The most important aspect of the overall level of funding for education is the level of permanent funding and the changes made to it. Increasing fixed-term development funding can easily create a false impression that funding for education is increasing.[51]

The OAJ argued that funding cuts were related to a decline in educational equality in Finland:

> In the same time cycle with education cuts, municipal education services have become increasingly unequal over the last twenty years. The parliament has decided to increase inequality among Finnish comprehensive school pupils.[52]

The perceived problem was that "various short-term projects and fragmented grants cause inefficiency in development work and encourage short-term development solutions".[53] In 2019, the OAJ urged the future government to repay its "investment debts" for education as soon as possible by proposing a long-term education growth program for the next term, which would mean investing more than one billion euros in education.[54]

The theme of equality in Finnish comprehensive education dominated in 25 releases. OAJ's concern was about the "erosion of equality" in Finnish education:

> According to research and PISA results there are clear signs of an erosion of educational equality. The school is no longer able to level out social differences as before. Low levels

Table 4.1 Main concerns of OAJ releases related to comprehensive education

Realisation of educational equality in Finland (n = 94)	Teachers' working conditions (n = 46)	Other topics (n = 41)
Educational financing and "education cuts" by the Sipilä Government (n = 26)	Teachers' well-being at work (n = 18)	Issues of indoor air quality in Finnish schools (n = 17)
Equality in Finnish comprehensive education (n = 25)	Student–teacher ratio and group sizes in comprehensive education (n = 14)	Digitalisation of education (n = 13)
Social exclusion: Extension of compulsory education (n = 23)	Teachers' annual working time (n = 13)	Bullying and sexual harassment in schools (n = 11)
State of Finnish special education and learning support (n = 20)		

of education are passed down from one generation to the next. Although the majority of Finns are doing better than ever and living standards have risen, there is a growing number of people in Finland whose opportunities to build a good life and security are increasingly weak. Those who would benefit most from education will receive it the least.[55]

A repeated argument in OAJ's publications was that urgent action must be taken to ensure educational equality in Finland. In the spring of 2016, the OAJ launched its own campaign for equal education, the progress of which was widely reported during the Sipilä Government's time in power. At the beginning of the campaign, the OAJ published a "Roadmap for Equality" which could be used as a basis for joint debate".[56] According to the Roadmap:

> The quality of education services must not depend on the family's place of residence, language, socio-economic or cultural background. Services must be publicly funded and their quality and accessibility must be controlled nationally. The task of education is to open the way for everyone.

The OAJ also launched a "Baton for equality" intended to stimulate discussion in the form of various events, campaigns, and publications on how educational equality could be secured in Finland. The baton circulated through nine organisations and companies and finished up at an equality seminar organised by the OAJ for party representatives in February 2019, just before the 2019 parliamentary elections.[57] In addition, the theme of equality pursued by the OAJ continued in the OAJ's 2019 parliamentary elections campaign "Koulutus ratkaisee" ("Education is crucial"). The OAJ campaigned on 37 proposals to "cut off the vicious spiral of education", five of which sought to address the problem of "erosion of educational equality".[58]

Another noteworthy concern in this equality area was social exclusion (23 releases). Here the problem was seen to be that "[t]he pursuit of efficiency and results in education have increasingly led to a lack of time to meet every child and adolescent in a respectful and unhurried manner [and] loneliness has increased".[59] The issue of social exclusion was raised in OAJ's support for extending compulsory education. It was argued that social exclusion resulted from a decline in educational attainment in Finland:

> The most educated Finns are in their forties, as the level of educational attainment rose until their age group, but began to decline after them. The decline is worrying, as education improves e.g., quality of life and personal well-being. The decline in educational attainment is weakening employment and is an obstacle to labour market renewal.[60]

The OAJ promoted expanding compulsory education as a way to raise the level of competence of Finns and reduce early school leaving. Its model for compulsory education published in March 2018 stressed that extending compulsory education would achieve greater educational equality in Finland.[61] The OAJ would later claim that an extension of compulsory education which began in August 2021 was influenced by its own campaigning.

The state of Finnish special education and learning support was a specific OAJ concern in the area of social exclusion related to the Basic Education Act revised in 2010 (20 releases). At that time, a 'three-tiered support' system was introduced in

preliminary and comprehensive education, with the aim of ensuring better access for pupils to the learning support they needed.[62] This was carried out through inclusion, where special support students were placed in general education groups but an OAJ release called this practice into question:

> This so-called inclusion works well if the group's activities are supported, for example, by a special needs teacher working with the class or subject teacher. Placing pupils with special needs in a general education group without support is the worst possible situation and yet unfortunately common.[63]

It was also argued that in some municipalities the approach taken to three-tiered support had been a cost-saving measure.[64] In April 2017, the OAJ published a report that highlighted unequal learning support across Finland because it had not been put into place in all municipalities and schools. The "education is crucial" campaign mentioned earlier also called for learning support to be urgently remedied.

Teachers' Working Conditions

Teachers' well-being at work during the Sipilä Government (18 releases) emerged as a theme especially in discussions of education funding:

> Increased stress among teachers and negative phenomena in schools, day-care centres, and educational institutions show that the financial resources are not adequate.[65]

The OAJ took measures to promote teachers' well-being during the term of the Sipilä Government. Before the Municipal Elections of 2017, the association published a "Route Guide for Municipal Decision-Makers" in order to stress the importance of teachers' "peaceful working conditions" and ways to realise these.[66] In August 2019, the OAJ launched a "school year of well-being at work", the aim of which was both to highlight the themes of well-being at work and to reach decision-makers.[67] In May 2019, the OAJ's council sent a video statement to the government-formation negotiator asking, "How will the forthcoming government ensure that teachers have the opportunity to do their jobs well?".[68]

Publications on teachers' well-being at work stressed the need for long-term, cross-government educational policymaking that would guarantee teachers' peaceful working conditions. The OAJ also emphasised that perseverance is an integral part of the teaching profession: "The top quality of Finnish education and upbringing has required long-term work. It must not be wasted with hypocritical entrepreneurial hype".[69]

Discussion in this area of teachers' working conditions often revolved around student–teacher ratios and group sizes in comprehensive education (14 releases). The OAJ's stance was that the law should determine the maximum number of students per teacher and that regulating the student–teacher ratio by law could help move from "exclusion development" towards "inclusion development".[70] The importance of lowered student–teacher ratios for both teachers' well-being at work and meeting

student needs was also emphasised.[71] The OAJ wanted Grades 1–2 to have a ratio of 1:18 and older classes to be 1:20. The proposed ratio also gave students receiving special support a higher coefficient. The OAJ argued that municipal decision-makers already had ways to introduce "ratio thinking" and to "strengthen teachers' peaceful working conditions".[72]

Annual working time for teachers was also the subject of numerous releases (13). A change in teachers' working hours was initiated when OAJ and KT Local Government Employers[73] concluded negotiations on a pilot model[74] at the beginning of 2018, and the OAJ's Executive Board decided to launch annual working time trials for comprehensive education.[75] The annual working time provoked a lot of discussion amongst OAJ members, including, for example, whether the number of lessons taught by teachers would increase as a result of the change.[76] There was also a breakaway group of teachers on this issue which had accumulated more than 10,000 members by August 2019.[77] At the OAJ Council meeting of November 2019, the Executive Board received criticisms from the Council for its communication concerning annual working time. Questions were raised about the OAJ's decision to close its own annual working time Facebook group in operation from January 2018 to February 2019.[78] According to the Council's feedback, OAJ's communication was seen as silencing the range of perspectives held by its members, and the Executive Board acknowledged the criticism it received:

> The discussion on the topic should have been continued and more resources should have been devoted to it, and there could have been more extensive and polyphonic articles on the topic in the Teacher magazine as well.[79]

Some Other Topics Covered by the OAJ

Issues related to indoor air quality were relatively prominent in the publications (17).

According to the OAJ, indoor air problems in schools were too common, and it commissioned research on the issue.[80] In May 2018, the OAJ welcomed a "Healthy Facilities 2028" program announced by a parliamentary working group.[81] On the other hand it expressed its disappointment when "The Finnish Indoor Air and Health Program" was published in October 2018. It argued the program downplayed illness due to indoor air problems, and trade unions had been ignored during the design process of the program.[82] Later the OAJ demanded state funding for the prevention of indoor air problems, more attention to appropriate construction of school buildings, and improvements in the legal security of those suffering from indoor air problems.[83]

One area where the OAJ seems to have often agreed with the Sipilä Government was around the digitalisation of education (13 releases). The preface of a 2016 OAJ report suggested:

> The Government has grasped at the digitalisation of education by launching a key project to support the development of learning environments and digital learning in comprehensive schooling. The differences are wide in the progress of digitalisation and national guidance and support are needed to ensure educational equality. The OAJ considers the project important and desirable and will play an active role in it.[84]

Elsewhere the OAJ emphasises the role of education in teaching children and young people digital skills:

> It is increasingly important to prepare children, young people, and adults to cope safely, responsibly, ethically, and critically in a progressively digital world, but equally socially, creatively, open-mindedly, and with confidence in their abilities. Without this knowledge, one can end up excluded in a digital society. If this skill is not learned in education, then where? The education sector must be at the forefront of digitalisation.[85]

At the same the OAJ stresses that Finland should focus on the equal promotion of digitalisation nationwide and had concerns about, for example, the lack of digital equipment provided by employers, i.e., municipalities, insufficient in-service training of teachers to the pedagogical use of digital tools and materials and the common experience of increased workload by teachers due to digitalisation.[86] Broader issues around individual freedom, privacy of personal data, the importance of personal interaction and preserving the pedagogical freedom of the teacher were also canvassed.[87]

A final key topic was bullying and sexual harassment amongst children in both schools and on the internet (11 releases). The prevention of bullying and harassment was featured in OAJ's communications throughout the Sipilä Government's legislature and was also one of OAJ's demands to the forthcoming government in OAJ's Parliamentary Election Campaign.[88] In May 2018 the OAJ asked:

> The rest of the government term must be other than talk about SOTE [Finnish acronym for health and social care], preparing for upcoming parliamentary elections and making promises. Actions must be taken. One has to ask how the bullied one is doing. Is the government's promise to take a stand against bullying coming true?[89]

According to the OAJ, more robust measures were needed to prevent bullying. It supported Tiina Elovaara's [Blue Reform political party] legislative initiative, in which both comprehensive and secondary education institutions would be required to report and address bullying and monitor its cessation.[90] The Sipilä Government also received praise from the OAJ for its work to prevent bullying and harassment. For example, it was pleased with the guide published by the National Board of Education in March 2018 on preventing sexual harassment, which the OAJ had helped to prepare. In OAJ's statement, the association emphasised that sexual harassment reported by a child or adolescent should always be addressed in the educational institution, regardless of whether the harassment occurred at school or elsewhere.[91]

Conclusion: Characterising OAJ as an Actor in Finnish Education

Returning to the question of how much the OAJ supported or resisted the centre-right Sipilä Government we caution again that a lot of policy work, both informal and formal, remains out of sight of our analysis here. We can therefore only present

a partial picture but some rather obvious points can be noted and some more subtle patterns as well.

An obvious starting point is that there is no discussion of overt resistance by the OAJ to the proposals of the Sipilä Government, for instance through strike action or campaigns that refuse co-operation with particular policies. One reason for this may be that it is averted by the highly collaborative approach to policy development in Finland which was mentioned in the introduction of this book and which our own discussion has shown continued, at least in a formal sense, during the Sipilä Government. OAJ continued to be called regularly to the meeting table, for instance, we know that OAJ's Olli Luukkainen participated in the steering group of the New Comprehensive School project from December 2015 to February 2019.[92] But there are also some signs that the OAJ did not in any case dispute many of the developments under the Sipilä Government, rather only wanting to take a slightly different perspective and not one that was particularly critical, at least certainly not by the standards of academic scholarship on the impacts of neo-liberal education policy. Anu Kantola (2015) explains that this consensus-seeking is a key to political success in Finland, especially today when the party-political landscape is constantly expanding.[93] This finding suggests that the OAJ prefers to work 'inside the tent', a positioning that has clearly worked for it historically and which Finnish educational politics continues to allow for and encourages. It is difficult to envisage an issue getting to the point where the OAJ would instruct its members to take overt protest action in the way that is common in many other countries.

Sometimes we see the reluctance to criticise government through omission. For instance, we see little commentary by the OAJ of the Sipilä Government's emphasis on ideals and practices traditionally associated with the business world: its emphasis on vision work, various innovation and pilot projects, networks and collaboration, a culture of change, digitalisation and internationalisation. Admittedly, these features can be considered as a continuum of various New Public Management-type reforms that had been carried out in Finland since the governments of Holkeri (1987–1991) and Aho (1991–95).[94] We also note that there was not a lot of discussion by the OAJ of the breakaway group of teachers who were unhappy with what the OAJ was proposing about changes in teachers' working hours, although that controversy had received attention in the Finnish media. Perhaps the OAJ finds it more important to present the image of being a united and consensual partner in the policy process. It is also noteworthy that the OAJ paid so little attention to the export of education (only one release) even though it was one of the big agendas of the Sipilä Government. There may be hints here of support for neo-liberal education policy as the single release (a blog post by OAJ chair Olli Luukkainen) was in favour of increasing education exports, regretting, for example, how fragmented the field of Finnish education exports was and how difficult it had been for education export actors to obtain financing for their business.

More often than omission, it seems that OAJ found political utility in generalities that cover up differences in perspective. The most frequent and important of these were in the area of educational equality and equity, the debate that dates back to the establishment of the Finnish comprehensive school system.[95] Both the Sipilä

Government and the OAJ spoke in favour of educational equality but meant different things. While the OAJ spoke about the equality of educational opportunities, i.e., everyone's "equal opportunity to complete a comprehensive school curriculum with the same principles regardless of their place of residence, gender or parents' wealth or social status",[96] the Sipilä Government emphasised rather individual educational equity, what Sirkka Ahonen has referred to as a neo-liberalist "equal opportunity for everybody to fulfil her or his capacity and aspirations".[97] It emphasises individual choices, deregulation of education, and liberalisation of school choices.[98]

This important difference is underpinned by an insufficient interest in the specific mechanisms of inequality and how these are affected by the policy. For instance, the impact of 'choice' and residential segregation on equality are amongst the most serious issues that critics of neo-liberal education policy tend to raise (see for instance chapters in this book by Seppänen, Pasu, and Kosunen; and by Bernelius and Kosunen). We do see the concern in some OAJ releases about the segregation in education and training and how the socio-economic background is related to so-called "school shopping". The OAJ also encouraged municipalities to adopt a "positive discrimination model" being used in Helsinki to improve academic outcomes and retention at school, especially for low-achieving children with an immigrant background.[99] Yet these concerns were not linked by the OAJ to neo-liberal developments in Finnish education policy.

Mira Kalalahti and Janne Varjo have shed some light on differences in perspective around equality in Finnish education. They point out that the concepts of equality of educational opportunities and individual educational equity were already mixed in the Finnish political debate during the Katainen Government in power from 2011–14. At that time, the contradiction from the point of view of equality was caused by dual goals of preventing segregation but emphasising the rights of the individual. They suggest these contradictions can be explained by the way equality had already become an unquestioned value in Finnish education:

> Equality can also be thought of as such a special and central part of the Finnish post-World War II education policy discourse that its conceptual analysis has remained superficial and the connections of its content to selected socio-political perspectives have not been specified.[100]

A further general feature of the OAJ's releases was the way they reflected frustration with a fragmented policy programme where different projects come and go. Although the OAJ did not directly criticise the development projects of the Sipilä Government, it seems the OAJ wanted this Government (and others) to have a longer-term perspective on Finnish educational politics. This question of the timeframe for politics and policy could be attributed to what Anne Maria Holli and Saara Turkka call "the hybridisation" of the Finnish political advisory system. As a result of this hybridisation, political preparation is divided between ministerial working groups and increasingly diverse project-based working groups.[101] In any event, the OAJ will likely need to respond to pressures in both the Finnish political advisory system[102] and in educational practices that call for a rapid capacity for renewal from both teachers and education policy.

Overall, our investigation into the OAJ's response to the Sipilä Government leaves us with the central question of why the OAJ was unwilling or unable to develop a more pointed critique of Government policy during that time. Was it because it is not ready to leave its comfort zone as an "apolitical" promoter of teachers' professional interests, free from political allegiances?[103] Or did senior OAJ officials agree with much of the direction of education policy at this time? (Olli Luukkainen's response to education exports seems to suggest this). Perhaps the OAJ was necessarily reflecting the perceived position of its membership and could not afford to develop any feistier critique of education policy? These questions remain for us and we hope future research will provide some answers.

Finally, we note that in recent times with the COVID-19 crisis, the OAJ did take a more oppositional stance to current Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government and municipal policy. During the first 'lockdown' in spring 2020 the OAJ argued strongly against this government's intention to quickly open contact teaching to the youngest comprehensive school pupils[104] and to open schools to everyone at the last minute before summer break.[105] The OAJ also deplored the intentions of many municipalities to lay off teachers during the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 crisis.[106] Perhaps in these changing times we will see some breakdown in the tacit understandings that have informed the way OAJ has acted in the past. Certainly, there should be no assumption that the nature of the OAJ's relationship with the Marin Government or future governments will remain the same, and indeed the pandemic may be a trigger for some rather different approaches.

Notes

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2. See, for instance Ahonen, S. 2002. From an industrial to a post-industrial society: Changing conceptions of equality in education. *Educational Review* 54(2): 173–181.

3. See Prime Minister's Office. 2015. *Finland, a land of solutions. Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government*. Government Publications 12/2015. https://vnk.fi/documents/10184/1427398/Ratkaisujen+Suomi_EN_YHDISTETTY_netti.pdf/8d2e1a66-e24a-4073-8303-ee3127fbfcac. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

   See also Tervasmäki T., M-A. Okkolin, and I. Kauppinen. 2020. Changing the heart and soul? Inequalities in Finland's current pursuit of a narrow education policy. *Policy Futures in Education*, 18(5): 648–661. doi:10.1177/1478210318811031

4. Tervasmäki, T. and T. Tomperi. 2018. Koulutuspolitiikan arvovalinnat ja suunta satavuotiaassa Suomessa. *Niin & Näin* 2(25): 164–200.

   See also Lempinen, S., and P. Seppänen. 2021. *Valtio koulutuksen liiketoimintaa edistämässä: Digitalisaatiolla 'osaamisen ekosysteemiin'*. In *Koulutuksen politiikat: Kasvatussosiologian 3. vuosikirja,* eds. J. Varjo, J. Kauko, and H. Silvennoinen, 73–110. Jyväskylä: Suomen Kasvatustieteellinen seura.

5. Financial support for this study was provided by grants from the Finnish Cultural Foundation, Varsinais-Suomi Regional Fund, and Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation.

6.   We refer here to the Sipilä Government following the convention of calling particular govern-
      ments after their leader but the public face of education policy at the time was Minister of
      Education Sanni Grahn-Laasonen.
7.   Lijphart, A. 2012. *Patterns of democracy. Government forms and performance in thirty-six
      democracies,* 2nd edition. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
           See also Kantola, A. 2015. *Muuttuuko maan tapa? Miten Suomessa käytetään talous-
      poliittista valtaa.* Sitra. https://media.sitra.fi/2017/02/23212731/Muuttuuko_maan_tapa_
      SITRA_muistio.pdf. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
8.   'Routine corporatism' refers to the institutionalised working group preparation through which
      economic groups and trade unions, such as the OAJ, have a strong position in Finnish political
      decision-making and preparation of laws. See Vesa, J., A. Kantola, and A. Binderkrantz
      Skorkjaer. 2018. A stronghold of routine corporatism? The involvement of interest groups
      in policy making in Finland. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 41(4): 239–261.
           See also Vesa, J., and A. Kantola. 2016. *Kuka pääsee mukaan? Miten järjestöjen ääni
      kuuluu lakien valmistelussa. Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja
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      handle/10024/79823/Kuka%20p%c3%a4%c3%a4see%20mukaan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllo
      wed=y. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
9.   OAJ. n.d. *The Trade Union of Education in Finland.* OAJ. https://www.oaj.fi/en/oaj/.
      Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
10. Räisänen, M. 2014. *Opettajat ja koulutuspolitiikka. Opetusalan ammattijärjestö ja
      Demokraattiset koulutyöntekijät -yhdistys peruskoulukauden koulutuspolitiikassa.* Tampere
      University Press. p. 14.
11. Prime Minister's Office 2015, op. cit.
12. Ibid., pp. 18–20.
13. Ministry of Education and Culture. 2019. *Uusi peruskoulu -kärkihanke 2016–2018.* Loppu-
      raportti.   https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4583171/Uusi+peruskoulu+-karkihanke+
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      kihanke+2016-2018+loppuraportti.pdf. Accessed 21 Dec 2021. p. 7.
           See also Ministry of Education and Culture. 2016. *New comprehensive School Action
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      ion+Plan+2016.pdf/8eef80c8-95e5-4d85-8a7c-426f6c98680c/New+Comprehensive+Sch
      ool+Action+Plan+2016.pdf?version=1.2&t=1487333320000. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
14. OAJ. n.d. Ajankohtaista. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
15. Anne Maria Holli and Saara Turkka (2021) argue that the Finnish political advisory system
      has moved from a corporate to a more hybrid direction, and especially the position of
      researchers as corporate partners has weakened while neo-liberal features in the advi-
      sory system have strengthened. See Holli, A-M., and S. Turkka. 2021. Tieteen muut-
      tuva rooli korporatistisessa neuvonannossa: Pitkittäisanalyysi tutkijoiden asemasta ministeri-
      öiden valmistelutyöryhmissä 1980–2018. *Politiikka: Valtiotieteellisen Yhdistyksen Julkaisu*
      63(1): 54–81. https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/329164/98500_Artikkelin_t
      eksti_191525_1_10_20210331.pdf?sequence=1.
           On the other hand, according to Vesa et al. (2018; 2016, op. cit.) "routine corporatism"
      is still strong in Finland and instead of weakening, it has "adapted to new circumstances".
           See also Rainio-Niemi, J. 2010. State committees in Finland in historical comparative
      perspective. In *Nordic associations in a European perspective,* eds. R. Alapuro and H. Stenius,
      241–268. BadenBaden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.
16. See for instance Lijphart, op. cit.
           See also Kantola, op. cit.
17. For more information about the history of consensus-seeking, corporatism and so-called state
      committees in Finland see for instance Rainio-Niemi, op. cit.
           See also Holli and Turkka, op. cit.
18. Translated quotation, see Mykkänen, J. 2015. Strateginen hallitusohjelma ja hallitusinsti-
      tuutioiden muutos. In *Poliittisen osallistumisen eriytyminen: Eduskuntavaalitutkimus 2015,*
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19. Ibid.
20. Prime Minister's Office 2015, op. cit. p. 12.
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23. Prime Minister's Office 2015, op. cit. p. 18.
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25. Ministry of Education and Culture 2019, op. cit. p. 78.
26. See Ministry of Education and Culture 2019, op. cit.
27. Ministry of Education and Culture. 2018. Finnish basic education—Excellence through equity for all. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/160846. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
28. Ministry of Education and Culture 2019, op. cit. p. 79.
29. Ibid., p. 16.
30. Ibid., pp.19–26.
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32. Ibid., pp. 30–31.
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36. Finnish National Agency for Education. n.d. Loisto—Varhaiskasvatuksen kehittämisverkosto. https://www.oph.fi/fi/kehittaminen/loisto-varhaiskasvatuksen-kehittamisverkosto#6c780c85. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
37. Ministry of Education and Culture 2019, op. cit. pp. 31–33.
38. Ibid., p. 31.
39. Ibid., p. 35.
40. Ibid., p. 38.
41. Doyle, W. 2017. Action plan report for global education brand Finland. Ministry of Education and Culture. https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4150027/Action+Plan+For+Global+Education+Brand+Finland/765e3118-475e-486e-a023-c4f88ae289f3. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.
42. Ministry of Education and Culture 2019. op. cit. pp. 38–39.
43. Ibid., p. 38.
44. Ibid., pp. 120–123.
45. The countries that were most successful in PISA tests and had strongly increased their own level of expertise were invited to the ISTP meeting (Ministry of Education and Culture 2019, op. cit. p. 41).

46. BETT is a 'global meeting place for the education technology community', see https://www.bettshow.com/bett-global-series. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

47. See also Lempinen and Seppänen, op. cit.

48. OAJ. n.d. Ajankohtaista. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/. Accessed 21 Dec 2021. Data-driven thematic analysis began by organizing OAJ's releases in chronological order. OAJ's releases about comprehensive schooling (N = 178) were read several times and the main points of each release were summarised and the dataset examples that were considered relevant for the discussion of the research questions were highlighted. The summaries and dataset examples were then re-read and sorted according to their subject area into main concerns. Finally, the main concerns were categorised into overarching themes.

49. The 178 releases were themed around 22 different themes, the 10 largest of which were represented across 140 releases are presented in the table and subjected to more in-depth analysis. In the table, however, this number appears to be larger, as during the analysis many releases were themed under several different themes. There were a total of 45 releases in the 12 smaller themes (again the calculations don't match with the 140 as some releases are placed under several themes). These 12 themes are establishment of a teacher register (4); teacher dismissal protection (8); teacher qualification requirements (6); teacher salaries (1); providing foreign language teaching to all first-graders (7); trial act for Second Native Language (2); evaluation (7); the PISA debate (3); curriculum debate (2); the establishment of student and degree register & students' data protection (2); reforming the club and hobby activities of schools (2); and educational exports (1).

50. OAJ. 2019. Koulutuksen rahoitus kuntoon. https://www.oaj.fi/contentassets/504ec214f24a4ae0845dbe531273a60d/oaj-2019-koulutuksen-rahoitus-kuntoon_25032019_nettiin_korjattu.pdf. p. 2. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

    Pulkkinen, S. 2019, March 22. OAJ's blog post. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/blogiartikkelit/koulutus-ratkaisee/2019/6-tapaa-joilla-koulutuksesta-on-leikattu--ja-miksi-sen-pitaa-loppua/. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

51. Translated quotation, see ibid.

52. Translated quotation, see Tuomisto, N. 2019, March 12. OAJ's blog post.
    https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/blogiartikkelit/koulutus-ratkaisee/2019/eduskunta-on-uuvuttanut-rehtorit-ja-koulutuksen/. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

53. OAJ 2019, op. cit. p. 11.

54. Ibid., p. 2.

55. Pulkkinen, S. 2019, February 2. OAJ's blog post. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/blogiartikkelit/koulutus-ratkaisee/2019/eriarvoistuminen-on-pysaytettava/. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

56. OAJ. 2016, April 12. Tasa-arvon tiekartta. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/julkaisut/2016/tasa-arvon-tiekartta/. Accessed 21 Dec 2021.

57. These organisations and companies were Association of Finnish Municipalities, Seta, Syl (The National Union of University Students in Finland), Samok, Moniheli, Stadin Osaamiskeskus, Securitas, Erilaisten oppijoiden liitto (the Association of Different Learners), Suomen vanhempainliitto (Parents' Association).

58. OAJ. 2018, October 5. Ratkaisuja Suomelle. https://www.oaj.fi/globalassets/julkaisut/2018/uusi_02042019_oaj_ratkaisuja_suomelle_a4_20s_kevyt_sivuittain.pdf. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

59. Translated quotation, see OAJ. 2018, October 5. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/nakemyksemme/2018/koulutus-ratkaisee-syrjaytyminen/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

60. Translated quotation, see OAJ. 2018, March 14. OAJ's Compulsory Education Model. https://www.oaj.fi/globalassets/julkaisut/2018/oppivelvollisuusraportti_final_sivuittain_uusioppivelvollisuusmalli.pdf. p. 4. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

    OAJ refers here to report by Statistics Finland: Tilastokeskus. 2017. Väestön koulutusrakennetilasto. Suomalaisten työikäisten koulutustaso ikäryhmittäin vuonna 2016.

61. Ibid.

62. OAJ. 2018, October 22. https://www.oaj.fi/politiikassa/riittavasti-tukea-oppimiseen-ja-koulunkayntiin/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

63. OAJ. 2019, February 19. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tiedotteet/2019/oppimi sen-ja-koulunkaynnin-tuki-uudistettava-pikaisesti/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

64. Translated quotation, see OAJ. 2017, April 24. https://www.oaj.fi/globalassets/julkaisut/ 2017/kolmiportainentuki_final_sivuittain.pdf. p. 2. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

65. Translated quotation, see OAJ. 2018, May 15. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tie dotteet/2018/tyonilo-karkasi-opettajan-tyosta/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

66. OAJ. 2017, March 23. Työrauha ja oppimisen ilo: Reittiopas kuntapäättäjille. https://www. oaj.fi/globalassets/julkaisut/2017/tyorauhaesite_6.4._sivut.pdf. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

67. OAJ. 2019, May 13. https://sko.oaj.fi/uutiset/mika-oajn-valtuustossa-puhutti-isoina-aiheina- neuvottelukierros-tyohyvinvointi-ja-vuosityoaika/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

68. OAJ. 2019, May 10. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tiedotteet/2019/oajn-valtuu sto-vaatii-investointeja-kasvatukseen-koulutukseen-ja-tutkimukseen/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

69. Translated quotation, see Luukkainen, O. 2018, May 14. OAJ's blog post. https://www.oaj. fi/ajankohtaista/blogiartikkelit/ollin-blogi/2018/opettajan-tyo-on-pitkajanteista/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

70. OAJ. 2018, October 5. op. cit.

71. Translated quotation, see OAJ. 2019, May 9. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tie dotteet/2019/valtuustoterveisia-hallitusneuvottelijoille/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

72. Translated quotation, see OAJ. 2017, March 23. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja- tiedotteet/2017/ryhmakoko-suhdeluvut-takaamaan-opettajien-maaraa-koulussa/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

73. KT stands for Finnish term "kuntatyönantaja" i.e., municipal employer. The abbreviation is also attached to the organisation's English name as well, see https://www.kt.fi/en/about-kt.

74. The annual working time trials have taken place in eight schools in five different municipal- ities. See https://www.oaj.fi/arjessa/perusopetuksen-vuosityoaikakokeilu/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

75. OAJ. 2018, January 9. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tiedotteet/2018/perusk oulun-vuosityoajan-kokeilumallista-neuvottelutulos/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

76. OAJ. 2018, October 18. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tiedotteet/2018/per usopetuksen-vuosityoaikakokeiluun-liittyy-huolia--tassa-vastauksia-niista-yleisimpiin/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

77. See https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10939413.

78. OAJ. 2019, February 5. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tiedotteet/2019/oaj.fissa- rutkasti-tietoa-vuosityoajasta-ja-vastauksia-huoliin--keskustelu-jatkuu/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.
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83. OAJ. 2018, October 5. Ratkaisuja Suomelle. op. cit.

84. Translated quotation, see OAJ. 2016, January 29. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/julkaisut/ 2016/oajn-askelmerkit-digiloikkaan/. p. 3. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.

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86. OAJ. 2019, March 21. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tiedotteet/2019/oajn-digikysely-kertoo-laitteiden-puutteesta-ja-lisaantyneesta-tyomaarasta--oajlla-ratkaisuehdotuksia/. Accessed 5 Jan 2022.
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     aattajilta-vastuutonta-korona-aikana-opettajien-lomautukset-vaikeuttavat-opiskelua-19-kun
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Nina Nivanaho is Doctoral Researcher in the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and
Education (CELE), University of Turku. She is also a researcher on the Academy of Finland-
funded 'Hollowing Out of Public Education Systems? Private Actors in Compulsory Schooling
in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand' (HOPES) research project. Her doctoral thesis is exploring
the emerging edu-business in Finland from the point of view of teachers.

Martin Thrupp is Professor of Education at the University of Waikato. His research interests are
in education policy, especially the lived effects of policy across diverse primary and secondary
schools and their communities. Thrupp has undertaken related educational research in Europe,
especially England, as well as in New Zealand, and has won several awards for his research and
publications. He has worked in Finnish education circles since 2016 including visits to Finland in
all four seasons. In 2022 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Turku.

Chapter 5
Finnish Quality Evaluation Discourse: Swimming Against the Global Tide?

Hannele Pitkänen

Abstract   This chapter discusses Finnish quality evaluation in comprehensive education, recognising that it frequently differs from that used by the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) in most countries. Instead of high-stakes testing of pupil achievement, monitoring or school inspection, Finnish quality evaluation (QE) rests mainly on sample-based national testing and self-evaluations conducted in schools and municipalities. The argument presented here is that, although reform of the Finnish education system has often taken a different path from other countries, at the level of discourse, the Finnish system is increasingly caught between the more usual approach to QE and the Finnish variant approach. This follows an analysis of the emergence and formation of the present quality evaluation discourse, consisting of historical layers of discursive practices of school-based development, performance and market-oriented quality. Between the rationalities of these discursive practices but also in relation to recent political concerns about the QE system, it remains to be seen to what extent the Finnish system is able to resist the power of the discourse into which global ideas and rationalities of quality evaluation have been imprinted.

We have recently witnessed a global megatrend towards evaluation,[1] which has permeated different sectors of society and realms of life. It has become institutionalised and is also part of our everyday experience. In the words of Peter Dahler-Larsen, we have experienced the emergence of the "evaluation society".[2]

The shift to evaluation has also been evident in education, manifesting, for instance, as a rise of an 'invasive culture of the educational evaluation'[3] and the 'global testing culture'.[4] Along with these, the idea and practices of quality evaluation (QE) have become incorporated into the everyday settings and practices of education and education policy-making—from the classroom of the smallest school to the highest levels of transnational policy-making. Currently, it seems, quality evaluation and its various forms and techniques, such as national and international large-scale student achievement testing, policy programmes and curriculum evaluation,

H. Pitkänen (✉)
Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: hannele.t.pitkanen@jyu.fi

auditing, accreditation, school inspection, teacher evaluation and many practices of school and teacher self-evaluation[5]—has become a somewhat natural and obvious technique for governing education across the globe.[6] These techniques of QE and continuous evaluation and monitoring of education aim to improve the performance and quality of education at all levels of education systems to meet the manifold requirements of the global economy.[7]

The spread of evaluation and the global testing culture in education is no isolated phenomenon, but a key part of larger developments in education policy and governance occurring throughout the education system since the 1980s and 1990s. These pervasive education policy reforms combining policy technologies and related rationalities of marketisation, managerialisation, decentralisation, consumerism, choice, etc., all manifesting the performativity and ethos of excellence, have been described as travelling global education reform 'packages'.[8] Building on the work of Andy Hargreaves and colleagues,[9] Pasi Sahlberg has applied the notion of the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) in analysing this trend of converging policies; "the transfer of education policies across country borders."[10]

According to Sahlberg, GERM has manifested in different ways across countries but shares some fundamental underpinnings. It rests widely on the adoption of market-based and managerial solutions such as school choice, school autonomy, competition in raising standards and quality of education. The policy techniques of quality evaluation and standardised large-scale testing have also often been found at the core. The rationality related to these policies in GERM is to hold teachers and schools accountable for pupil achievement. As Sahlberg puts it, according to the logic of GERM, "school performance—especially raising student achievement—is intimately tied to the processes of evaluating, inspecting, and rewarding or punishing schools and teachers".[11] In this understanding, quoting Lawrence Angus, "school failure [is] being represented as the responsibility of schools and individuals, and as being due to the inadequacy of the educational 'product' rather than to the socio-political, cultural and economic factors that affect school performance".[12]

The roots of GERM are in neoliberal education policies in Anglo-Saxon countries in the 1980s,[13] and since then have spread to education systems across the world as a policy solution to problems in the quality and effectiveness of education. Nevertheless, as noted by many researchers, instead of improving the quality or effectiveness of education, the enactment of these reforms and quality evaluation policies has been to the detriment of the calibre of education. According to Martin Thrupp, the negative impacts include "… 'teaching to the test' and the fabrication of results, narrowing of the school curriculum, an increasingly instrumental view of teaching, the valuing of some students over others, and damaging effects on students' conceptions of themselves as learners".[14] Additionally, these reforms, including increased reliance on test scores and evaluation data and related teacher evaluation systems, have negatively impacted on professional culture and professional relationships in school by increasing anxiety, encouraging competition and discouraging collaboration and collegiality in the school community.[15] Finally, an argument of many scholars in the fields of sociology and the politics of education has been that going with GERM has not only fundamentally altered the rationalities

and techniques of governing education, but also of thinking of education and what it means to be educators and educated.[16] As Stephen J. Ball has put it "the novelty of this epidemic of reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are".[17]

In recent years, GERM has continued its expansion across education systems and locations, especially those traditionally quite receptive to it,[18] although this globalising effect of GERM and even the adoption its techniques depend on the context. For example, Antoni Verger and colleagues have pointed out that national large-scale assessment results can be used both to support education improvement or trigger competition and sanction 'underperforming' schools.[19] This means that the same policy technique may be supported by diverse rationalities and used for a range of purposes. As Jaakko Kauko and colleagues have concluded, policy reforms are always attached to context sensitivity, path-dependency and contingency.[20]

The Finnish education system has traditionally been unreceptive to mainstream global quality evaluation policies. Hard and harsh sanctioning policies utilising the evaluation data and forming part of GERM have not been put in place in Finland. For example, instead of high-stakes testing of whole age cohorts and sanction-oriented school inspections, the Finnish quality evaluation of comprehensive education has relied mainly on national sample-based student achievement testing and thematic evaluations, and on autonomous local level self-evaluations.[21] The purpose of these is to further develop education,[22] not sanction or blame and shame schools or educators, which is rather common in more punitively-oriented systems.[23] From this point of view, it might be concluded that global policies have not reached the Finnish education system, or that the impact of these policies has been minor. As colleagues and I have pointed out elsewhere,[24] the Finnish education system has been developing against global trends and has had some success in doing so.

Nevertheless, by analysing the history of rationalising local evaluation in the Finnish quality evaluation discourse, this chapter aims to challenge the success story of resistance to global pressure. This builds on our recent argument[25] that the success of Finnish quality evaluation policy, resting for instance on cross-party and administrative political legitimacy and professional support and having continuity and stability over time, has been more partial than complete. We claim that this is especially the case when reflecting on it through the most recent changes in policy discourse,[26] in which more centralised control over quality evaluation is anticipated.[27] This chapter shows the significance of international trends in shaping Finnish discourse since the 1980s, even though GERM has not been emulated in actual practices of quality evaluation. Considering recent trends in Finnish quality evaluation policy, the question arises whether the Finnish system is slowly but surely becoming more attached to global patterns.

In what follows, I present a short overview of QE in Finnish comprehensive education at present before briefly explaining the genealogical methodology underpinning my analysis and then discussing Finnish quality evaluation policy discourse itself.

Quality Evaluation in Finnish Comprehensive Education

The evaluation system of Finnish comprehensive school currently rests on two main pillars, national-level evaluation and local-level evaluation of education. The regional-level evaluation falls between these main pillars. Additionally, Finland participates actively in international evaluations such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMMS.

National-level evaluations are co-ordinated by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC), an independent agency responsible for the evaluation of education at the national level. The actual evaluations are conducted with co-operation from other Finnish evaluation and research organisations. National-level evaluations consist of assessment of learning outcomes in relation to the aims set out in the curriculum and of thematic and system evaluations with varying foci. All evaluations are based on the politically confirmed national evaluation programme. Assessment of learning outcomes has recently focused mainly on assessing the outcomes in the mother tongue, namely Finnish and Swedish (both of them official languages in Finland), studies in foreign languages (English) and mathematics.[28] The thematic and system evaluations focus on some specific content package or theme. They may focus on the carrying out of some policy programme or curriculum reform or evaluate the general state of education. For example, recent thematic and system evaluations in comprehensive education have focused on the educational transitions of pupils from diverse backgrounds and on the implementation of local evaluations and of the Pupil and Student Welfare Act.[29] In contrast, regional-level evaluations tend to focus on education from the point of view of basic service; how this service is provided in the respective regions.

Local education providers, mostly municipalities (n > 300), are required by law to participate in external national evaluations. However, these have been conducted as sample-based studies, so that the results can be generalised across the entire pupil population. The principle of sample-based testing together with the development orientation in evaluations has been a pioneering aspect of Finnish education policy intended to prevent the adverse effects of publishing evaluation results as league tables and to avoid competition between schools.[30]

The other main component of the Finnish quality evaluation system is local self-evaluation on which the Finnish evaluation system heavily relies. This includes evaluation organised and co-ordinated by education providers but also school self-evaluation. The idea of school self-evaluation supported by education provider emerged in the 1980s, was adopted into the curriculum and educational legislation in the 1990s and has been emphasised since then.[31] Reflecting the strong tradition of municipal autonomy and public trust in the school institution and the professional calibre of teachers, education providers and schools are independent in their evaluation policies, with no binding national framework or model for local-level evaluation. The foci and methods of evaluations therefore vary between education providers and schools. To guide and assist education providers and schools in their self-evaluation,

the Ministry of Education and Culture has published quality criteria for basic education.[32] These quality criteria, by nature, are recommendations only. Around 40% of education providers have reportedly used them as quality evaluation tools.[33]

Finally, taking all these elements together, the idea has been that the quality evaluation conducted at each level of the evaluation system should be mutually supportive. Nevertheless, most weight has been put on local self-evaluations. On several occasions, the local level has even been seen to constitute the basic structure for Finnish quality evaluation of basic education, supported by the other elements, especially national-level evaluation.[34]

Methodology: Analysing the Origins of the Quality Evaluation Discourse

Finland has clearly taken a path different from other countries following GERM in quality evaluation. Drawing on my earlier genealogical analysis on the Finnish quality evaluation discourse from 1970 to 2010,[35] this chapter presents an account of the socio-historical formation of that discourse. My key question has been: Does the Finnish quality evaluation policy discourse expresses different rationales of QE policies than those found globally?

Generally, genealogy can be characterized as the history of present. It aims at providing a socio-historically framed account of how the current situation we live in has come to be. Therefore genealogy takes as its starting point the knowledge, idea, phenomenon, practice or issue which is considered self-evident, normal or taken-for-granted in the societies we live in:'socio-historically formatted truths', as Michel Foucault calls them. Then it looks back at history and studies the socio-historical constitution of that truth. This is done by focusing on incidents of emergence, mobilization, transformations and disappearance of rationalities, conceptualizations, ideas or practices related to it. It also focuses on relations of power supporting and productive of studied discourse and 'truths'. By doing so, the genealogy challenges the current taken-for-granted and shows it's socio-historical groundedness and relation to the multitudes of relations and forces of power operating in society.[36] These changing truths are approached and analysed here as discursive practices, which can also be thought of as historical layers in the formation of the current discourse.

This chapter, stemming from these analyses, illustrates how the current discourse, especially the idea of local quality evaluation conducted in schools and municipalities, is a result of the entanglement and multi-layered mixture of these socio-historically changing and emerging discursive practices. Each of them had contributed to the formation and transformation of the quality evaluation discourse by incorporating and merging their specific kinds of 'truth' and rationalities into it. As each new discursive practice has emerged, it has inserted a new historical layer into the studied discourse. Therefore, discourse is considered to be in continuous

formation that is shaped by relations of power prevailing in a society. The chapter pays attention to the relations of international and global trends and discourses with the Finnish discourse. The original research drew on educational legislation and the curricula of comprehensive schooling and more than 400 different kinds of texts intended to guide, direct, steer, or promote local-level self-evaluation during the period researched. Due to space constraints in this chapter, only a compact account can be presented.

Next, I present a genealogical analysis of those rationalities and practices here referred to as discursive practices, along with the prevailing understanding of quality evaluation as a normal and continuous everyday practice of schools and education providers. I also challenge the prevailing understanding of Finland's position running so utterly contrary to global trends. A realistic account finds Finnish discourse being an integral part of the global flow, and therefore, inseparable also from complex relations of power, those productive of and conditioned by globally mainstream discourses.

The Discursive Practice of School-Based Development

Local evaluation, the self-evaluation conducted by schools and education providers, is currently required by Finnish law and the national curriculum. It is now assumed in Finland, and also elsewhere, that self-evaluation is necessary to improve and ensure the quality of education in the context of global economy.[37] In genealogical terms, this idea has become a truth of our present.

In the early 1970s 'quality' was not so much discussed or problematised. Rather, it was taken for granted that the national curriculum, if correctly put in place, would ensure a reasonable and equal level of education for each and every pupil in Finland. School inspections by the regional inspectorates and supervision by local boards, central evaluation and steering bodies of that time operated in support of this rationality by controlling and evaluating whether the legislation and orders were indeed complied with and thus equality and level of education ensured. In this context, the idea of teachers and schools conducting systematic self-evaluations was inconceivable and beyond the scope of what can be said and done within the limits of the prevailing discourse.

The early idea of local self-evaluation emerged in the Finnish education policy discourse at the turn of the 1980s,[38] at the dawn of strong deregulation and decentralisation policy, and the related abolition of the traditional school inspection system and supervision by school boards which used to exert evaluative surveillance and control over schools.[39] The idea developed in the context of the rise of the discursive practice of school-based development in response to the prevailing education policy discourse emphasising top-down bureaucratic planning and regulation of schools. The essence of the emerging view was that, instead of the bureaucratically imposed top-down governance and reforms, school development should come increasingly from the grassroots level, from the schools themselves.[40] As part of this new school

improvement policy, highlighting the role of schools and teachers in the continuous development of schooling, the idea of school-level self-evaluation advanced. It was reasoned that self-evaluation should constitute a regular phase in the continuous cycle of the pedagogical development of each individual school[41]:

> The starting point is school-based development. A key principle is that all schools should undertake more evaluation of their own activities and to seek solutions to reduce and eliminate problems that arise.[42]

This understanding of school-based development, widely manifest in both Finnish education policy documents[43] and the professional literature[44] in the mid-1980s, was supported by the knowledge base provided by the school effectiveness and school improvement movement originating in the USA and spreading to other continents and also to the Nordic countries.[45] One of the core elements of the school actively developing itself—known as the self-reforming school—was that schools continuously evaluate themselves as part of their pedagogical development[46]:

> One of the main goals is to make the school self-renewable. This means that the school continuously evaluates its own activities and resolves the problems that arise.[47]

As a result, the view gained ground in policy and curriculum documents that schools should, independently and continuously and as part of regular practice, self-evaluate their activities and develop them according to the national aims laid down for education.[48] This meant that not only were individual teachers expected to evaluate and reflect on themselves—an idea which had also prevailed at least since the 1930s in teachers' professional discourse[49]—but it was also an expectation directed towards the whole school institution as a pedagogical community. In this way, the discursive practice persuaded individual schools and teachers to think about themselves as capable of actively developing both their school and Finnish school education in general, instead of being mere operators of top-down organised school development and objects of direct governance by way of administrative rules and the legislation. For example, the National Board of General Education proclaimed:

> One must generally strengthen teachers' confidence in their own abilities, the importance of their work and the fact that it is possible to develop activities in each school through their own efforts.[50]

By the 1990s interrelated discursive practices of performativity and customer-oriented quality began to emerge, giving rise to new discursive layers and practices in the Finnish quality evaluation discourse. The prevailing practice and idea of school-based development would be caught up in these emerging practices, but only on the margins and thus represented in the developing discourse on the quality evaluation of Finnish comprehensive education. Today, some three decades later, fragmentary traces or vestiges of the basic idea and practices of school-based development are still discernible in the current discourse.[51] For example, one valid quality criterion still states:

> The quality of the processes and structures of comprehensive education can be approached from the perspectives of school improvement and effective school studies focusing on

those traits' characteristic of well-functioning schools. […] In development-oriented schools the self-evaluation and development of the operations based on systematically collected evaluation data will be highlighted.[52]

The Discursive Practice of Performance

Reflecting the rise of GERM and the growth of managerialism in particular, the discursive practice of performance developed in the Finnish discourse in the 1990s at a time of severe economic recession and cuts in the public sector.[53] Earlier, policy discussion in education had focused mainly on inputs and principles, rules and pre-regulated processes aimed at governing education. Now the discussion turned to focus on performance and the outcomes of basic education.[54] The central policy idea was that targets and resources would be given to schools and education providers, which in turn would become responsible for the attainment of such targets.[55] The means of monitoring the outcomes of education would be the evaluation of the performance[56]:

> The basic idea [of performance based management] is that the school itself is allowed to seek the means for the result after the goals and financial resources have been agreed upon. This creates a clear link between the performance goals set by the school and the evaluation.[57]

Similar changes in the rationality of governing and related political technologies of decentralisation and deregulation appeared across the entire Finnish public sector and administration in the 1990s. These changes were greatly influenced by the managerialist New Public Management doctrine (NPM), which at the time was being widely adopted across western economies and the OECD countries.

The emergence and constitution of the practice of performance in education relates strongly to these NMP-influenced rationalities, technologies and knowledge, but cannot be understood as any straightforward application of them. Rather, it was a mix of these NPM-derived ideas and prevailing practice in school-based development, which emphasised continuous cycles of development and self-evaluation by school staff.[58]

This interface can be illustrated by practice around the evaluation of performance. Throughout the Finnish public sector and administration, the demand to evaluate the performance and outcomes of public services was increasingly acknowledged. An evaluation model focusing on economy, effectiveness and efficiency, the three E's of NPM doctrine, was developed for the public sector.[59] However, the general model for the public sector was deemed to apply only partially to the education sector. This reflected the prevailing educational discourse, according to which education and its outcomes had some specific traits which were not easily measured[60] or compared with the results of other sectors. This was due, for example, to the idea that the most important results are not apparent until decades after formal education has ended:

> The results of the educational institution are very many, obviously. It is impossible to achieve residual assessment data on these.[61]

> The impact of an educational institution extends back decades, throughout the lifetime of a person. With such a broad view of impact, it is impossible to measure or even estimate.[62]

Thus, the Framework for Evaluating Educational Outcomes[63] was modified to take into account the special nature of education and educational outcomes, although through the dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency and economy highlighted by NPM doctrine. According to that document, education should be evaluated on these dimensions not only at national level, but at the local level, in schools and municipalities. Finally, the results from each of these levels should interact with each other to generate an overall and holistic picture of the outcomes and performance of Finnish basic education.[64]

In the discursive practice of performance, the goal was not only an all-encompassing picture of education and its performance but primarily the emergence of an evaluation culture and related evaluative attitude which teachers and schools should espouse. This was promoted through projects and extensive literature on quality evaluation, mostly prescriptive or educative in nature. In these, teachers and schools were strongly positioned as professional subjects only if they internalised a willingness for and aspiration to continuous self-evaluation. It was deemed essential that teachers and schools develop an ability and aspiration simultaneously to be able to self-evaluate themselves and be evaluated; to be subjects and objects of evaluation[65]:

> The objective of the evaluation of the performance of the school is to develop the school's activities in a determined manner both for the pupil's learning and growing and the development of community activities. It is often about changing attitudes and mindsets and creating a new working culture in schools.[66]

> Talking about performance orientation in the context of the school world is essentially an attitude approach; it is a question of culture rather than purely economic aspects.[67]

Whereas within the practice of school-based improvement self-evaluation appeared as a separate phase within the cycle of the pedagogical school development, now it appeared as an omnipresent activity and expected attitude.[68] This also prompted a question of the role of self-evaluation in the production of evaluation knowledge if its subjective nature was acknowledged. In highlighting the practices of self-evaluation, the idea evolved that, despite striving towards objectivity in self-evaluation, we must live with the subjective nature of self-evaluation.[69]

The discursive practice of performance that evolved at the interface of NPM doctrine and school-based development peaked in the 1990s and early 2000s. The notion of market-oriented quality also entered the picture in the mid-1990s. Yet the practice of performance was dominant and remains in current discourse together with market orientation to quality. This can be seen in the quality criteria associated with basic education as published in 2012:

> Evaluation is/means the evaluation of the performance of basic education in which the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations will be taken into account. Evaluation will serve to investigate how the curriculum and targets set for education have been realised and how effective the education is.[70]

The Discursive Practice of Market-Oriented Quality

Following the rationality of GERM, approaching quality and school performance as quantifiable and presentable as numbers and being manifest e.g., as customer satisfaction, the market orientation to quality has become more important in the 2010s. This has been accompanied by the construction of the idea of 'quality school' in the Finnish quality evaluation discourse.[71] In this frame, quality school is a replica of an idealised business organisation with a strong customer orientation:

> The quality of the school is identified by how well the needs of the client can be taken into account and how the professionalism of teachers can be used to meet the needs of the clients.[72]

Continuous evaluation and excellent results became highlighted also as elements of quality school:

> The outstanding school community continuously evaluates and measures the realization of its strategies and goals, and also achieves excellent results consistent with objectives.[73]

The most influential model of such organisations in the Finnish context has been the EFQM [European Foundation for Quality Management] model promoted in many Finnish publications about the quality of education at school and municipal level.[74] Along with the spread of these models and their adoption in influential education governance documents there has been a strategy to produce a 'quality school serving the customers' as a symbol of organisational excellence. In this discourse, teachers and schools as well as municipalities as educational providers are positioned as the servants of educational client-citizens. School is supposed to endlessly strive for excellence in every respect, and this is rendered quantifiable by reflecting on and evaluating the school organisation through the calculation model of quality presented by these quality evaluation models. Thus, total quality would be the representation of the calculated sums of performance in each predetermined sector of the organisation. For example, according to one of these models, in the total quality of the school management accounts for 10%, strategy 8%, personnel 9%, processes 14% and performance in customer service 20% of the quality of the school.[75] Most importantly, the traditional core of the education, teaching and learning, remains as only one element in the quality of education, and the focus on quality calculation increases in the organisational elements of the school. Thus, education and learning are supplanted, and quality of education appears as universally applied market-oriented quality decontextualised from the specificities of school, education and pedagogy.[76]

Conclusion: An Unhelpful Mythology?

This chapter has sought to provide a realistic account of Finnish quality evaluation of education by challenging and modifying the argument that it has been resisting

the global tide. This was done by providing an historically sensitive analysis of the emergence and construction of the idea of local-level evaluation in the Finnish quality evaluation discourse. Three diverse discursive practices were cited as fundamental to the constitution of the current discourse. Each of them has had its moment: school-based improvement in the 1980s, performance in the 1990s and market-oriented quality since 2000, but all of these are embedded and mixed into the current quality evaluation discourse. Central to the argument of this chapter is that each of these has its roots in internationally travelling policy discourses, including the school effectiveness and improvement movement, the New Public Management doctrine and the EFQM model together with the idea of a universal quality school.

Additionally, arising from the analysis, I identify three tendencies in the Finnish quality evaluation discourse which support the claim regarding the impact of GERM on the Finnish discourse. First, since the 1980s we have witnessed a gradual intensification of the idea of evaluation in the production of knowledge of the quality and performance of education. In the early 1980s, the focus of evaluations was limited to very specific areas of school development. Currently, stimulated by the discursive practices of performance and market-oriented quality, the discourse embodies the notion that each aspect of education should be known through the practices of quality evaluation. I call this intensifying tendency the pursuit of overarching knowledge of education through the practices of evaluation.

Second, quality evaluation becomes enshrined as part of the everyday practices of education and education governance. Once a single phase in the development of education, evaluation is nowadays expected to be a constant component of the 'quality work' done at schools as an integral part of normal work at school. I call this tendency the normalisation of evaluation in education practices.

Third, the ethics of the inevitability of self-evaluation emerges along with the consolidation of the evaluation culture. In this evaluation culture, teachers and schools are considered professional and ethical subjects only if they internalise the pursuit of better performance through the practice of continuous self-evaluation. In these settings, evaluation becomes an internalised attitude indispensable in the pursuit of universal excellence of education, determined and scored by the quality evaluation models. I call this tendency the ethics of the inevitability of self-evaluation.

These tendencies, arising from and constituted by the discursive practices of school-based improvement, performativity and customer-oriented quality, are closely related to the basic ideas and rationalities embedded in GERM and in internationally disseminated quality evaluation policies, which see continuous quality evaluation as a central technique for improving the quality of education.

At the same time some understandings and countertendencies have buffered these GERM-related tendencies of the discourse. The intensity of these understandings has varied over time. There has been the principle of an immeasurable variety of education. According to this understanding, the outcomes of education cannot be totally converted into numbers or quantifiable results. By measuring or quantifying education, something important and valuable to education and the educated will inevitably be lost. This understanding has been slowly fading in recent decades. Another principle and countertendency is the idea of the vagueness and subjectivity

of self-evaluation. Despite the firmly entrenched idea that QE should capture objective and reliable knowledge about education and its performance, there has also been a view that the subjectiveness of self-evaluation should not harm the aim of the evaluation. These countertendencies in the Finnish discourse around quality evaluation may have limited the rationalities of GERM in the Finnish discourse. Thus, they may constitute some previously unnoticed countertendencies to global hegemony. At the same time, recent developments have introduced evaluation and quality work in the form of internationally disseminated quality models such as EFQM, thus it may be a mistake to overemphasise the way that Finland is swimming against the global tide.

Overall, if looking at the current quality evaluation practices in comprehensive education, the Finnish case definitely still goes against the rationalities and techniques of GERM. But when focusing on the rationalities embedded in the Finnish quality evaluation discourse, there is still a drift towards the global mainstream. It remains to be seen whether these parts of the Finnish discourse going with GERM will become more powerful over time, or if Finland continues to go against the flow. This is an urgent matter to consider given recent pressure towards stricter and more centralised quality evaluation policies in Finland.[77] For example, the Finnish Government has called for 'clear and binding quality goals' and related indicators and systems of open data to monitor and ensure the equal access and quality of 'educational services' across the country.[78] The existing Finnish quality evaluation discourse, shaped by global policies and discourses, is partly supportive of adopting these stricter and standardising quality evaluation policies and practices.

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Hannele Pitkänen is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education and Psychology, University of Jyväskylä. Her research, spanning the fields of soci-ology and politics of education, history of education and critical curriculum studies, focuses on evaluation and assessment in education and guidance as a form of governing education and the educated. Pitkänen's current Academy of Finland-funded project examines the current politics of pupil self-evaluation and its manifestation in the daily practices of education.

Chapter 6
Ecological Sustainability and Steering of Finnish Comprehensive Schools

Niina Mykrä

Abstract With the climate catastrophe and biodiversity loss, our globe is facing enormous challenges: the basis of life on Earth is in danger. Eco-anxiety and global eco-social crises are also driving education to search for solutions to build a sustainable future, for instance the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development views education as a key instrument for change. One of the key promises of the Finnish Ministry of Education is to commit to sustainable development, and the Finnish National Forum for Skills Anticipation states that important future skills should include knowledge of sustainable development. In national reports on how to carry out Agenda 2030, Finland has highlighted education as a key strength in meeting the sustainability goals. Yet the global goals of sustainability education fail to translate into concrete actions by the time they reach everyday life in Finnish schools. The 2014 Finnish national core curriculum for basic education is also insufficiently clear in the area of sustainability even though it expects sustainability to be included in school culture and teaching. In addition to this, the enactment of the curriculum in Finnish comprehensive schools meets various hindering and promoting cultural elements, which are interconnected. Change towards sustainability across levels of activity from high-level policy to everyday life within schools in Finland is complicated.

A change of direction is vital for a sustainable future: the globe is facing enormous challenges with the degradation of the environment. News about the climate catastrophe, biodiversity loss, and soil and water contamination fill the media.[1] New research reveals devastating details of the state of the environment with only a few signs of improvement, and researchers have appealed to politicians to take action.[2] The cause of the degradation of nature lies in human-centred relationships to nature, overconsumption and the neo-liberal paradigm: all of these are central to the frightening developments.[3] There is an urgent need for society to change both individual

N. Mykrä (✉)
Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: niina.p.mykra@jyu.fi

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and institutional environmental practices. However, promoting sustainability can be expected to be complex because it conflicts with overall trends in society and politics, it is based on diverse academic disciplines, it is strongly connected with ecological literacy, and it is value dependent.[4]

The United Nation's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development[5] presents 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) for prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. It suggests that education is a key enabler of all other Sustainable Development Goals. In global politics, there are ambitions that public school systems should lead the way to a sustainable future.[6] At the same time UNESCO's 'roadmap' for education for sustainable development suggests that we are nowhere near that point because in many countries education for sustainable development (ESD) is reflected in education policy, teacher training, and curricula but often it is interpreted with a narrow focus on topical issues rather than with a holistic approach on learning content, pedagogy, and learning outcomes which make the transformation possible.[7]

Bringing change to schools is not an easy task as they can never be released from the society in which they are situated.[8] Moreover education and schooling are inherently contradictory: their role is to both socialise children and renew society.[9] In these two tasks also stands the relevant possibilities of education: learning to live in equilibrium with other-than-human and learning to renew the present unsustainable way of life.

The literature on sustainability often regards ecological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions as equal bases of sustainability. In contrast, but like Rockström and Sukhdev,[10] I view ecological sustainability as the most central element. Only a stable climate system and resilient ecosystems can provide a foundation for human social, cultural and economic activities, and so at school, to learn and act for this order of priority, is vital. For this reason, I look at the situation in Finnish comprehensive schools through the promotion of ecological sustainability at school. I define the promotion of ecological sustainability at school as a multi-voiced, multidisciplinary, and multilevel activity that hopefully will lead the way to an ecologically sustainable future. Promotion means actively encouraging or furthering the progress of ecological sustainability. Ecological refers to the equilibrium between living organisms such as human beings, plants, and animals as well as their environment. Sustainability is the ability to uphold or defend this ecological equilibrium. The school is the place where this promotion happens, and it includes both environmental and sustainability education and reducing the environmental load of the school.

Steering of Comprehensive Schools Towards Ecological Sustainability in Finland

As the promotion of ecological sustainability is a multi-level phenomenon, it is important to consider what kind of steering policies for ecological sustainability there are in Finland, how the national curriculum of basic comprehensive schooling

reflects the goals defined by steering documents, and how these relate to local school activities in Finland. Environment and education policies have often attempted to create change at schools but as this section will show, often with little real impact.

There are many policy documents that drive comprehensive schools towards sustainability in Finland. In recent research[11] I examined over 80 Finnish steering documents and web pages from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of the Environment and the Finnish National Agency for Education. I also considered documents that included ecological sustainability in education from other areas of Finnish public administration on different levels. Key documents were found by going through websites, Non-Governmental Organisations' lists of the documents that are important for environmental education, and different search engines. The goal of this document analysis was to find the central documents that steer or intend to steer Finnish comprehensive schools towards sustainability, and to describe the spectrum of the policy instruments. I collected all essential contents from the documents, made first descriptive analysis and then thematic analysis of the contents, and the main findings of my analysis are discussed in this section.

When steering Finnish comprehensive schools, public administrators use mainly soft policy instruments like information, agreements, strategies, and action plans. Many documents related to sustainable development make mention of comprehensive schools. As they are soft policy instruments, there are no penalties if the plans are not fulfilled. Even so, these documents bring the themes to stage and show which things public administration prioritises. Documents are often made in cooperation or through democratic negotiations, which broadens the thinking of all involved, but can also make documents a heterogeneous collection of different and contradictory aspects.

The main international document related to sustainable development is Agenda 2030. It is at the heart of in Finnish environmental policy as well. The most important goal for sustainability education is subgoal 4.7: "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles (…)". How Agenda 2030 gets enacted in Finland is a matter for the Finnish Government. Instead of a traditional national strategy document, the National Commission on Sustainable Development formulated *Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development*.[12] The goal was that both the Finnish public sector and other actors, would all make pledges to promote sustainable development in their work and operations. The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development argued that this widespread national commitment and concrete operational pledges would be a key instrument for implementing the Agenda 2030 in Finland.

In the field of education, both policymakers and every school were challenged to make their own commitments.[13] For example, the Finnish National Agency of Education promised to include sustainable development systematically in the national goals of education, steer and support municipalities to change according to sustainability goals in curriculum and strengthen abilities to build a sustainable future in schooling.[14] The Ministry of Education and Culture promised to respect the *Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development* and implement it in its strategies and

steering.[15] It is expected that those who have made the commitments self-assess if the goals have been reached, but by the summer of 2021, neither the Finnish National Agency of Education nor the Ministry of Education and Culture had completed the assessments. Only a small percentage of schools made their pledges by 2020, and most of the pledges made focus narrowly on reducing personal waste or other small everyday acts.[16] As a prompt for carrying out ecological sustainability at schools, *Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development* has not been a success.

Monitoring of the state of sustainable development in Finland is undertaken by the Prime Minister's Office together with the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development.[17] The purpose of such monitoring is to create a comprehensive picture of how Finland is succeeding in promoting sustainable development and to identify the challenges for consistent policies. Progress towards targets was monitored by means of indicator baskets linked to the commitment. One indicator is particularly linked to ecological sustainability in education and relevant competences: "The number of daycare centres, schools and educational institutions with a focus on sustainable development". The number in this area has increased very slowly. As early as 2006, the Education and Training Division of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development had set a target of 15% for the number of certified schools, but Finland has not yet reached even half of that target. Despite this, many reports argue that the area of education and competences is strong for ecological sustainability in Finland. For example, one national report on the applying the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Finland stated that its strengths lie in good education and competence, and that it is supported by a long-term, integrated approach to sustainable development in schools.[18] A more recent report claims that sustainable development permeates all levels of education from early childhood education and care through to the secondary level.[19] Unfortunately, these assessments are over-optimistic: in the education sector, the focus is on social sustainability and it is rare for policy statements to take a stand on ecological sustainability.[20] Agenda 2030 sub goal 4.7 is forgotten from the assessments, or they assume that the work has already been done by including sustainable development in the national curriculum of comprehensive schools.[21]

It was only in 2020 that the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland published its Sustainable Development policy for achieving the goals of Agenda 2030.[22] This policy declares that the special responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture lies in the promotion of goals related to social sustainability. Ecological sustainability has only a marginal presence in the document, it suggests ecological, social, and financial dimensions should be considered equally but the concrete subject matters of ecological sustainability education are missing. The document talks about energy efficiency and the circular economy in the maintenance and use of existing buildings, which is also important for ecological sustainability, but this is not enough to enhance learning for ecological sustainability. Concrete goals or steps for learning ecological sustainability are missing.

In addition to Agenda 2030 and related documents, many other environmental policy documents in Finland include enhancing ecological sustainability at schools. They include, for example, the Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 of Finland, the National

Forest Strategy 2025, a report on the National Energy and Climate Strategy for 2030, the National World Heritage Strategy, the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2022 of Finland, and the National Strategy for Walking and Cycling 2020. The education policy statements acknowledge ecological sustainability education much less than environmental policy documents, even though the strategy of Ministry of Education and Culture 2030 and the Finnish National Forum for Skills Anticipation states that important future skills should include knowledge of sustainable development.[23] Statements about ecological sustainability are scarce on the websites of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency of Education. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture does not mention sustainability or environmental aspects at all when introducing 'Finnish education in a nutshell', a key overview of the Finnish education system for those in other countries.[24] There are some signs of more favourable future developments: the National youth work and youth policy programme 2020–23 has said that education providers will be encouraged to follow the principles of sustainable development and that there will be national sharing of good practices related to sustainable development.[25] Work based on the policy has already started: in 2021 the Finnish National Agency of Education published a web guide "Sustainable future" which concentrates on learning, working culture and everyday practices in the world of education and schooling.[26] The target group of the guide is educators on all levels. In addition to this, in 2021 the Finnish National Agency of Education launched a development project for sustainability education.[27]

Closer analysis[28] of all the Finnish environment and education policy documents reveals six particular themes that I want to highlight here. First, environmental or sustainability education is significant in policy documents of all levels. They point out its importance and use inclusive language such as 'all', 'every', 'overall', when talking about learning with relation to sustainability. Some documents also argue that education is essential in making sustainability possible.

Second, education is seen as one tool for environmental policy. The documents suggest that policy goals should be achieved through schooling and the curriculum. Environmental policy sees schools as partners in cooperation towards carrying out the environmental policies.

Third, education policy documents do not include sustainability issues as comprehensively as the commitments of the national school administration would suggest. Many policy documents state that all activity concerning comprehensive schools should include sustainability issues. When examining educational steering documents, in many of them sustainability issues are missing or very scarce, even if including them could be reasonable. Many of the documents that do include ecological sustainability emphasise social aspects or concentrate only on climate change. There has, however been some better recent progress.

Fourth, the steering of schools towards ecological sustainability stays on the abstract level. The concepts used are abstract and ambiguous. Even when a steering document mentions sustainability education as an important aspect, it does not include it when listing the concrete steps of carrying out the policy. In environmental policy documents, the enhancement of environmental and sustainability education

stays at the level of administrative development or recommendations for cooperation. Many documents have recommendations attaching subject areas to the national curriculum of comprehensive school, but even then, statements stay abstract and do not specify what is meant to be learnt.

Fifth, commitments to include sustainability issues in all activity in education and comprehensive schools fade level by level until they reach the local documents. On the global and national level, documents promise to strengthen the knowledge and skills needed when building a sustainable future. For example, documents recommend that every school should have a plan or commitment for sustainable development. In reality however, only a minority of schools have made an official commitment to sustainability, a sustainable development or an environmental plan, or have some kind of certification of sustainability.

Finally, regulatory and economic policy instruments stay marginal when steering schools towards ecological sustainability. Most of the steering documents with relation to ecological sustainability at schools are soft policy instruments, like information and strategies. There are no economic instruments that focus on steering schools towards ecological sustainability although some relevant project funds have been released lately. National legislation includes only one statute that steers comprehensive schools towards sustainability, apart from the national core curriculum.

Overall, there are few steering documents with concrete steps to steer schools nationally towards ecological sustainability. One of the reasons could be that the great majority of schools are run by independent municipalities (see Kalalahti and Varjo in this book), and in addition to the non-earmarked lump sum distributed to municipalities, for the most part the state has statutory power over schooling only through the national curriculum.[29] Different organisations with many policy documents have wanted to include ecological sustainability in the national curriculum of comprehensive schooling, so it is to that I now turn.

Ecological Sustainability in the Finnish National Curriculum

In its Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, The Prime Minister's Office stated: "In Finland, sustainable development and global civic skills feature prominently in the national curricula and in qualifications from early childhood education to primary and secondary education".[30] But how true is this really? Looking at the national core curriculum for compulsory basic education in Finland, to what extent does it steer schools towards ecological sustainability?

The Finnish National Agency of Education drew up and confirmed the most recent National Core Curriculum for basic education in 2014, and it was required in municipalities and schools in 2016. Every comprehensive school is expected to work towards the objectives the National Core Curriculum. Education providers and schools draw up their own local curricula within the framework of the national core

curriculum. At every level, teachers, policymakers and citizens have had opportunities to have an impact on the content of the curriculum—although recent research suggests that the process was not as democratic as it was intended to be.[31]

My research analysed Finnish national core curriculum for basic education, the local curriculum of the field municipality and school level curriculums of three schools. The curriculum has two parts: the general part and the subjects at different levels. The general part concerns everybody, every lesson and all the activity in schools. It includes, for example, values, general goals, and operating culture. The subject part includes the special task of Grades 1–2, 3–6 and 7–9. Every subject has objectives of instruction and key content areas. Every object of instruction has a connection to the specific transversal competencies in the general part of the curriculum.

The first paragraph of the whole curriculum tells the reason why Finland updated the curriculum: "… to ensure that changes in the world around the school can be responded to and that the school's role in building a sustainable future can be strengthened in the organisation of education". Indeed sustainability is one of the key concepts in the Finnish curriculum.[32] The main concepts used in the curriculum are sustainable development, sustainable future, and sustainable way of living. The curriculum uses the concepts environment, environmental awareness, and relationship with nature. Both the general and the subject part of the curriculum are rich with diverse content areas and themes connected with ecological sustainability. Most of the main chapters include sustainability issues, and more than 15% of the pages of the curriculum include the concept of sustainability. Yet the use of the concepts is not coherent. Different subjects use different concepts, and some use them all without any clear logic.

The general part states that eco-social knowledge and ability are part of sustainable development, and that eco-social knowledge and ability means that pupils understand the seriousness of climate change in particular, and strive for sustainability. One impressive section about underlying values points to the necessity of a sustainable way of living: "Humans are part of nature and completely dependent on the vitality of ecosystems. Understanding this plays a key role in growth as a human being". One of the seven transversal competencies in the curriculum is "Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future". There are some far-reaching statements in that part too. The curriculum promises that "the pupils develop capabilities for evaluating both their own and their community's and society's operating methods and structures and for changing them so that they contribute to a sustainable future". The operating culture section also includes strong statements: The pupils are encouraged to work for the well-being of their environment, and one principle of the "Environmental responsibility and sustainable future orientation" section promises that "A learning community accounts for the necessity of a sustainable way of living in all of its activities". Working methods in the curriculum include methods familiar from environmental education: outdoor learning, experiential pedagogy, exploration and multidisciplinary learning. The curriculum takes into account central competencies for sustainability, like responsibility, critical thinking, participation and cooperation,

too. In addition to this, one goal of multidisciplinary learning modules is "practising agency that is consistent with a sustainable way of living".

My research considered how the transversal competence area "T 7. Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future" is connected with different objectives of instruction of the different subjects. In the curriculum, there are all together 741 objectives of instruction at all levels and in all subjects. Every subject and over a quarter of the objectives of instruction are marked in the curriculum as related to the Transversal competence area T7. I analysed whether these objectives include ecological, social, economic, or cultural sustainability. Only 10 subjects include ecological sustainability in 23 objectives, this equates to only 3% of the objectives of instruction. The social and cultural dimensions of sustainability appear more in the objects of instruction than ecological, although social sustainability takes the rather vague and unambitious form of "working together" and "taking care of each other". Economic sustainability is mentioned less than ecological sustainability. Connecting the objects of instruction to the transversal competencies has not made the curriculum coherent: Ecological sustainability has not reached all subjects, but it is left mainly to the traditional natural sciences (environmental studies, biology, geography) but with some presence in religion, ethics, crafts and home economics. Most of these objectives include only personal choices for a sustainable way of living, with a quarter including a societal level. There are some ambitious objectives for ecological sustainability, but more critical ideas are missing, particularly if you compare the contents with the general part about changing the structures of the community. I would argue that every subject has its own role in fostering ecological sustainability, a role that no other particular subject can fill, and sustainability crises cannot be solved with personal choices but with collaboration between communities. Teachers should have been able to follow the curricula of the subjects and still get an extensive idea of promoting ecological sustainability.

To summarise, the structure of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education includes multiple parts linked to sustainability, but some subjects have only weak connections to ecological sustainability. The curriculum is neither consistent nor coherent when talking about ecological sustainability. This could be because of the process of creating the curriculum: many different stakeholders wanting to have their say in the curriculum. While the general grounds for fostering ecological sustainability at school is strong, the curriculum is utopian rather than realistic, and does not provide a tool for every subject to work clearly towards ecological sustainability and ecological sustainability.

This leaves teachers with the huge task of realising connections between ecological sustainability and content areas of teaching. Although sustainability is recognised in the curricula, changes towards ecological sustainability in the everyday practices of schools do not automatically appear and it may be that change is only external.[33] Next, we turn to the everyday life of schools. How do teachers see the steering of environmental and educational policies within ecological sustainability?

Teachers and Administrative Steering

Although Finland's policy documents and curriculum steers schools and teachers towards ecological sustainability, everyday activity in Finnish school has many facets. My research involved interviews with 42 people working in school settings, mostly teachers from three schools but also some school leaders or administrators and some environmental educators. The main topics of the semi-structured, one-hour interviews were factors hindering and enhancing sustainability education at schools. The transcriptions were analysed through thematic analysis.[34] The analysis revealed 24 dilemmas that schools should solve before the promotion of ecological sustainability can fully expand, as well as three dimensions in the everyday activities of schools that include all these dilemmas and their possible solutions. I call these dimensions a *Sphere of Fostering Ecological Sustainability* (Fig. 6.1), as discussed.

The first dimension is that in Finland, teachers have considerable autonomy.[35] They can interpret and implement curriculum quite widely based on their quality education and expertise. Research has usually seen this as very advantageous for quality teaching, it gives motivation and job satisfaction, supports decisions suitable for local circumstances and gives learners a good example of working in organisation.[36] Nevertheless, my research found that this autonomy also sets challenges to the promoting of ecological sustainability at school—and steering of schools towards sustainability.

Teachers that I interviewed, called for their peers to engage with promoting ecological sustainability. At the same time, they did not like their own autonomy being
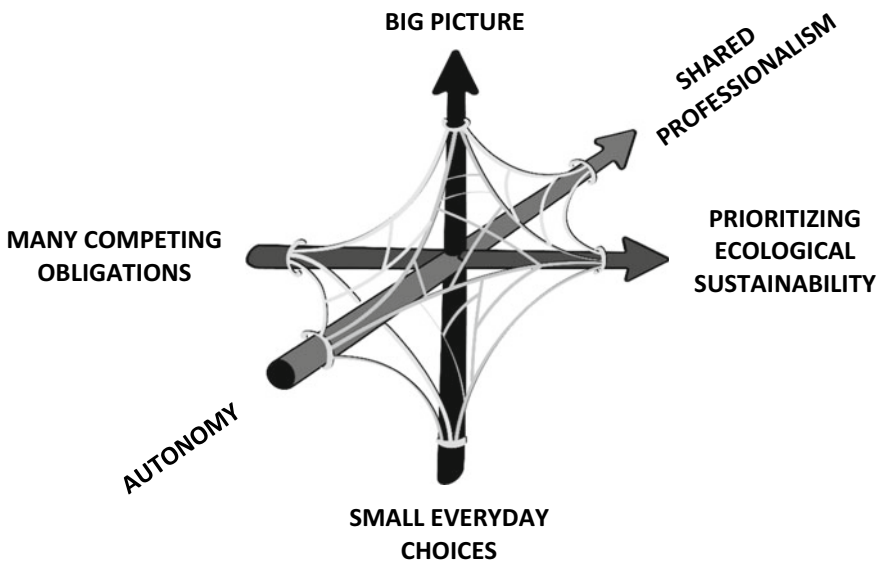
Fig. 6.1 A sphere of fostering ecological sustainability

disturbed: they said that they disliked guidance on environmental matters from their peers. This impacts another way: teachers do not like to disturb the autonomy of their peers: they are afraid that talking about environmental matters would bring negative emotions to the fore, and sensitive matters of this kind are better left undiscussed. Promoting ecological sustainability may be part of the underlying values of basic education as written in the curriculum, but unwritten rules can be much more powerful.

We can see the same kind of dilemma with autonomy and administrative steering: Teachers hope for clearer administrative steering in ecological sustainability, but at the same time many perceive the demands of the school administration as an unnecessary bureaucracy and administrative propositions as unsuitable for everyday school life. Meanwhile, many partners in cooperation with schools, like NGOs and other environmental education professionals, have the mission and professional skills to help schools to promote ecological sustainability, but find it hard to get inside the everyday life of school. Strong steering by school administrations or NGOs is rejected as disturbing teachers' autonomy.

Many young people have good ideas and an urge to promote ecological sustainability, but they do not have the autonomy to carry out the changes. Teachers and the national curriculum ask students to be active, but they have little real decision power. Many learners in comprehensive schools are capable of helping teachers in ecological sustainability issues and have many fresh and innovative ideas. Organising real possibilities for students to participate in developing activities and decision-making processes could help schools as a whole to make progress in the field of ecological sustainability.

Another possibility for overcoming these dilemmas and keeping the strengths of teacher autonomy is expanding autonomy to shared professionalism. My interviewees said that they think that teachers have a positive attitude toward promoting ecological sustainability, but at the same time they said that the major barrier to sustainability was negative attitudes. Joint planning and cooperation in the field of environmental education can bring different standpoints to the fore and make joint learning and local common solutions possible. Joint planning can also be a possibility for different actors at school (like cleaning, maintenance, lunch services and even environmental education professionals) to have their say in sustainability matters. There were some examples in my data how administrative steering helped schools to set up situations of this kind where the whole school community has training and discussions about ecological sustainability at school. In this way administrative steering can expand teachers' independent autonomy to the shared professionalism.

Moving now to the second dimension in the everyday activities of schools that incorporates dilemmas and their possible solutions, many schools concentrate on small everyday choices, when talking about ecological sustainability. The major role of everyday ecological acts at school is also highlighted by earlier research.[37] The everyday practices of the school can be justified because whole school approaches using everyday activities as a springboard to learning can help students move from

awareness to action and reduce the environmental load of the school.[38] Yet the environmental crisis that the world is facing cannot be solved with small local acts, rather fundamental transformation and transformative learning is needed.[39]

Many interviewees recognised the big sustainability challenges that humankind must solve, and many of them considered that small acts at school are insignificant in comparison with big environmental problems. Still, at the same time, they said that most important thing is to teach learners small practical environmental choices, which are easy for children. Teachers said they needed tips for environmental education but did not take them to be part of their regular "serious" schoolwork—it is impossible to have suitable pre-made environmental education material for every lesson when the autonomous teacher has a strong view of what and how they want to teach. Usually, teachers used environmental education tips with learning methods during special days or programmes, such as environmental days at school. Many teachers did not challenge the current human nature relationship in society. They did not either give examples about how they brought out big environmental challenges in their teaching—many said that they are too difficult to take into discussion with children, and it is difficult to talk about something that raises the lifestyles of the children's families. This is in contradiction to the curriculum and its demands for teaching pupils to develop capabilities for evaluating and changing society's unsustainable structures as discussed earlier in this chapter.

One point of view concerning everyday sustainable acts relates to division of labour: teachers' main job is teaching, not negotiating with refuse recycling companies about suitable waste bins or emptying them. The curriculum did not manage to deliver the whole picture of sustainability to teachers: Teachers said that promoting environmental sustainability belongs to their tasks, but many had only small-scale outlooks and thought that ecological sustainability only concerned recycling. Wherever local infrastructure was not ready for that, they found promoting ecological sustainability too hard. The previously mentioned joint planning including different actors at school is important for making the division of labour at school clearer—and for expanding the idea of what ecological sustainability includes. If the municipalities ensure that practices connected with recycling, energy and water usage and lunch services are ecologically sustainable, teachers can concentrate in what they know best: teaching and using the built environment as an example of environmental sustainability.

I also found possibilities to look at the bigger picture and wholeness of the world in my research. Some teachers used the school's immediate surroundings (including nature) with many possibilities for considering ecological sustainability, while others preferred classroom teaching to outdoor teaching. (The situation might have changed, because with COVID-19 teachers found new interest in the outdoors and the use of outdoor learning and environmental education materials increased significantly).[40] Versatile working methods and multidisciplinary learning, mentioned in the curriculum as well, are very suitable for teaching ecological sustainability. Both of these possibilities seemed to be underused at school. Some teachers found multidisciplinary learning hard to manage. Administrative steering was able to not only introduce schools' possibilities of multidisciplinary learning in local natural areas,

but also allow learning by teachers through enabling, for example, the services of nature schools (mentioned in the curriculum) or other professional environmental education services for schools.

The third dimension in the everyday activities of schools that incorporates dilemmas and their possible solutions was that teachers talked about many competing obligations at school. That teaching is very busy work is a well-known phenomenon that gets hundreds of thousands of hits in internet searches. Research recognises multiple demands that teachers meet at school as well.[41] In my interviews, teachers said that a sustainable future is an important goal, but in the middle of numerous everyday demands that future seems far away, and you can think about it later—but the suitable time for sustainability issues never comes. Even if the more recent school reform in Finland has increased the demand for ecological sustainability, it also increased the number of pupils with special needs in average classes. This has increased teacher workload and reduced their energy available to sustainability matters.

Joint planning and cooperation can make joint learning and local common solutions possible in the field of promoting ecological sustainability at school, as I previously mentioned. At Finnish comprehensive schools, time is scarce for this kind of cooperation. One of the reasons is the collective agreement of Finnish teachers that counts only working hours with classroom teaching when determining salary.[42] In addition to planning and giving lessons autonomously, teachers' obligation to work with their peers is restricted to only a few hours per month—including all the meetings of the teachers. In addition, the school year includes only three days joint planning. As a result, many teachers see the planning of ecological sustainability with others and for the whole school organisation as an extra task. Because there are so many other everyday practices in schools, teachers specialise: some teachers take care of musical instruments, others look after sports equipment. Teachers said that teachers in charge of sustainable education are important for reminding and developing the school activity related to ecological sustainability. The risk is that the responsibility falls entirely to the teachers in charge, and other teachers forget the issue.

One cure for the constant lack of time could be shared teaching, which means that there could be two teachers sharing larger teaching classes. In my field school, this brought many possibilities for teachers to take care of common issues like ecological sustainability during the lessons. Shared teaching also made it possible for teachers to discuss their ideas about ecological sustainability. Shared teaching could therefore be a springboard for school development, but sometimes it does not help: it could also lead to a division of labour without creative collaboration, a situation where sustainable issues are again left to one partner.

Schools could develop their ecological sustainability by prioritising the promoting of ecological sustainability over some other tasks. This is not easy: teachers generally do not know the global agreements on sustainability and so are unable to use them as their compass towards ecological sustainability. Even the curriculum has not managed to prioritise sustainability in everyday school life, although it contains strong statements promoting ecological sustainability for the reasons discussed earlier in this chapter. Textbooks do not help much either as teachers do not see

them as very helpful in these issues. It could also be that most teachers do not recognise the content areas of the subjects that include ecological sustainability, and that it is mainly those who already have qualifications in ecological sustainability that are improving their competence.

The steering of schools could prioritise sustainability issues. Principals can bring ecological sustainability to school meetings on a regular basis. Every year schools must answer the questions of the local administration to fulfil a local yearly plan of the school, and municipalities can ask about sustainability issues, and in that way make sustainability a priority in everyday choices. National school administration could communicate about ecological sustainability as a major theme in their information letters to municipalities or on their web sites. In the long run, governance can prioritise ecological sustainability by clearing the curriculum and improving the collective agreement of teachers so that time-consuming discussions on sustainability issues are better considered.

The three dimensions of a Sphere of Fostering Ecological Sustainability that I have introduced have many connections. That is why change cannot start only from one dimension, but every dimension should be considered. The steering of schools for bringing sustainability to central attention and into discussion can help in this multidimensional task.

Conclusion: Promoting the Ecological Sustainability at Schools Lacks Concrete Actions on Every Level

Many global organisations, national and local public administration and NGOs are steering comprehensive schools towards ecological sustainability in Finland. At schools, principals and teachers are implementing strategies and plans. Promoting ecological sustainability at school is a multi-voiced, multidisciplinary, and multilevel activity. In this chapter, I have introduced the steering towards ecological sustainability at schools that exists in Finland, what the national curriculum says about ecological sustainability and what the steering towards ecological sustainability looks like at the local school level through the eyes of teachers. The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education is the main document steering schools towards ecological sustainability, but it is inconsistent and not so concrete when talking about the subject contents. The independent autonomy of teachers, concentrating on small practical choices and many competing obligations challenges the promotion of ecological sustainability—but can be expanded to shared professionalism, awareness of the bigger picture, and the prioritising of ecological sustainability.

Such steering can have favourable implications for ecological sustainability, but there is still much to do. While the Prime Minister´s Office praises the Finnish schools for a long-term, integrated approach to sustainable development,[43] closer analysis of the situation shows that the whole picture is not so rosy. A larger view is needed on every level. It is important to have a dialogue on all levels: What is

the goal in promoting the ecological sustainability of schools? What can the role of schools be in making societies ecologically sustainable? Steering is not equivalent to giving instructions on exactly how to do this. It can provide possibilities for discussions and debates where everybody's expertise and standpoints build a more ecologically sustainable school and education in cooperation. Steering has the possibility to bring environmental issues to wider attention, show that ecological sustainability is an important issue, and that every subject area has some connection to sustainability. Steering documents could also show the larger view about what sustainability includes. More concrete statements and examples are still needed to build the base for the conversations. Steering of school exists, and there is possible to steer schools towards sustainability—in a socially sustainable way.

Our world needs a huge transformation, and transformation means learning on all levels. The change is not possible without a need to change, which concerns both individuals and organisations. Steering can be one factor creating the need for change. The need for ecological sustainability can pull together different levels and organisations to work towards more sustainable future. The COVID-19 pandemic shows that big changes in communities are possible. Change towards a better world could start by systems thinking and identifying relationships between all activities and ecological sustainability, including at school.

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Niina Mykrä is Post-doctoral Researcher in the Finnish Institute for Educational Research at the University of Jyväskylä. She has had a long career involved with environmental education as an art teacher and teacher in charge of environmental issues, as the head of the nature school of Tampere municipality, and as the Executive Director of The Finnish Association of Nature and Environment Schools. Mykrä's recent PhD research was about promoting ecological sustainability in Finnish Basic Schools.

Chapter 7
Unmentioned Challenges of Finnish Teacher Education: Decontextualisation, Scientification and the Rhetoric of the Research-Based Agenda

Janne Säntti, Mikko Puustinen, and Petteri Hansen

Abstract Finnish teacher education has emphasised that academic standards and a research-based agenda are followed in the everyday activities of training teachers. Finnish teacher education has been recognised as a prime example of how to carry out teacher training. In our chapter, we reach beyond the myths and hype about Finnish teacher education with three interconnected concepts: decontextualisation, scientification and rhetoric. With these concepts, we expose unwanted side effects that have followed from pursuing academic standards. We also illustrate the swift transformation of Finnish teacher education.

Finnish teacher education reviews seem to have the same recurrent message: Teacher education in Finnish universities has the same position and status as traditional academic subjects like history, mathematics or social sciences. Thus, research is central to the function and identity of teacher education, and every student teacher must pass a master's degree to gain the status of a qualified teacher. As it stands at present, these views are reassuring that teacher education is an indisputable part of academia in Finnish higher education institutions and that Finnish teacher education is following academic guidelines.[1]

Finnish teacher educators consider that teacher training has embraced the research-based agenda as the central organising theme which is considered in administrative decision making and day-to-day academic activities including all the tasks performed in basic studies and even in teaching practices. They see research-based

J. Säntti (✉) · M. Puustinen
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: janne.santti@helsinki.fi

M. Puustinen
e-mail: mikko.puustinen@helsinki.fi

P. Hansen
Tampere Institute for Advanced Study, Tampere University, 33014 Tampere, Finland
e-mail: petteri.hansen@tuni.fi

Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, NTNU, P.O. Box 8900, Trondheim, Norway

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reasoning as a kind of adhesive that connects educational practices to educational theories. The relationship between theory and practice is another often-repeated tenet of Finnish teacher education. It follows that research-based thinking should associate theory and practice in a compact connection so that schoolteachers can work out daily teaching problems based on their theoretical knowledge gained in teacher education. Thus, theoretical reasoning does not stop when neophyte teachers commence their practice in education.[2]

The career development of Finnish teacher educators seems to support the idea that research-based thinking is truly the operative agenda in Finnish teacher education. In Finland, recruited teacher educators are expected to have a doctorate which was not true a few decades ago. Nowadays, Finnish teacher educators are publishing in international publications and mainly identify themselves as researchers.[3] They also appreciate the research-based approach.[4] It is no wonder that this academic look seems to lure those seeking academic opportunities. This does not question that occasionally Finnish teacher educators may feel the term 'teacher' is better applied to their professional identity. Furthermore, since theory and research are fused in Finnish teacher education discourse it provides a good basis for divergent identity-based interpretations. The same academic appeal has made teaching an attractive career choice for young people in Finland. The popularity of teacher education programmes has ensured that teacher students are often highly motivated. Like their university teachers, student teachers appreciate the research-based approach, and they can detect it in most of their courses.[5]

It seems that Finnish teacher education is managing excellently. And to make the story even more favourable, Finnish education has been basking in the glory of PISA success and teacher education has naturally received its share of this international adulation. So, it is no wonder that this small nation, whose inhabitants are famous for being introverted and modest, has risen to the occasion, become proud of its achievements, and produced such volumes as *Finnish lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?*[6] and *Miracle of education: The principles and practices of teaching and learning in Finnish schools.*[7]

The same praise continues in Finnish teacher education reports. In international comparison it has been declared that although Finnish teacher education is in an excellent position, 'it is always possible to make good even better' and that Finnish teacher education programmes have been acknowledged 'as a desired goal for other countries'.[8] In these laudatory views, Finland often takes the role of the educational forerunner in education, as Finns are depicted as having an almost sacred relationship with education. This mission obliges Finns to show the way to other nations struggling with their educational issues.[9]

Finnish teacher education can also be seen from a different standpoint. Some ask whether research-based teacher education in Finland is more rhetoric than reality.[10] The fact that teacher education belongs to academia does not guarantee that a research-based approach is enacted plausibly. On the other hand, the same teacher training institutions that have professional school functions (to educate masses of teachers) must at the same time meet expectations imposed by international research communities. There are also still some teacher educators who mainly identify with

their roles and mission as teachers and see their researcher identity as secondary.[11] As well, while Finnish teacher educators have improved their academic achievements, departments might be tempted to recruit top-notch researchers from other disciplines to enhance research output.[12] Another problem is that not every student seems to understand the research-based approach.[13] A further issue is that large-scale empirical research about the reception of research-based approach amongst schoolteachers is still lacking and one must contend with indirect indications and personal knowledge.[14]

Research-based teacher education is by no means a Finnish national treasure, but an approach widely found in international recommendations.[15] Unsurprisingly, it is enacted differently around the world.[16] While we see that research-based teacher education is definitely a favoured and largely assumed approach in academia, we think that there are still many questions to be studied. We have referred above to studies and views which clearly promote research-based teacher education and a Finnish way to do it. We have also provided views that criticise these studies. Both lines of inquiry could reflect tendentious and goal-directed intentions. Still, the fact of the matter is that research-based teacher education is a complicated process. We are also aware that to many other academic disciplines it can appear a bit strange to criticise a research-based approach. But in education, there are some serious and intrinsic reasons which should be considered. First is the rather brief history of the academisation process of academic teacher education which is also true in Finland. Another issue is the rather complicated relationship between theory and practice in education.[17]

In this chapter we study ideas, developments (whether intended or not) and repercussions, that may have hindered or complicated the fulfilment of the research-based agenda. Furthermore, we scrutinise unwanted side effects that may have followed when complying with the research-based approach. We apply three different views to present our point of view. First, we consider whether or to what degree the story of Finnish research-based teacher education is more rhetoric than reality. Second, with the idea of decontextualisation, we demonstrate how the research-based approach has alienated teacher education from the school environment and the rank and file of education and how teacher education studies have missed so-called contextual studies. Finally, we discuss scientification of Finnish teacher education in the changing context of university work.

Another Version of the Finnish Teacher Education Success Story

In this section, we examine the transformation of Finnish teacher education during the last half-century. Based on an analysis of national committee and evaluation reports the rhetorical emphasis of Finnish teacher education can be divided into four periods: 'The retreat from tradition' (the 1960s), 'Academia calling' (the 1970s and the 1980s),

'Rhetorical academisation' (the 1990s and the 2000s) and 'Real academisation?' (the 2000s and the 2010s).[18] Each period has its characteristics. In the 1960s teaching was mainly seen as craftsmanship. Thus, the message of reformers was quite clear: more theory is needed because the theoretical basis of teacher education was inadequate, and the traditional idea of teachers' work was outdated. However, the same reformers warned against providing an overly theoretical education for prospective teachers. Practice, i.e., connection to day-to-day schooling was seen as an important, if not predominant, part of a teacher's education.

When teacher education was on the verge of achieving full academic status in the 1970s, the emphasis on theory strengthened. The ability to think scientifically was presented as being characteristic of a teacher, as encapsulated in the suggestion that 'practical decisions should derive from research-based facts, not beliefs'.[19] Nevertheless, the committees of the time admitted that teachers were not supposed to be 'real researchers' and that there was not (as yet) any generally accepted theory of education or instruction.

The third phase, 'Rhetorical academisation', embodied the need to accelerate the academisation process. At the beginning of the 1990s, Finland was suffering deep economic depression and questions arose as to whether class teachers needed studies at the master's level. Furthermore, it was questioned by some in academia whether the university was the right place for teacher education. The defensive reaction was to stress the theoretical aspects of teacher education: now the teachers were to be not just schoolteachers but 'educational experts'. The rhetorical shift was connected to a simultaneous change in the teacher education curriculum. This was supported by the fact that schoolteachers achieved true authority in local curriculum work at the same time. More theory and research methodology were added to teacher education to promote the teacher-as-a-researcher attitude to student teachers.

Closest to the present day, the concern about a gap between theory and practice has vanished. Even though teaching practice periods became shorter in the 1990s, the relationship between theory and practice has become less and less seen as a problem. Unlike earlier decades, teacher education reports from the 2000s and 2010s do not recognise any ambivalence. On the contrary, a report from 2007 declares that 'a research orientation and teachers' day-to-day work are inseparable'.[20] Here, the key element is said to be personal practical theory (PPT), that every teacher trainee is encouraged and expected to develop. The concept of PPT, as well as some analogous labels, refers to the interaction between the knowledge, beliefs and practices in the minds of teachers. The stated aim of PPT is to combine different elements experienced by students during their education. Yet, PPT is rarely elucidated and the vagueness of PPT raises questions of how scientific elements are separated from mere personal experiences and if PPT can offer any universal tools that go beyond the personal experience of a teacher.[21]

When one reads Finnish texts about teacher education that are written after the millennium, the overall impression is that the academisation process is complete and the decade-long challenge to combine theoretical and practical parts of the education

has been solved. At the same time, Finland's education system has gained international attention or even hype because of excellent PISA results. In these circumstances, selective use of two facts, the fact that Finnish primary teachers have required a master's degree since the 1970s and the fact of the PISA results, have created a narrative of the growth story of Finnish teacher education finally culminating in excellent learning outcomes. However, any more thorough history is more complicated.

First, there is some evidence that Finnish teacher education discourse has been selective, and goal directed. In the 1990s a Finnish version of the report summarising an international review did not refer to the reservations that the international team had about the lack of time and other resources schoolteachers would have if intended to conduct research during their careers.[22] However, all the other observations of the international team are listed in detail. Similarly, a committee report of 2007 declaring the merging of research orientation and teachers' daily work ignores international studies in which teachers question the role of theory in teacher's work or stress the rather complicated relationship between theory and practice in education.[23]

Second, a constant theme in committee and evaluation reports is criticism towards teachers who work in schools. School teachers are said to have a limited understanding of educational research and to show reluctance towards educational science. What is striking is that even in the same reports Finnish teachers are said to be top-notch in their profession when compared internationally but only a few lines later are accused of lacking research motivation.[24] In this vision of a good teacher, research-based teacher education is applauded, and the work of actual schoolteachers is suppressed. Teachers are presented as half-educated researchers, who should be able to do research, but who are not real researchers.[25]

Third, the rhetoric praising the research-based agenda presents teacher education only as the education of teachers who study education as their major. While the success story fits nicely to the development of primary teacher's education and their internationally uncommon master's degree, it overlooks subject teachers who teach at both lower and upper secondary levels and who have subjects like history, geography or biology as their major. This is despite PISA measuring 15-year-old students who are taught by subject teachers and it can be estimated that there are more subject teachers than primary teachers in Finland. While we acknowledge that there may be several reasons for this lapse of memory, the education of subject teachers does not fit the success story. Subject teachers study their future teaching subject as their major, spend on average only one year in Education faculties, and so absorb their academic orientation from their subject major. Their education has been fully academic since the nineteenth century and can be characterised by strong continuity and stability when compared to the education of primary teachers. Hence, the subject teachers seem a poor fit for the story.

To sum up this section, the self-rhetoric of Finnish teacher education has constructed a coherent narrative of success. The success story is built around the research base of teacher training as well as the reputation of the Finnish education system. The narrative acknowledges primary teachers' education and its development but ignores subject teachers and pays no attention to the connections between

teacher education's theory base and practical schoolwork. This has created a seedbed for decontextualisation, which we introduce next.

Decontextualisation—Teacher Education Without School and Society

We have argued that the strengthening of the research-based orientation of Finnish teacher education has been possible under the rhetorical shield, and this, in turn, has intensified decontextualisation. By decontextualisation, Hannu Simola means a discursive break in the 1970s in which the sociohistorical and institutional context of teaching and learning in school vanished from official texts on education in Finland. Simola links the decontextualisation process to other simultaneous school discourses. Firstly, while the school is still run for masses the idea of individual pupils had been emphasised in the school discourse. At the same time, ubiquitous learning which may occur everywhere and whenever has replaced the time-bound and contextual school education. The third simultaneous discourse is the tendency to fall silent about the compulsory nature of schooling. Finally, decontextualisation has also made possible the scientification of teachers and teacher educators (discussed in the next section) which are epitomised in the research-based agenda.[26]

How has decontextualisation been manifested in Finnish teacher education? To begin with, it seems that in Finnish teacher education so-called contextual studies like history or sociology of education have fallen away, or when accomplished, suffer from uncritical acceptance towards prevailing political views and agendas.[27] The same tendency is seen in Finnish educational textbooks: In the 1970s these textbooks were emphasising how crucial it is for teachers to recognise societal and historical elements when dealing with everyday school challenges. In the latest textbooks, references to these contextual factors have diminished and the focus is at the level of the classroom. Wider societal issues, when mentioned, are mainly about school development and unfocused pressure from society to change.[28]

Decontextualisation is also noticeable in the imagery around an ideal teacher. In the wake of the academisation process of Finnish teacher education presented above, the Finnish teacher profile has also gradually transformed from a rather practical and didactical thinker to a research-based professional who is expected to also undertake research tasks as part of daily duties. The autonomous position of teacher education in academia has made it possible to strive for this rather ambitious teacher ideal. The problem becomes clearer when two Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, are compared. In Sweden, the state has controlled teacher education. Thus, Swedish teacher education policy has oscillated between political orientations and teacher ideals. When Social Democratic governments have been in power, Swedes have pursued a progressivist orientation with the teacher as a social reformer. Under centre-right liberal governance, the prevailing teacher ideal has been the academic orientation in which the teacher is a subject expert.[29]

The fact that Finnish teacher education has been largely free of party politics and government control has made it more feasible to follow academic and science-based guidelines. From the academic point of view, this is an advantage. However, the lack of political guidance has reduced the awareness of the political, societal, and sociological issues in teacher education and fostered the tendency to view education in a depoliticised way free from normative pressures and political agendas. There are reasons to believe that this has strengthened decontextualisation in Finnish education and especially in teacher education. In contrast, political agendas in Swedish education and teacher training have been salient and under vivid debate. Nowadays, Sweden has also started to follow the research-based agenda.[30]

Finnish teachers' awareness of political pressures is related to other normative expectations to which they have been obligated. The traditional Finnish teacher ideal cherished patriotic and Christian virtues linked especially to primary school teachers. These normative virtues were overt and binding and teachers were expected to act and live accordingly. The traditional teacher ideal was seen as outdated in the 1960s, after which Finnish teacher educators chose to follow the research-based agenda as depicted above. This change of outlook happened during the period when the Finnish welfare state was created as part of the goal-oriented modernisation process of the whole society and education. In this development, teachers were expected to have a crucial role.[31]

The research-based agenda is said to epitomise the ideas of neutrality and objectivity. Thus, it is considered to be free from normative pressures whether political or ideological. Nevertheless, new research-based teachers are not exempt from normative pressures. While traditional normativity was allowed to be obvious, the newer normativity is cunning and at the same time seductive: it asks teachers to study and develop themselves continuously and not to get stuck in the past as they are supposed to be dynamic agents of change. Furthermore, they are supposed to have extensive networks and international partnerships. It may be a coincidence, but these virtues are usually associated with researchers. Of course, readiness for change and broad-mindedness can be seen also as desirable. But it is problematic if these virtues mean an uncritical stance towards administrative decisions and readiness to embrace various school reforms for fear of being called a 'diehard', 'dinosaur' or 'luddite'. This may be the case if teachers are not aware of political and ideological pressures on and within education (see also Juvonen and Toom in this book).[32]

Decontextualisation can also be seen in the relationship between theory and practice. It seems that the separation of theory and practice is visible in teacher education, which is mainly appreciated by student teachers. Still, the relationship between theory and practice is all too muddled for many of them.[33] Teacher practice provides a promising opportunity to study theoretical questions in concrete educational contexts. Unluckily, as a consequence of the research-based agenda teacher educators have pulled back from guidance on the practice of teaching. This has meant two things: first, much theoretical knowledge has withdrawn from periods of teaching practice and it has put University-based training school teachers increasingly responsible for disseminating theoretical understanding under the simultaneous pressure to take care of practical school issues. Second, teacher educators

have lost opportunities to see what is happening in classrooms. These repercussions have increased decontextualisation and minimised opportunities to bring theory and practice together.[34]

Finnish teacher educators have made a lot of effort to convince us that they have found a workable solution for combining theory and practice. Even more, this coexistence of theory and practice should also be true in a teacher's daily work.[35] While there is still the need to undertake large-scale empirical research on how the research-based agenda is approached amongst practicing teachers, some case studies are indicating that Finnish teachers are challenged to keep up with their theoretical knowledge. In other words, teachers do not read educational journals. As well, although teachers mainly do appreciate academic and research-based education, educational science is unable to provide analytical tools and theoretical perspectives for teachers. Teachers demand quite concrete tools, which would help them to understand students and their behaviour. According to teachers, these were absent in their academic education. It seems that research-based education does not provide a solid, critical and theoretical basis for teachers. Thus, teachers are not able to theorise their work and recognise complex interrelationships, which further promotes decontextualisation.[36]

More than thirty years ago, two Finnish educational scientists Osmo Kivinen and Risto Rinne wrote a provocative article to arouse debate around Finnish teacher education, and they succeeded.[37] The researchers accused Finnish teacher educators, amongst other things, of concentrating on studying their students, namely preservice teachers, and making conclusions about the state and the needs of schools and schoolteachers with this evidence. The same may be true even today. This is a burning issue since the predominance of research-based culture in Finnish education can be studied in no other way than studying the actual context.

Scientification of Finnish Teacher Education and the Changing Context of University Work

The rhetoric and decontextualisation of Finnish teacher education discussed so far can be seen as the consequences of a rather consistent and steady scientification process, which is the common thread in the transformation of teacher education and how it has succeeded to settle within academia. The main reason for scientification of Finnish teacher education can be related to the general scientification of professions in modern societies. Living and working as a professional in the so-called knowledge society requires continuous self-development as well as the ability to interpret and apply the latest scientific research.[38] Indeed, one reason for the scientification of Finnish teacher education in the 1970s was to ensure that the teachers working in the new comprehensive school would be equipped with the latest research knowledge and continue updating their skills during their work career.[39]

The scientification has had many welcome and widely recognised consequences for Finnish teacher education. Getting affiliated with universities has attracted more

students to apply to teacher training programmes and it has also raised the academic requirements for people working as teacher educators. The scientification of teacher education has thus improved the professional status and autonomy of both Finnish teachers and teacher educators. However, several studies are pointing out the problems related to the professional identity and autonomy of teacher educators working in universities.[40] Balancing between scientific and educational expectations seems to be hard also for some Finnish teacher educators.[41] While some problems and solutions could be found from the organisational culture of teacher education departments,[42] one should also pay attention to the difference between the university context where the scientification of teacher education first started and the university context where it is supposed to continue happening. In other words, it would be worth reflecting on how changing societal expectations related to universities serve or challenge the existing teacher education practices.

When class teacher training and elementary training schools entered Finnish universities in the 1970s, two groups of professionals encountered the situation where there were plenty of opportunities for both groups to develop. On the one hand, there was a small and established group of scholars coming in mainly from other fields of science such as psychology and subject departments. For this group of researchers, the teacher education represented uncharted territory with the possibility to establish new vacancies and training programmes. On the other hand, there were also a large group of people having a background as a qualified and merited teacher but with no experience of scientific work. From the 1970s until the early 2000s teacher education units consisting of teacher education departments and training schools supported the latter group of teacher educators to participate in doctoral studies, do excursions abroad, and develop their professional identity as science-based practitioners. As a result, both the total number of staff, the number of professors, and the share of people having doctoral degrees increased steadily between the 1970s and early 2000s.[43]

What characterised the Finnish university politics during this scientification of teacher education in the 1970s and 1980s was the importance of regional politics and the steady growth of funding by the state. Growing public funding, however, meant also growing resource control of universities, which intensified especially in the 1990s. While in the 1980s the funding of universities was still solely based on the number of starting students, in the 1990s Ministry of education introduced various performance indicators to monitor the scientific output of universities.[44] The relationship between state and universities changed in 2009 when the new University Act gave Finnish universities stronger financial and administrative self-control. What this new independence meant also was that the amount of public funding and regular personnel declined while the importance of external funding increased.[45] What also happened at the same time was the shift from quantity-based public funding into performance agreements where scientific quality was also taken into consideration.[46]

For many teacher education units and teacher educators, the last decades of changes have meant confusing times. As a result of decreasing influence of regional politics and increasing influence of economic self-management, the majority of the Finnish universities ended up closing teacher education units located in different towns than the main campus at the beginning of the 2010s. Centralising teacher

education into bigger units has meant new research possibilities for teacher educators but it has also opened the door for policies where budget cuts could be done for example by integrating studies and staff of different training programmes. On the plus side, some teacher students have probably experienced more academic freedom in their studies than before, but at the same time, the studies are not necessarily well-targeted for the context where teacher students are expected to work in the future.

Besides the questions related to the content of teaching, there are also some concerns about how well the new policies aiming to increase the scientific productivity and external funding in universities meets with local and national needs of teacher training.[47] Even though research communities have been officially advocating for versatile teaching and research activities, evaluation practices such as the Journal Ranking by The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies encourage researchers to hunt performance points for their home units.This applies particularly well to researchers having short-term contracts and whose ability to perform as scientifically productive researchersare evaluated in staff recruitment processes and tenure track models.[48] Increasing scientific expectations and dependency on external funding has also changed the way how teacher educators participate in developing teaching and teacher education. Instead of long-term cooperation with the people working in the field, constant scanning of resources leads easily to project-hopping and short-term development policy.[49]

Conclusion: The Need to Acknowledge the History, Challenges and Tensions of Teacher Education in Finland

The Finnish teacher education system has followed a research-based agenda since the 1970s. One clear but unintended repercussion of the development from vocational training to full academic and research-based activity is decontextualisation. In our analysis, decontextualisation takes place in the content of teacher education, and at the same time, there are processes through which teacher education is in the danger of losing its connection to school realities. Rather ambitious visions concerning teachers' work as quasi-researchers should be also reconsidered. The rhetoric of Finnish teacher education has offered a shield to proceed with the research-based agenda, which has welcomed academic development. At the same time, this process has isolated teacher training from school contexts, and as a consequence decontextualisation has gained a firm foothold in Finnish teacher education. Science policy which underlines research activities at education's expense and promotes short-term and global-oriented projects has been especially problematic for teacher education, which is also in need of local thinking and long-term commitment.

In this chapter, the political and ideological consciousness of Finnish teacher education has been concealed under the decontextualised culture. It is problematic if teacher education is just reacting to the pressures of science policy and trying

to convince, maybe with louder rhetoric, that it is in shape and can handle both the scientific and practical educational issues without problems. We do not want to keep up dichotomies between research and teaching-orientated teacher education, nor deny the usefulness of the scientific method when solving practical problems. Instead, we criticise the discourse in which scientification is seen as a solution without problems and where dilemmas emerging in everyday practices and policies of teacher education are actively silenced.

Finnish teacher education can salute its achievements with good reason. But in the celebration, it has forgotten to recognise complicated consequences. As a general rule, one-sided praise has been done mainly by teacher educators who have also represented the schoolteachers' voices rather lightly. It is quite clear that the academisation process of Finnish teacher education has been a favourable project for teacher educators and teacher education institutes. The same process has also provided schoolteachers with real analytic and academic skills needed in the daily school context, not forgetting the distinguished status and professional authority it has granted.

On the other hand, there is still the need for a more detailed examination of what the research-based agenda means for teachers in their day-to-day schoolwork. The few case studies done, indicate that the rhetorical promises of research-based agenda do not get realised in their daily schoolwork. This is reflected by teachers' lack of familiarity with educational research or the way they seem to lack analytical tools to analyse the institutional or societal settings of schooling. Research-based teacher education aims to educate teachers not simply as the recipients of professional knowledge, but as autonomous actors who also participate in knowledge production.

Teacher education aims to offer academic tools and broaden students' thinking to help them generate context-free knowledge and thus understand individual classroom situations and personal experiences in a wider context. While there would be little point criticising the Finnish aim to support making theorising and reflection visible by emphasising PPT, it would be a mistake to think that merely vocalising one's private theories would create a better practice. Theory in the form of 'school-free pedagogy' may not offer meaningful tools for a practitioner. Hence, based on the historical development of Finnish teacher education, we argue that the decontextualisation of educational knowledge makes it hard for an individual teacher to meaningfully combine scientific knowledge and one's own experiences.

To conclude, the history of the academisation process in Finnish teacher education is rather exceptional. In the 1990s it was still being questioned whether the university is the right place for teacher education. It was blamed for sustaining the old teacher college culture. It took only a decade to change the situation dramatically, not least because of the high rankings in PISA testing and swift and consistent measures to foster the academic culture in teacher education. Since the turn of the millennium, teacher education has been a widely known success story of Finnish higher education.

At the same time, spurred by the scientification process, Finnish teacher education has been busy in pursuing academic goals. First teacher education had to catch up with the rest of academia and show that it can follow true academic standards. When this finally happened, it was necessary to adapt to the new science policy. Both

situations have imposed demands which may be irrelevant, if not detrimental, to the old necessities of teacher education like teaching practice and practical dimensions of teacher's professional skills. When adapting to varying academic cultures teacher education has been very agile. Still, we should examine more closely whether the approach of Finnish teacher education has reflected more the eagerness to please academia and ministries than a critical stance and readiness to appeal to the particular needs of teacher education, which it certainly possesses. Maybe the truth lies somewhere between these extremes.

We have earlier introduced the idea of the marriage of convenience between theory (teacher educators) and practice (teachers at work in schools) in Finnish teacher education.[50] If the teaching profession is regarded as truly research-based the status of teacher educators in Academia is assured. Besides that, teacher education can provide academic prestige and distinctive authority which separate teacher educators clearly from teachers working in schools. At the same time, it is good if teachers in schools are also at least somewhat academic 'half-researchers' but who come in any case from a good academic family.[51] We sincerely hope that the communication is active and diverse in this utilitarian marriage and that the genuine academic spouse also lets their teacher partner have a say. We also hope the latter is not demanding the impossible from the union either.

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50. Säntti, Puustinen, and Salminen, op. cit., p. 16.
51. Labaree, D. 2004. *The trouble with ed schools.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. pp. 12, 33.

Janne Säntti is University Lecturer in Pedagogical Studies for adult education at the University of Helsinki where he also holds the title of Docent. Säntti has studied Finnish teacher education in post-war Finland, especially the formation of academic teacher education. His current interests include digitalisation, the future of education and rhetorical analysis.

Mikko Puustinen Ph.D. is University Lecturer in history and social studies education at the University of Helsinki. His research interests include history and social studies education and teacher education. He has studied the academisation of Finnish teacher education and is especially familiar with rhetorical analysis. Recently, Puustinen has been studying the meanings in-service teachers give to educational research and theory.

Petteri Hansen is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Tampere Institute for Advanced Study and Associate Professor at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim. His research interests include comparative politics and history of education and teacher education.

Chapter 8
Teachers' Expectations and Expectations of Teachers: Understanding Teachers' Societal Role

Sara Juvonen and Auli Toom

Abstract Being a teacher is an esteemed position in Finland. Finnish class teachers are academically educated professionals in five-year masters level programmes, where only a small percentage of applicants are accepted. However, in recent years, more teachers have reported having intentions to leave the profession, and there has been a slight decline in the number of applicants to teacher education programmes too. In this chapter, we elaborate Finnish expectations of teaching as a profession, set by society on the one hand, and teachers themselves on the other. Society sets both explicit and implicit expectations for teachers: teachers' work is defined by a national curriculum as well as current policy aims, but is also moulded by the surrounding culture and norms. Teachers themselves are likely to have expectations of a personally fulfilling career; expectations that have begun to form already in their years as students in school, observing and learning what teachers and school are like. Schools, ideally, function to both maintain and reform society. We argue that expectations concerning teachers—normative expectations learned through observation in particular—act as part of the way schools maintain society. We ask whether Finnish teacher education today does enough to help teachers to assume their teacher role in society broadly and navigate the constantly changing field of education.

Being a teacher is charged with expectations from many directions.[1] Societal expectations of teachers maintain they should uphold national demands for education and schooling, meet requirements presented in the curriculum, carry out new educational policies, and serve the needs of students. Societal expectations entail implicit expectations as well: assumptions arising from often long-held norms about what a 'good' school and teacher are like, and who can be a teacher to begin with. Prospective teachers themselves are also likely to have professional ambitions and expectations of what being a teacher will be like. Margaret Buchmann[2] approaches this in her

S. Juvonen (✉) · A. Toom
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: sara.juvonen@helsinki.fi

A. Toom
e-mail: auli.toom@helsinki.fi

thorough analyses of people holding a teacher's role; fulfilling professional responsibilities and, at the same time, utilising personal strengths. In his famous book, *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*, Dan Lortie[3] coined the concept *apprenticeship of observation*, suggesting that unlike most professions, socialisation into being a teacher begins already in the early years we spend at school as students. Aspiring teachers bring with them experiences from their years in school. Deborah Britzman[4] has written about the cultural myths of being a teacher, concluding that common understandings of the profession—such as being a role model—might become an unnecessary burden and prevent the chance of teachers undoing what they have learnt during their years as observers in school.

In the aftermath of Finland's PISA fame, both the Finnish comprehensive system and teacher education have attracted international interest. The Finnish primary teacher education programme has been widely analysed and some of its key elements have even been adapted internationally. Being a teacher is an esteemed position in Finland, requiring a university degree from a study program with an exceptionally low entrance acceptance rate. Yet even though Finnish teachers and teacher education rank highly both in Finland and internationally, there are indications of growing numbers of Finnish teachers having plans to leave teaching,[5] some even at the very beginning of their career.[6] In very recent years, the number of applicants to the primary teacher education degree programmes has declined slightly.[7] Internationally, a proportion of teachers switching careers is a well-known phenomenon, but not in the Finnish context. Nevertheless, some weak signs of it are emerging which might indicate that early-career teachers in Finland are finding it challenging to embrace a teacher's role and all the expectations that it involves.

The purpose of this chapter is to look at Finnish teacher education in light of current trends and research, together with classic texts about teaching. The chapter aims to provoke ideas about the current Finnish teacher education and its relevance to teachers' work.[8] Our main question is whether Finnish teacher education today serves to educate teachers that are able to assume a societal role, and through that role work towards schools' societal tasks: both maintaining *and* reforming social and cultural structures in individuals' lives and society. We approach the subject through expectations that teachers themselves have, and expectations that society sets for teachers. By culture and the expectations arising from it, we refer to the ways of being and doing of specific contexts into which people are socialised and contributing to, through living within and interacting with their surrounding social communities. Our interest is in teacher education, as it is where existing expectations should be recognised, critically explored and, ideally, reconciled. Unlike studies on teacher-student interaction or the classroom, there is still relatively little research on the Finnish teacher in their social and societal context.[9] We contextualise our argument by first discussing current trends in Finnish teacher education and schools. We then elaborate different expectations concerning teachers, and propose how these expectations work as part of schools' (re-)productive or societal maintenance function. We argue for a teacher education that enhances critical professional agency, to scrutinise and reconcile different expectations towards schools and teachers and, in the end, to enact the school's societal tasks with purpose and consideration.

Teacher Education in Finland

Finnish teachers are academically educated in five-year master level programmes. Teacher education was placed in the universities according to a political decision in 1979, soon after the reform of Finnish basic education. Since then, it has been the requirement that every primary and secondary school teacher must earn a master's degree to receive a formal teacher qualification. The five-year primary teacher education programme comprises basic, intermediate and advanced studies in educational sciences including bachelor's and master's theses, as well as studies in minor subjects and teaching practice periods in teacher training schools and regular schools. It qualifies teachers to work as primary school class teachers with students of 7–13 years of age. Subject teachers typically complete a master's degree in their chosen subject and, in addition, one year of pedagogical studies in educational sciences including teaching practice periods. This qualifies them to work as subject teachers in both primary and lower and/or upper secondary schools. The research-orientation as an organising theme of teacher education and the broad aim to educate pedagogically thinking teachers[10] have been developed gradually. The main aim is to learn key knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as an inquiring orientation.[11] Inquiry-oriented teachers are thought to have capabilities to work in complex everyday settings at school and have both a theoretical understanding and practical capabilities for the key phenomena—education, teaching and learning—at both classroom and school levels.

A concrete determinant of who can become a teacher comes in the form of the application process, and the recent decreasing number of applicants has been noted and investigated.[12] In recent years, Finnish teacher education has also taken steps towards a more nationally unified student selection process. The previous, university specific entrance examination model was criticised for a lack of evidence-based methods and for bias.[13] To avoid these issues, a government funded project *Student Selection to Teacher Education in Finland—Anticipatory Work for Future* (OVET/DOORS) has created a conceptual framework[14] based on a model of teacher competencies developed by Sigrid Blömeke and colleagues.[15] The model aims to enhance cohesion between Finnish university study programmes and help universities to implement more uniform and transparent student selection practices. These developments seek more equal treatment and selection of applicants, and also aim to focus the entrance evaluation on the elements of teachers' work that have been found relevant. However, most of the teacher education programmes in Finland are structured around subject-specific didactics studies, and societal and contextual questions of schooling often receive less attention during the actual studies.

Current Educational Trends and Challenges in Finland

Current issues concerning Finnish schooling, such as growing segregation amongst residential areas and how this is reflected in schools and student demographics,[16] challenge the aspiration of equality and influence school life. School choice also affects school segregation both among and within schools.[17] Finnish media debate concerning inclusive education has been lively after a change in legislation in 2010 that aimed at providing special support for students in need in general education classes rather than in a separate special education class.[18] The Teacher Education Forum, established by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture in 2016, lists the characteristics of an ideal future teacher, and raises growing differences among educational institutions and a growing competence gap "between boys and girls" as possible challenges for attaining these teacher ideals.[19] A growing competence gap in the Finnish PISA evaluations between students is also tied to socio-economic background, and the possibility of its connection to growing segregation within the biggest Finnish cities is considered in the preliminary Finnish PISA case report.[20] Constant societal change and changing discourse also mould expectations towards teachers, and teacher workload is a subject of ongoing public discussion.

It is well recognised that through observation, students only see a fraction of what it is to be a teacher, meaning that students who enter teacher education rarely have a comprehensive understanding of what the work entails and what is expected of them.[21] Societal change, as described above, can be expected to widen this gap between expectations further. This makes learning to understand the school as an institution, one's own expectations towards it and towards themselves a key task of teacher education. The challenge is how to make future teachers' own perceptions of school visible and convey society's expectations to teachers, whilst also allowing for critical scrutiny of these expectations. To assume a societal teacher role, teacher education could provide student-teachers with possibilities for testing their ideas and ideals, and thus, enacting their professional agency[22]—instead of educating them strictly in line with the current basic education curriculum and structures, as the curriculum is likely to change many times over a teacher's career. In the following, we elaborate teachers' own expectations and societal expectations towards them.

Teachers' Personal Expectations for the Profession

Compared internationally, teaching is still an exceptionally popular career choice amongst young people in Finland. The teaching profession is relatively autonomous, and the professional framework provides possibilities to fulfil one's own ideals and potential. But as a tool of self-realisation, it is only partial: Teaching requires strong commitment to support students' growth and learning, an altruistic attitude and willingness to work for the best of the students. Teachers strive to accommodate their personal needs and interests to the profession and for the best of student-learning and

growth.[23] Agentic teachers who are personally committed are able to build good relationships with their pupils, enhancing their learning and favourably impacting their schooling experience.[24] The relationship between teachers and students is always asymmetric, and sets the main responsibility for education, learning and development on the teacher's side. The relationship is future-oriented, temporary, and imperfect, and it hopes for the best of students' growth and development. In the end it is voluntary: students cannot be forced to commit to the pedagogical relationship offered by their teachers, even though schooling is compulsory.[25]

These core characteristics steer teachers and strongly influence their willingness to work as teachers. They are strong motivating factors for investing in the work, and challenge teachers to build functioning and trustful relationships with their students. Teaching expects strong personal investment, but still, it is not only for realising one's own visions and ambitions, but rather to realise them by fulfilling the teacher's role.[26] As Buchmann emphasises, schools are firstly for students, and students' autonomy and self-realisation depend on what they learn at school. As a result, "self-realisation in teaching is not a good in itself, but only insofar as pursuing self-realisation leads to appropriate student learning".[27]

Empirical research on Finnish student-teachers shows that their learning includes a variety of meaningful phases and critical experiences throughout their studies. Agentic capabilities for reflection and building a collaborative learning environment and pedagogical competence develop gradually—but not linearly—during the studies.[28] Student-teachers constantly construct their professional identity, which should be intentionally challenged and supported in teacher education. Compared internationally, the Finnish context allows teachers to utilise and develop their own personal interests and strengths: the education system, formal qualification requirements, the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCC), and related decrees[29] set the professional norms and space in which teachers do their work, perform their teacher roles and bring in their personal qualities as teachers.[30] Within the legal framework, Finnish teachers have relatively broad freedom to, for instance, emphasise pedagogical approaches and utilise such materials and tools that they perceive relevant for students' learning.[31] They may initiate developments, collaborations and innovations at schools with their colleagues, that benefit both students' and teachers' learning.[32] Yet although the teaching profession allows for personal aspirations and self-realisation to an extent, in practice, teachers' work is delimited by societal expectations, which we turn to next.

Societal Expectations Towards Teachers

There are both explicit and implicit societal expectations towards teachers ranging from legal, binding requirements to normative assumptions which are less conscious cultural understandings of the social world and the roles of the people within. Explicit, rather ambitious, expectations are stated in the National Core Curriculum for basic education (NCC), which sets guidelines for the aims of comprehensive education:

each comprehensive school is to provide children with certain academic skills and support them in their growth, well-being and building of positive identities.[33] The NCC, adapted into local curricula to better suit municipalities and individual schools, is a binding document setting the fundamental frame of expectations for all schools and teachers' work. It is renewed in Finland in every 10–15 years through a highly collective process involving teachers, researchers, policy makers, and even parents. It reflects the collective understanding of the core characteristics of school education that are seen as important to promote, both intellectually and pedagogically.[34] The NCC is an example of not only explicit expectations, but as such a shared effort it also reflects implicit norms; all who take part in the process are apprentices of observation and carry with them cultural ideas and values.

The role of teachers in education policy is twofold: their profession and everyday actions are objects of continuous policy development, but they are also expected to act as the individual and reflective professionals 'implementing' educational policy in schools. Finnish teachers are traditionally highly autonomous actors and enjoy a high level of trust, there being no high-stakes accountability model such as school inspections or teacher evaluations based on student outcomes.[35] The Teacher Education Forum has formulated development goals for teacher education, viewing teachers as "future-oriented and broad-based" experts who, among other things, will actively develop, experiment with and implement pedagogical innovations as well as continually develop their own competence as a teacher. To do this, teachers are to utilise the "latest research and evaluations" and seek and provide support in national as well as international networks.[36] These strategic guidelines set high and perhaps unrealistic aims for teachers to pursue. It may be recalled that as well as constantly evaluating and developing pedagogical strategies along with their own competence and being active in teacher-networks, teachers are expected to teach.

Like all social systems, schools are also filled with implicit expectations of how to be and behave—after all, a central task of institutional education is socialisation and thus cultural (re-)production.[37] These mostly tacit, historically constructed norms, and assumptions that arise from them are tied to cultural traditions and social hierarchies that are present in the overarching society, and are an inherent part of the school. They concern more what is seen as natural or normal and involve less conscious reflection and decision.[38] What is abnormal in school is always constructed in relation to what is viewed as normal.[39] Discourse and cultural perceptions of normality thus mark off the possibilities of a 'proper' teacher's action. Historically, in the official steering documents of Finnish basic education through 1860s to the 1990s, the ideal teacher was first portrayed as a model citizen, setting an example both in and outside of the school, reaching to requirements of their health, appearance and overall conduct beyond teaching. Approaching the basic education reform in the 1950s, explicit expectations of impeccable behaviour and reputation were removed from the written discourse, and after the reform of basic education, a middle-class teacher ideal of model citizenship faded—however, talk of teacher ideals going beyond teaching did not fully disappear from state discourse until the beginning of the 1990s.[40]

The current legal requirements for a qualified teacher strictly concern academic and language qualifications.[41] Implicit expectations concerning teachers' moral character and ethical behaviour are still present today,[42] which is understandable due to the characteristics of teachers' work. Some studies imply that the expectations extend to teachers' cultural characteristics and conduct, or even appearance.[43] Analysis of the front covers of the OAJ Trade Union of Education's magazine *Opettaja* [Teacher] from 2013 to 2017 shows a visual representation of a Finnish teacher as "highly homogenous in terms of ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical appearance",[44] suggesting that cultural ideas and ideals of teachers still persist. These traits have little to nothing to do with the core tasks of teaching and teacher profession, as the focus should rather be on how teachers are committed to students' growth, or how teachers are able to develop their school, for instance. Even though change in policy reflects cultural change, expectations arising from norms do not necessarily instantly go away when modifying steering documents, since discourse and the practices they shape are continuously socially reproduced in people's actions, speech, and experiences,[45] unless consciously and actively challenged. New ideals and policy aims for teachers' work emerge, but instead of altogether replacing the previous ones, live side-by-side with their antecedents, and not always harmoniously.[46] Having had a teacher role model is reported as one of the pull-factors to teacher education by Finnish secondary school students,[47] and so for students—and future teachers—it matters whether teachers represent a homogenous or a diverse group of people, since through observation, students learn what a teacher is and can be like.

Working with and Around Cultural Ideals of School—a Societally Sensitive Teacher

Finnish primary school teachers are sometimes argued to be more often traditional than critical in their relationship with society,[48] despite the policy ideal of a critical, research-oriented teacher.[49] Dan Lortie[50] suggests that students who find school-life pleasant are more likely to consider a teaching career, which, to him, naturally maintains a less critical and more perpetuating relationship between teachers and the school institution. Cultural expectations of school and normality begin to form already in our years in schools as students, and like all people, teachers are through socialisation products of their culture and their actions reflect what is viewed as culturally normal. Skills learned through observation and a strong motivation for entering the field of teaching may mean that student-teachers are eager to complete their degree efficiently, and to that end, adapting to, rather than pausing to criticise teacher education seems logical. But as Kai Kallas and colleagues[51] have argued, the readier a student–teacher is to adapt to, versus criticise, the status quo during their studies or after, the fewer their possibilities for professional learning.

If teachers truly come to teaching with a more conservative than critical mind-set, we argue it may crucially impact teachers' work: without suitable tools to question the institution and its inherent normative assumptions, teachers may end up questioning their own adequacy as teaching professionals, or the adequacy of their pupils when facing difficulties in their everyday practice. A study of Finnish student-teachers' challenging experiences in their trainee phase lends some support to this proposition: while navigating through situations that student-teachers felt ethically difficult, they were more likely to be critical of themselves rather than openly criticise their supervising teachers or the training school's practices, even with situations that caused them emotional frustration or distress.[52] In another Finnish study, teachers who had a more traditional, adaptive orientation towards society were found to understand the aim of institutional education and thus their own role as a conforming agent, socialising students into society, with less critical scrutiny of societal issues and problematisation of their role as a teacher. The study found this traditional orientation to be connected with more stress and a troubled relationship with growing demands towards teachers, both curriculum-based demands as well as expectations from parents.[53]

It is equally important to study whether teachers who may lack a critical perspective towards the institution are more likely to be critical of not just themselves but of the students when facing challenges in the classroom. In media debate, students who need special support or who are not proficient Finnish speakers, for example, are sometimes named as challenges in schools,[54] thus problematising the student rather than the normative institutional structures (see Jahnukainen and colleagues in this book). Research also shows that students who are pushed to the margins in terms of ethnicity, social skills, or otherwise, are not always heard by school adults when facing troubles in school.[55] Normative expectations of students may lead to fewer opportunities for children to be socially accepted in schools: Ina Juva and colleagues[56] demonstrate how school adults, too, may take part in the exclusion of students that do not fit the cultural construction of normal. A recent national student well-being survey[57] found that secondary school students of 13–17 years of age who are in marginalised groups based on their gender identity or sexual orientation encounter more troubles in school overall, and more often report feeling like outsiders in the school community than students who are not in marginalised groups. An expectation of a certain kind of normal[58] positions some children as out of the ordinary, with—likely unintended—consequences for their experience in school and with teachers. If a teacher's relationship with the institution and the surrounding society lacks critical nuance, it is all too easy to view social norms as natural.

Through these normative expectations, we see one cycle of the school's function of maintaining society: Succeeding academically and socially in school may come more easily to students who meet the school's cultural expectations,[59] and the students who have had a pleasant time in school are typically more likely to seek a career in school. Thus, when working in a school, they hold a less critical relationship with the institution,[60] making it easy to view the institutional structures that again contribute to some students' success and others' adversity as natural rather than socially constructed. Thus, we wonder whether a lack of criticism towards the school

institution and its social structures may in fact work as one mechanism of reproducing exclusion. We suspect that without the means to critically analyse and understand the institution and without problematising implicit expectations of what is normal in school, the remaining options for teachers are to be critical of themselves or of the students when facing problems in their work. There is a need to examine whether teacher education truly offers space and time to explore the school as a social and societal institution critically, enabling teachers to assume an active, societally sensitive role in this system.

Constructing Societal Sensitivity and Critical Professional Agency

Promising changes are being made in the admissions to teacher education,[61] but in terms of skills for critical contextual knowledge to understand and manage with the intersecting expectations and social issues presented above, the work continues. In a conceptual model for teacher agency and social justice, aimed specifically to countering issues such as exclusion, Nataša Pantić[62] combines skills that involve critical thinking, analysis of social structure and culture as well as developing a strong ethical basis for teaching, and helping teachers realise their own potential as transformative agents. In Finland, there have been experiments of university study programmes aiming at developing teachers' critical transformative agency,[63] developing cultural diversity among teachers,[64] and allowing teachers to attain the required qualifications while already working in schools.[65] For instance, the Critical Model of Integrative Teacher Education (CITE) specifically aims at developing teachers' transformative agency, learning critical reflection of one's own subjectivity and position in social structures and society, with positive outcomes in terms of skills of critical thinking and analysing school communities.[66] However, taking these skills from teacher education to the field has been found to sometimes clash with the existing work cultures of schools, and may be difficult to bring into action.[67] To allow for scrutiny of societal and cultural structures and the school's role within them, sensitivity and distance is required in the field of education as a whole.[68]

To understand schooling as a social system and one's own role in it, student-teachers would need to study educational sciences broadly, and the question remains whether the mainstream of current programmes provides enough space and time for student-teachers to develop skills of critical thinking based on the broad spectrum of educational sciences. There is a need for research on the effectiveness of the programmes and possibilities that new approaches could offer. Newly graduated teachers do not always view their academic studies as useful in the job market,[69] and Kallas and colleagues[70] wonder whether understanding teaching as a profession of craftsmanship emphasises the perceived relevance of practical over theoretical studies. A cultural myth of the teacher as a self-made, natural professional serves

against the idea that teaching could be learned or improved through teacher educa-tion.[71] In doing so, it does not serve in unlearning the perceptions that have been internalised during one's years as a student observing teachers. Learning to become a teacher in teacher education should challenge student–teachers' personal orien-tations and conceptions of teaching as well as construct their professional identity based on a broad understanding of being a teacher. For a teacher to be able to truly act altruistically for the best of their students, they need to be provided with the means and skills to understand the complex life situations and societal contexts of others and their own. In principle, the philosophical idea of educative teaching in a broad sense is written into the NCC, but in day-to-day practice is probably less emphasised, as it may be easier to focus on measurable academic skills.

Conclusion: Reconciling and Challenging Societal and Personal Expectations

We have argued that maintaining existing values as well as reforming them are at the core of schooling, visible in the expectations set for and by teachers in Finland. Reforming values requires continuous critical thinking and active profes-sional agency in an institution that is laden with tradition and not always easy to change. We have questioned whether the current Finnish teacher education provides enough tools for teachers to assume their societal role as both maintainers *and* reformers. The notion of learning teaching through years of observation, and what aspiring teachers bring with them to teacher education and eventually classrooms is not new,[72] but without actively committing to reform as well, there is a danger of mainly reproducing the existing values and societal structures, not all of which are equitable. In the Finnish context, considering recent research on school segregation in particular, it is of critical importance to focus on what can be done in schools to not act as a reinforcing mechanism of structures that tend to marginalise some students. To use apprenticeship of observation as an ally of change rather than continuity[73] and avoid reproducing exclusion, schools need active, critical, and societally sensitive professionals.

Enhancing teachers' critical professional agency could help ensure two things: First, it could work towards maintaining the personally rewarding nature of teaching—most often teachers are motivated by being truly able to positively influ-ence young people's lives. Seeing norms as what they are—social and thus change-able—could mean being able to actively engage with the institution rather than leaving it when experiencing challenges in school. Second, professionally agentic teachers could ensure that schools have what it takes to truly work with both indi-vidual and societal change, and continue to enact school's societal tasks. These all require that teacher education allows and challenges student-teachers to be actively and critically engaged in their studies. Constructing active and critical teacher's professional agency ultimately comes down to understanding the institution, one's

own potential role in it, and which elements of the profession may be negotiated and which ones may not. To be able to support all pupils in their learning and growth, develop professionally throughout their careers, develop their schools together with their colleagues, and have a chance to respond to the negative effects of school segregation while also pursuing personally fulfilling teacher careers, future teachers need to be supported in working their way through these questions.

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    Spring 2020 brought a slight upward change in the number of applicants, but it should be noted that at the very time of higher education's joint application period in March 2020, unemployment in Finland grew substantially due to the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among people with no higher education degree (see Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. 2020. *Työllisyyskatsaus maaliskuu 2020.* https://www.ely-keskus.fi/documents/ 10191/40073516/Maaliskuu+2020.pdf/07e62a9a-fd70-4ce2-b4bb-c4369db522b1. Accessed 20 Jan 2021), and an increase of applicants was seen across the field of higher education study programmes, not in teacher education alone.
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Sara Juvonen is Doctoral Researcher in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. Her background is in the sociology and politics of education, and she has worked in several research projects dealing with Finnish basic education policy and practice. Juvonen's research interests concern social justice and equality in education, teaching and teacher education, and the social norms of school life in general. Her current study is examining education and socialisation and the relationship between school and society.

Auli Toom is Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Centre for University Teaching and Learning (HYPE) at the University of Helsinki. She is also Vice-Dean responsible for research at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki and Fellow of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters. Toom's research interests include teacher knowing, competence, expertise and agency among students and teachers which she investigates in basic education, teacher education and higher education contexts.

Chapter 9
Businessing Around Comprehensive Schooling

Piia Seppänen, Iida Kiesi, Sonia Lempinen, and Nina Nivanaho

Abstract The idea of education as a commodity, particularly as a field of export, has gradually taken hold in Finland creating a base for government collaboration with edu-business. In that logic comprehensive schooling for citizens in a small nation like Finland is positioned as a tool for a platform economy and to make profit within a sector of welfare society that has traditionally been considered separate from business-making forces. In this chapter after briefly describing the commercial actors in comprehensive schooling in Finland, we aim to understand how businessing around comprehensive schooling works in Finland based on interviews with different types of actors who aim to create this industry. We distinguish the rationalities, logics and modes of operation of edu-business. The rationale behind private actors' involvement in comprehensive schooling in Finland rests on their claimed ability to create "innovations" that schools themselves cannot make, mainly related to the use of technology. Possible negative side effects are not discussed. Edu-preneurs emphasise "evidence based" activities done outside the academic community, nevertheless they call this research. Industry-making in education is conducted via networks facilitating various edu-business related activities by connecting interests and actors. We conclude that society needs to be wary of multiple lines of products and policy pressures by global edu-business creating new policies like auditing and quality assurance policies to guide and consult education policy-makers. Overall developments in businessing around comprehensive schooling raise questions about democracy and schooling as public service in a small nation like Finland.

P. Seppänen (✉) · I. Kiesi · N. Nivanaho
Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku,
Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: piia.seppanen@utu.fi

I. Kiesi
e-mail: iida.i.kiesi@utu.fi

N. Nivanaho
e-mail: nina.j.nivanaho@utu.fi

S. Lempinen
Department of Education, University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: sonia.lempinen@utu.fi

Today education is frequently seen as an area of business investment or opportunity. As many scholars have pointed out, education around the globe provides "lucrative opportunities for investment and profit"[1] and forms an entire *global education industry (GEI)*.[2] Finland has become caught up in these developments especially in the area of education technology. What is astonishing to us is the systemic way in which business aims to penetrate education as a national asset and how representatives of the state are amongst those promoting business in the education sector. At times this is stated very clearly in policy documents:

> The platform ecosystems and platform industry develop fastest by opening up national development environments (hospitals, schools, factories and energy networks etc.) and key technology/data resources to pilots and experiments conducted with customer interface (asiakas-rajapinnoilla). This way we can significantly speed up the development of Finnish companies' products and services towards the needs of customers.[3]

This strategising towards the so-called digital platform economy and the vision to harness schools and other public institutions to business development was jointly published by the Prime Minister´s Office (Juha Sipilä Government 2015–19), the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland and a state organisation that funds 'innovations' namely Business Finland in 2017. Scholars have emphasized that platforms are not neutral digital tools. Mathias Decuypere and colleagues suggest they should be viewed with 'a *critical platform gaze*' as "… active socio-technical assemblages that are in the process of significantly transforming the educational sector".[4] In *Platform Society,* José vanDijck and colleagues argue that powered by the Big Five tech corporates (Alphabet-Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook and Microsoft) platforms push new concepts of learning that disregard education as a vehicle for socioeconomic equality.[5] Education as common good is likely to get redefined by platformisation because it shifts the values: "bildung vis-à-vis skills, education versus learnification, teachers autonomy versus automated data analytics, and public institutions versus corporate platforms".[6] This chapter arose out of a question about the current developments leading the businessing of comprehensive schooling in Finland, or what we call edu-businessing.

At first glance, Finland is not much of a market for educational products and services. In comprehensive schools, the most obvious commercial products used historically have been printed materials, mainly books, produced by long-established publishing companies, some of them state-owned. The content of learning materials was nationally inspected until 1992 by the National Board of Education and since then evaluation of textbooks has been the responsibility of municipalities and teachers,[7] guided by the National curriculum. Over the last decade and particularly the last few years, various actors in Finland have started to develop education-related products to create a market and financial gain. Over the last decade the branding and focus of education materials have moved towards "digital learning", with a raft of new slogans and products.

Commercial actors and related activities in education are discussed typically under the notion of privatisation. A comprehensive review of literature on private sector participation in public education in Europe over the last thirty years[8] has identified two main lines of research. One is to do with practices that make the public

sector more business-like ('Privatisation in education policies' and 'privatising identities and institutions'). The other, more recent, analyses the spaces that nurture private sector involvement within and across the borders of the European nation-states ('actors and market studies' and 'networks of privatisation'). This chapter focuses on the 'actors and market studies' of commercialisation in education—particularly in education technology[9]—in Finland, and relates to the 'networks of privatisation' discussed more in detail in the chapter by Kiesi in this book.

In this chapter we describe how the field of business in education has emerged and seek to understand how edu-business works in Finland. We begin by using government documents to show how the idea of education as a commodity, particularly as a field of export, gradually took hold in Finland. This trend started in tertiary education after the triumphant PISA results in the early 2000s, creating a base for government collaboration with edu-business which eventually reached into comprehensive education. Second, we describe the commercial actors in comprehensive schooling in Finland. Third, we aim to understand the phenomena of businessing around comprehensive education in Finland based on interviews with actors involved in edu-business.[10] For analysing the interviews we use a framework by Marcelo Parreira do Amaral and Christiane Thompson[11] which distinguishes *the rationalities*, *logics* and *modes of operation* of edu-business.

How Finland's Education Export Kicked Off

Finland's PISA successes of the early 2000s led to the view that education could become a commodity exported from Finland. By 2009 the Matti Vanhanen II Government (2007–10) announced a strategy to establish a new export industry: education, and this led to a Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) strategy paper in 2010.[12] This paper emphasised support for "efficient collaboration" between public and commercial actors.[13] It proposed undertaking education export through a state owned company (FinPro, currently Business Finland) which would seek to take advantage of "… changes in [the] education business field in target countries", including possible new education policies.[14]

Referring to comprehensive education in Finland, the strategy sought commercialisation within Finland stating that "… functional domestic markets are a prerequisite for successful export". On the one hand the MoEC spelled out how a "… strong publicly financed education system needs to be secured" but they also pointed to the need to "… develop public administration's skills to purchase education technology and related service"[15] in order to "… keep up domestic markets of education export".[16] In other words, government actors were clearly promoting the expansion of business opportunities in education in Finland. The toolbox for this included joint services, product development, and quality control.

The strategy included an intention for tertiary education actors to become education exporters.[17] Development towards selling tertiary education had already been promoted from 2005 with fees for foreign students,[18] and further strengthened in

2007 through a law change allowing tertiary education to sell degree education to groups outside the EU.[19] The MoEC in 2010 was strongly promoting a new role for universities. However, their tasks in legislation do not include business-making as such but rather "… to promote independent academic research as well as academic and artistic education, to provide research-based higher education and to educate students to serve their country and humanity at large" and to "… interact with the surrounding society and promote the social impact of university research findings and artistic activities".[20]

During the following Jyrki Katainen Government (2011–14), delegations of ministries and edu-business actors were sent to various parts of the globe "to foster collaboration and promote Finnish education expertise". MoEC press releases indicate delegations to Brazil, Chile, Peru, Japan, China, and South Korea in 2013 and to Indonesia and the USA in 2014.[21] For the first time reference to education export aimed at evaluating possibilities based on recently introduced fees for University students outside the EU.[22] The state was acting not only to facilitate and promote collaboration between different state actors (e.g., ministers in the field of Work and Finance, Education and Culture, and Foreign affairs) but also to bring together "… stakeholders interested in education export and offered support ranging from productisation to export delegations."[23] This 2013 development was called the 'Future Learning Finland' project[24] and by 2015 it became an organisation that promotes education export, Education Finland, led by the National Agency for Education. Comprehensive schools were also now expected to participate in building of the global education industry.

A reform of the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education was taking place at the same time and was completed in 2014. It invited markets in "technology and digital in learning" in comprehensive schools and state actors were active to promote them.[25] The Alexander Stubb Government (2014–15) described digitalisation as "… a central opportunity for economic growth for Finland" and it developed a platform for an educational cloud service standard (*koulutuksen pilvipalvelunväylä, later called EduCloud Alliance*)". Estonia was also involved:

> Along with solutions by EduCloud Alliance it is easier to produce, purchase, share and use tools for digital learning. Tools can be, for example, materials, games, applications and services. Development is done in close collaboration with ministries and agencies that are responsible for national service architecture as well as with the Estonia state. The emphasis of the new curriculum is in using and understanding ICT and putting the digital tools required by work in schools more easily into the reach of pupils, students and teachers.[26]

There were further developments under the Sipilä Government (2015–19) with a focus on 'modernised learning environments', the 'opportunities offered by digitalisation' and 'new pedagogical approaches' for learning.[27] The Sipilä Government planned to make Finland into "… a world-class laboratory of new pedagogy and digital learning".[28] It also pressed for new legislation so that "… obstacles to education exports [were] removed".[29] In 2016 this government named a "Chief Specialist in Education Export" to commercialise Finnish education and facilitate export.[30]

In those years Finnish public sector was increasingly aimed towards digital business in education and this commodification of education was linked with the platform

economy planned by Juha Sipilä´s Prime Minister´s Office, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, and Business Finland. In this 'growth environment' the private sector (companies), the state and the public schooling system are intended to work together in order to promote, sell, invent, invest, test and share products and services. With "… better use of data resources, favourable conditions will be provided for new business ideas".[31] The platform economy is new to the fields of public policy and related legislation, and so far is very much economically driven.[32] Under Sanna Marin´s government (2019–), the Minister´s Office has prepared a statement that indicates that the laws and policies concerning the platform economy are being considered alongside the EU, and should be considered nationally and internationally with multidisciplinary groups.[33]

To sum up, tendencies towards considering education as a business started in Finland following its PISA success in 2000. Although PISA is based on the scores in compulsory schooling, the edu-export attempts centred particularly on the university and vocational education sectors.[34] There is also an extension of business activities in the preparatory courses in access to tuition-free higher education in Finland which particularly involves high-school students.[35] The business around various products and "innovations" in comprehensive education, despite Finnish schools being almost entirely state-run, has emerged as a development of the market, to which we now turn.

Business Enters Comprehensive Schooling

There are different types of commercial or private actors with a range of agendas to bring to comprehensive schooling in Finland in recent years. The most prominent ones are long established publishing houses Sanoma Pro, Otava Learning and Edita Publishing. According to their websites,[36] Sanoma Pro has 47,000 teachers as users of their materials, Otava Learning reaches around 30,000 teachers per year, and Edita Publishing is the smallest of the three. All of them also cover other sectors than education. Many have shifted towards "learning services", rebranding to learning industry names over the last decade.[37] In addition, a stock market-listed Media and Learning company, Sanoma has been creating a new market in Finland in teaching and tutoring outside school hours, having bought a company for tutoring students in 2016 and selling digital courses for upper secondary schools since 2017.[38] This daughter company of Finland's largest learning material producer has had an advertising campaign[39] for pupils in their last years of comprehensive schooling and those in general upper secondary with the slogan "individual teaching since 2010". It was one of the first times pupils who were well under 18 years had been targeted by such services in Finland. There was not any particular educational content on offer but rather a focus on strengthening the pupil's position in formal schooling, targeting higher grades with the slogan "Keskiarvo ylös!"; "Grade point average up!".[40] Having a higher-grade point average could be attractive to families as it would help their children to get more competitive position at the next level of education.

Technology corporate Microsoft is a prominent actor in Finland building markets in education business. Some schools in Finland participate as so-called showcase schools, that is to "… engage with Microsoft and like-minded school leaders around the world to deepen and expand education transformation using the Education Transformation Framework".[41] Microsoft promotes "education transformation" illustrated as holistic and this is supported by information labelled "[r]esearch from policy makers and academics where learning transformation initiatives have made dramatic improvements".[42] Attached to digital learning environments and platforms, furniture companies also brand themselves using learning and pedagogy. An example is the century-old Finnish furniture company ISKU with an "Active Learning concept—creating modern and smart learning and innovation environments with pedagogy driven design".[43]

The other distinct group of edu-business actors in Finland are various startup companies, typically looking for quick business growth in the education sector with products they can test in Finnish schools, scale up and sell in many countries, not only or even particularly in Finland.[44] Startups are also supported by business actors like business accelerator companies, some of which target edu-business in particular.[45] A not-so-visible group of actors around edu-business are investors who are targeted as participants to edu-business events.[46]

Having started identifying actors doing business in comprehensive education in Finland, we frequently came across those that advocate commodifying education and creating a market in the edu-business sector[47] as also described in the growth of education export above. This intertwining of commercial/private and public actors in education relates to the concept of 'Public Private Partnership' (PPP)[48] and to a particular form of governance in society, network governance.[49] How private actors collaborate with public actors in Finland in order to promote edu-business and impact the governance of education are discussed in the chapter by Kiesi in this book.

Our Study of Rationales, Logics and Modes of Operation in Edu-businessing

In order to better understand edu-business and activities around it, edu-businessing, in Finland we conducted a selected set of interviews with different types of edupreneurs. Here we analyse interviews drawing on how Marcelo Parreira do Amaral and Christiane Thompson[50] use their analytical tools to understand how the global education industry is changing education and how it works: what are *the rationales* of expanding industry in education, and what are *the logics* and *modes of operation* in it. These three analytical distinctions are overlapping, but are useful in recognising commonalities and general trends in how the diverse actors in close collaboration with governmental ones promote education market. The rationales for expanding the Global Education Industry (GEI) are identified as (i) "Innovating, Growing, Sharing", the Logics of Action in the GEI as (ii) "Shaping Reality, Crafting Solutions"

and the Modes of operation in GEI as (iii) "Construction crises, industry-making, and connecting interests".

In the following we use this framework to analyse interviews by different types of commercial actors in Finland.[51] The 13 interviews were conducted in 2019–20 (mostly face to face, but two online because of COVID-19) and typically took an hour or more. They were usually undertaken by all the authors and conducted in a similar way each time.[52]Before the interview the commercial actors were sent a summary of their organisation based on internet resources in order to show that we already knew many basic facts and wanted to ask more in-depth questions than could be found in publicly available sources. The interview themes focused on aims and operations of these actors in education nationally and globally, the participation of private actors in public education and cooperation between the private and public sectors in comprehensive education. We also asked more general questions about the commercial actors' views of education in Finland and education as business.

Rationales for Expanding the Edu-business: Innovating, Growing, Sharing

The rationales driving business in education globally rely on understanding that knowledge can be transformed into "innovations", thus into economic growth, and with notion of "shared value" target to combine private and public interests in education in the exploitation of knowledge.[53] Innovations traditionally mean goods and services but also refer to any new behaviour or practice that can be applied to practice culminating in the commercialisation and the creation of value. Here we unpack these rationales and illustrate how the narrative of innovation, economic growth and shared value was evident amongst the edu-business proponents we interviewed in Finland.

The interviewees justified commercial actor participation in public education in Finland by their ability to innovate education related products and services, including anything attached to profit-making opportunities. In Finland these commercialised innovations are mainly related to technology and its use in schools. The unifying argument was that private actors can create innovations for teaching that can't be achieved by a public school, at least not alone. The CEO of one 3D technology startup explains:

> And yes, our significance is really big in bringing new ideas, as they do not come from the public by itself, for example the use of AR [Artificial Reality] in teaching. There is no way those come from the public. There are various pilot projects there, but they will not be able to achieve such long-term levels of innovation, which we can. (3DBear, a startup company)

What typically followed justifications of private actors' skills to innovate in the public school system of Finland, was an account of the need to open and expand 'the market' for the businesses, and thus for economic growth for the entire country. Those

interviewed explained how allowing the involvement of business in Finnish educa-
tion improved the chances of companies, particularly start-ups, to succeed in inter-
national education markets. This was seen to benefit Finnish society by increasing
its economic competitiveness. Thus, Finland's role in edu-business was to develop
a commercial environment and a reference market, a stepping stone to global sales
and success:

> There are certain doubts then, if we go in with only the purpose of making money, but Finland
> is a safe operating environment for it as we have teachers who are well trained and the public
> administration is the least corrupted. So, this is, in a way, a good market for developing
> this co-operation [between public and private]. So, it is more of this kind of ideological
> resistance. There is constantly the question of whether it brings in fees to our education,
> when our strength is that our social mobility in society is strong because education serves
> everyone and it is not sort of cherry picking, where you pick the best students from there.
> Instead, we learn from a young age to work together. (Education Finland, an organisation
> promoting edu-business)

The rationale behind the justifications and needs of edu-business actors in Finnish
public education lay in promoting the common good: public actors benefit from
business actors being involved in schools. The argument also promoted the idea that
once innovation and growth are achieved, they become a shared value for all actors
involved.[54] This rationale of shared value could be seen, for example, in the argument
that schooling will isolate itself from society if it has no collaboration with business,
particularly as the world of business is where many pupils will work in their adult
lives:

> It [school] cannot be any detached island from society. In other words, if we do not do that
> business collaboration, then there is the danger that the gap between school and the rest of the
> world becomes too big. And if we think about adults, how we work and how we for example
> use phone as a tool, then it is surely ridiculous, if that same model cannot be brought to the
> school, because they will do that at work, so we need to raise them [students] into those new
> ways of working, already at the school. (Seppo, a startup company)

The interviewed business actors raised concerns that if edu-business actors cannot
collaborate with schools, the innovations and the related possibility of economic
growth would slip away from Finland. On the one hand they claimed to value the
public school system but on the other, they wanted an "education ecosystem" around
it that could be exploited for profit. Furthermore, the interviewed actors stressed
that the participation of the private sector in the public school benefits society by
promoting common good. Private technological innovations were argued to be useful
in facilitating the daily lives of teachers and students and in improving learning
outcomes because they motivated pupils:

> Probably most companies have a sort of a view that these products and services, that are done,
> can improve learning and take it to—quite a few always talk about how school should be made
> into a more meaningful place. And I do believe, in such an improvement of learning outcomes
> yes, but maybe precisely through making the school a more motivating and activating place.
> (Education Alliance Finland, an organisation promoting edu-business)

Edu-business actors positioned schools as needing edu-business if they wanted
"to really develop themselves" for the best of the child. Furthermore, it was argued

that the use of public funds would be more efficient once schools got the products and services they needed, and thus co-development would be beneficial. Finland would then remain "a superpower of learning" as a representative of xEdu (an organisation promoting edu-business) put it. Overall, separating public and private gets seen as unnecessary once a child is seen as a stand-alone entity without any connections to social structure:

> … I think the essential question is, how high-quality equality in education—as they say in the world [turns momentarily to English] *excellence and equity,* so that you develop both quality and equality—takes place in the best possible way, then I think that is the key issue, that all the discussion should begin from the best interest of the child, and not about if it is public or private. So, if the children are doing well and equality is increasing, then that is the key question, I think. (HundrED, an organisation promoting edu-business)

As this quote illustrates, the narrative of the common good in terms of equity or equality is typically emphasised among edu-business actors in the context of Finland where comprehensive schools are provided by municipalities and are publicly funded and governed. Strong arguments are needed to open up schools to business actors and so interviewees emphasised the reasons why the private sector is important and valuable to the public school system.

Logics of Action: Shaping Reality, Crafting Solutions

Of all the logics of action for edu-businessing, *evidence-based reforming* is seen by Parreira do Amaral and Thompson as particularly prominent across numerous country contexts.[55] In Finland the evidence-based logic of action stood out among edu-business actors when they argued the need to enter their products and offer commercial "solutions to shape reality" into schools. Furthermore, a striking feature in interviews was that business actors named many of their activities or their collaborators' activities as "research". Here we discuss evidence-based logic and how it is promoted and expressed through what is called research by the edupreneurs.

A common view amongst interviewees was that edu-business products and solutions need to be verified with empirical evidence, and thus commercial actors ought to have access to schools. The edu-business actors were seeking "evidence on the impact of learning products and services",[56] even though education policy in Finland does not have much focus on performance testing of schools and pupils or "data-driven governance of education".[57] Such evidence-based reforming was seen as essential in product marketing because "in the edu-sector, purchasing decision-makers may even demand that the solutions have been researched to be of high quality" (EdTech Finland, an association promoting education technology business). One edu-business, Education Alliance Finland, sells education products' quality evaluations to edupreneurs. They appeal to "an academically sound approach" to evaluating the pedagogical design of a product based on the principles of educational psychology. They draw on what they call a "white paper" by two researchers from a company named ELE Finland.[58] ELE (Engaging Learning Environments) was founded by

professor of education psychology Kirsti Lonka from the University of Helsinki. Here evidence for edu-businessing came not from research conducted in university organisations but by their actors in companies.

Evidence-based reforming was seen both as a common denominator of successful edu-businesses and as a possible form of collaboration between edupreneurs and academic researchers that would produce high-class innovations. An example is the "commercialisation and internationalisation of a learning platform developed at the University [of Turku]", Eduten Playground.[59] Universities and some particular academic scholars[60] were seen not only as strong references that validate the products but also as potential partners, and business actors themselves. As explained by a representative of EdTech Finland (an association promoting education technology business in Finland), many innovations are done by researchers at universities but the universities themselves are not particularly "the ones who set out to productise and commercialise". Indeed one representative of an ecosystem promoter expressed concern about universities' participation in edu-business: universities might distort competition in the field:

> [How] the hell does a small company or a startup, for example, or even a slightly bigger company compete against a university brand? Of course, if a university comes to say that they have an amazing service, and it's cheap as well: "This has been developed as research work for like 20 or 10 years" then of course the head of the local education department in the municipality of Nuorgam, as an example, thinks that "This is just great. There is no risk, this is pretty cheap and this has a great brand behind it, this will produce a lot of good for us because it is a university and it has a great deal of know-how and it helps us." But go there as a startup… (EduCloud Alliance, an organisation promoting edu-business)

To demonstrate evidence-based intentions some actors mentioned "research work" as being central to their work without particularly explaining what it means. For example, edu-business actor HundrED claimed to do research and professional development:

> Then we do research work with different actors, again, if you try to understand why school development is challenging and how it could be done differently … why do some innovations spread and others don't? We will be doing little bit of [turns momentarily to English] *professional development* in the future, that is, for example, the Minister of Education, the heads of education, the people who deal with the school. We talk to them about examples of how digitalisation has been done successfully in some countries or otherwise and from an international perspective. And then we are really trying to solve real problems with existing solutions, if you think that the head of education in Sweden, Stockholm, says that we want to develop the teaching of artificial intelligence, then we can tell them that there are 10 ways to share with you from the world. The problem right now is that, if the head of education in Helsinki says she wants to find good ways to teach artificial intelligence, then where does she go? So, she goes to either to [biggest learning companies in Finland] Sanoma Pro or Otava. If she writes this to Google, she unfortunately can't find how South Korea has been doing it for 10 years, for example. (HundrED, an organisation promoting edu-business)

As the quote indicates, HundrED seeks to shape the reality of education on a global scale by influencing education policy makers. Furthermore, the HundrED CEO mentioned that they recruit 15-year-olds who want to develop their schools as "youth ambassadors"[61] in order to develop schools globally, in over 70 countries.

HundrED's aim is to focus on solutions in very specific questions, such as what is *"a good way to prevent school bullying, improve acoustics, improve school meals, re-train teachers, communicate with parents, and so on"* that can be seen as global consultancy products because they aim at "scalability".

Whereas HundrED was focused on spreading "the best, stand-alone innovations" around the world, another global education consultancy business or market-making tool seeks to shape reality at the same time in all levels of education from policy to schooling practices. New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL), first funded by Microsoft, was then organised by the state-owned Training centre for education Educode and owned by Edita Publishing which has continued selling and spreading it to municipalities including providing an audit-manual in Finnish in order to "guide them to that systemic thinking and the right way to make that change" (Edita, a corporate).[62]

What the mentioned evidence actually is, how it is gained in *evidence-based reforming*, towards what end and by whom both at a local and global scale is often vague and produced outside the norms science follows. Rather product development acts to both market products and shapes education policies and practices thus spans the markets.

Modes of Operation: Construction Crises, Industry-Making, and Connecting Interests

The construction of crises as a mode of operation by education industry has centred on scandalising public education in order to provide justification for why private and business involvement is necessary. The "discursive destruction and construction of education"[63] is how commercial activity in the education sector is made and shaped. One could suppose that due to its PISA success the narrative of crisis[64] might be an unfamiliar mode of operation in Finland, yet crises are nevertheless constructed around portraying schools as old-fashioned because they apply too little technology in teaching. Once schooling and comprehensive schooling are portrayed as old-fashioned, it leads to an argument that education technology and thus various business activities around it are a required solution. As discussed elsewhere,[65] the discourse of needing to "change" comprehensive schooling especially for educating twenty-first century skilled workforce for the future (digital) economies was evident in our edu-business actor interviews, but not amongst policy-makers. The argument was that once society and the world get digitalised, schools could not operate in isolation from this development:

> So, if we consider this digital revolution that is currently happening around us. … and then we look at education sector, we have to ask, is the school going to remain as an old analog fortress or is it going to become part of universities and society? (xEdu, an organisation promoting edu-business)

Through digitalisation and technology for schooling a whole new sector of an industry is created, namely "digital learning". What follows from the construction of crises in schooling is *industry-making* as a mode of operation in the education business. The role of state has become "a central facet" for the global education industry. It is now "a powerful connector that initiates, facilitates, and sponsors many of the activities in the GEI", and thus becomes an entity that *connects interests* as a mode of operation.[66] The role of the state seems vital in education industry-making in Finland as well where state actors have become heavily involved in building an education platform economy.[67] The line between the private and the public becomes blurred, and connecting of private and public interest takes places through networks as explained in the chapter by Kiesi in this book.

Conclusion: Businessing with Public Schooling in a Small Nation

This chapter began by considering why comprehensive schools are positioned as tools for the platform economy and profit derived from a sector of Finland's welfare society that is traditionally considered separate from business-making forces. Various actors aim to create an industry and markets in education, and this has become promoted by state actors. Based on our interviews with edu-business actors, we provide here one way to understand *the rationale* for the education industry in Finland, as well as their *logics of action* and *modes of operation.*

The rationale behind private actors' involvement in comprehensive schooling in Finland, and how they justify their existence rests on their claimed ability to create innovations in a way that schools themselves are unable to do. These innovations are mainly related to the use of technology. According to this rationale, edu-business will benefit the whole society as the eduproducts are believed to improve learning and can improve economic growth especially if they can be sold. An assumption is that edu-products have no negative side effects and schooling will be better off than they would otherwise be without edu-products[68] and that schooling should be harnessed to serve the growth of the economic sector.

What follows these rationales as *logics of action* are the edu-products and consulting that "shape reality and craft solutions" with help of "empirical evidence", for instance under slogans such as "products' learning impact" and "research- or evidence-based" activities. There is a market niche in edu-business for the most entrepreneurial professors of education to set up their own companies. Various entrepreneurs also conduct what they regard as research, but the activities often lie outside academic practices and logics. There are signs that edu-businessing in Finland is taking new steps towards some audit and quality assurance tools to guide and consult education policy-makers and other education actors operating amidst a jumble of digital tools.[69]

Finally, a *mode of operation* discursive destruction and construction of education[70] was evident in Finland after schooling and comprehensive schools were portrayed as old-fashioned by edupreneurs. This led to the argument that education technology and thus various business around schooling is needed to help schools. Typically, the edupreneurs articulated this as necessary to prepare for the future of education as we discuss in more detail elsewhere.[71] The industry-making in edu-business is conducted through networks that facilitate various edu-business related activities by connecting interests and actors.

In closing, it is important to note that businessing around compulsory schooling might not be limited to attempts to make Finnish comprehensive schools serve related industry because there are also global companies who have multiple lines of other business and ways to bend education policy in their favour. Such global companies are not only limited to selling ed-tech products to schools and operating global private school chains, but also produce management services and consultancy to various school owners or operators.[72] These global developments in businessing around schooling and particularly its connections to education policy-making need to be watched carefully. Such developments challenge democracy and in Finland they threaten schooling as public service and practice.

Notes

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67. Lempinen and Seppänen, op. cit.
68. Parreira do Amaral and Thompson, op. cit., p. 277, point that there is "the underlying assumption that innovation as planned change has become a central feature of economic, political and social realities, and that it is intrinsically good and positive".

69. The most recent is "quality definition of pedagogically high-quality digital environments" by Kokoa Agency Ltd, run by names Education Alliance Finland and Kokoa Standard, with National National Agency for Education. Opetushallitus 2021. *Pedagogisesti laadukas digitaalinen ympäristö*. Laatumäärittely 2021. https://uudetlukutaidot.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Pedagogisesti-laadukas-digitaalinen-ymparisto.pdf. Accessed 4 Jan 2022.
70. Parreira do Amaral and Thompson, op. cit. p. 281.
71. Lempinen, et. al. Under review, op. cit.
72. Rönnberg, L. 2017. From national policy-making to global edubusiness: Swedish edu-preneurs on the move, *Journal of Education Policy* 32(2): 234–249, 10.1080/02680939.2016.1268725. p. 238.

Piia Seppänen is Professor of Education, especially on comparative education and education policy at the University of Turku and also works as Vice-Dean for research in its Faculty of Education. Her research with research groups at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE) focusses on pupil selection, urban social segregation and classed practices within comprehensive schooling as well as on commodification in public education systems and its connections to the global education industry.

Iida Kiesi is Doctoral Researcher in the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. She is a researcher on the Academy of Finland-funded 'Hollowing Out of Public Education Systems? Private Actors in Compulsory Schooling in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand (HOPES) research project. Her doctoral thesis focusses on commercialisation in education, especially in terms of networks and partnerships.

Sonia Lempinen is University Teacher in the Department of Education, University of Turku. Her expertise is in inclusive education, policy studies, and the commercialisation of education. Lempinen's postdoctoral research involves studies of policies and practices of commercial interests in public education. She is a researcher on the Academy of Finland- funded 'Hollowing Out of Public Education Systems? Private Actors in Compulsory Schooling in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand' (HOPES) research project.

Nina Nivanaho is Doctoral Researcher in the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. She is also a researcher on the Academy of Finland-funded 'Hollowing Out of Public Education Systems? Private Actors in Compulsory Schooling in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand' (HOPES) research project. Her doctoral thesis is exploring the emerging edu-business in Finland from the point of view of teachers.

Chapter 10
Co-operation of Edu-business and Public Schooling: Is the Governance of Education in Finland Shifting from the Public Sector to Networks?

Iida Kiesi

Abstract The number of edu-business actors involved in Finnish schooling is increasing, as is their collaboration with the public sector. This chapter introduces concrete examples of how edu-business actors in Finland collaborate with state actors and also discusses what their aspirations are for future collaboration with state actors. By analysing these forms of co-operation and the expectations of Finnish edu-business actors, I aim to describe the current position and the course of governance of education in Finland. I argue that edu-business networks, that cross and blur the sectoral boundaries between public and private, create possibilities for edu-business actors to affect education policies in Finland. This possibility of a shift from the public governance of education towards network governance can weaken the democratic aspects of the public education system as networks lack commitment to transparent decision-making and accountability to the public.

Around the globe the education sector, traditionally seen as a public good, is now also seen as a potential source of economic benefits, as an investment and as an opportunity for supranational business.[1] Education has attracted private actors from different sectors and the private actors now have a wide range of roles and relationships with the state and especially the education sector.[2] Although some of these edu-business actors prefer to highlight philanthropic motives, what they have in common is their aim of making a profit by converting education into a commodity and an export product.[3] The rise of private actors in education is connected to the commercialisation of education, what Anna Hogan and Greg Thompson[4] have described as "the creation, marketing, and sale of education goods and services to schools by for-profit providers". As a result of private actor activity in schools, business-related rhetoric has become embedded in the debate on education, introducing the idea of education as a service and students and their parents as clients.[5] In turn, public funding has become a stimulus for private actors, many of which have only become established

I. Kiesi (✉)

Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education, University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014, Turku, Finland
e-mail: iida.i.kiesi@utu.fi

because of the demand for their services by governments.[6] Evidently, the guiding principles of education are changing globally as the knowledge economy and global competitiveness narrative is challenging the welfare narrative. However, the political and historical context of a nation determines the degree and stage of the change.[7]

Following the global trajectory of commercialisation in education, the number of edu-business actors and organisations promoting edu-business has increased in Finland.[8] In our research (see Seppänen, Kiesi, Lempinen and Nivanaho in this book), we have described the commercialisation development and the recognised actors in it as well as analysed their rationales, logics and modes of operation. This chapter contributes to research on edu-business in Finland as I will focus especially on the public sector's role in edu-business from the perspective of edu-business actors. I argue that edu-business networks, that cross and blur the sectoral boundaries between public and private, create possibilities for edu-business actors to affect education policies in Finland. In what follows, I present a little more background to my research, before discussing the shifting role of the public sector as a facilitator of edu-business in Finland.[9]

Blurring of Sectoral Boundaries Between Public and Private Through Partnerships and Networks

As discussed in the introduction to this book, the Finnish education system and its comprehensive schools are mainly organised and steered by public actors, in other words the state and the municipalities. There has not been much concern or debate about the growing impact of private actor involvement in the education system in Finland, although privatisation and outsourcing of healthcare, especially elderly care, has often made headlines in the Finnish media. Despite this it would be a mistake to think that Finland's schools are separate from or immune to commercial business interests.

Marcelo Parreira do Amaral and Christiane Thompson[10] explain that edu-business actors operating in the global context i.e., the Global Education Industry (GEI)[11] are creating new ways of business-making that are "distinct from arrangements typical of classical economic thought, where the making and shaping of an industrial sector have been primarily influenced by (limited) governmental intervention in a self-regulating free-market environment". In Finland, as the education space is predominantly public, the private actors have begun to integrate themselves into the public governance of education forming 'ecosystems'.[12] This means that the private actors have created networks with other private actors as well as with public actors in order to advance their business and the ecosystem's goals.[13] State actors, such as the Finnish National Agency for Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture,[14] are central in these networks, a sign of the strong constraining role the state has had by regulating the business-making in Finland's schools, and in turn enabling edu-business as well.[15] This supports Parreira do Amaral's and Thompson's[16] argument

about how the public has "turned into a powerful connector that initiates, facilitates, and sponsors many of the activities in the GEI." In Finland, some of the edu-business related organisations, such as Edita, Education Finland, EduCloud Alliance, are directly or indirectly owned or founded by the state, which makes the distinction between public and private even more blurred.[17]

The concept of 'public private partnership' (PPP), has also entered the field of education in Finland. During the process of conducting this research and attending edu-business related events, I noticed the phrase 'public private partnership' frequently spoken in English in the middle of an otherwise completely Finnish discussion by edu-business actors. The term PPP is ambiguous which is why different actors can interpret its mechanisms with different motives and expectations.[18] According to Graeme Hodge and Carsten Greve,[19] PPP can be thought of as either a governance scheme or a language game. As a form of governance, PPP emphasises contracts and connections between the sectors. However, as a linguistic term, 'public–private partnership' is a way of moving away from the concepts of 'privatisation' and 'outsourcing'.[20] Talking about a 'partnership' is a way to describe private sector involvement in a positive manner, as privatisation is often discussed in the media with a certain amount of criticism.[21]

According to Susan Robertson and Antoni Verger[22] the background to the proliferation of PPPs in education reflects the spread of neoliberal ideology. Proponents of neoliberal ideology argue that free markets and competition increase efficiency, risk-taking and innovation in publicly governed systems such as schools.[23] Arguments for utilising PPPs in traditional public education highlight the need for private actors to bring innovative solutions that can improve deep systemic problems such as the accessibility, quality and equality of education.[24] In turn, arguments against the PPPs are based on concerns about the impact of these mechanisms on teachers' working conditions, increased privatisation and again, on equality.[25] Moreover, an additional subject of debate has been whether PPP agreements should be only temporary solutions to address challenges in the public system or whether a permanent 'paradigm shift' in education governance needs to be pursued.[26]

As PPPs blur the boundaries between public and private sectors, more private actors are obtaining opportunities to participate in the public education arena. The emergence of several non-state actors operating within and beyond the government embody the shift of political power from a traditional hierarchical government to a networked governance.[27] According to Wayne Au and Joseph Ferrare,[28] government is often referred to as a public power that is based on democracy and is thus accountable to the people. As they are regulated by public sector roles, government bodies who decide on educational policies must work transparently for the public.[29] In contrast, network governance is based on the informal authority of flexible networks. These networks are constantly evolving and expanding systems[30] which include a diverse set of personal and corporate relationships that are created either through formal (i.e. visible) or informal (i.e. hidden) channels.[31] By building networks, the edu-business actors create more opportunities for themselves to affect policies, do

business and build new capital.[32] As the world is ever more connected, the relationships between GEI actors also cross and transcend national borders and form networks in which education policy is created and disseminated globally.[33]

According to existing research about network governance, a wide range of policy networks creates ambiguity in decision-making processes; due to the informal authority of the networks, it may remain unclear what has been agreed on, between whom, with what consequences and in return for what. In the absence of clarity, political decision-making processes are exposed to power games and the boundaries between the public and private sectors blur.[34] The challenge for network governance is therefore its lack of commitment to transparent decision-making and accountability. There are no formal tools to redress the potential losses non-governmental organisations or networks may cause, for example, to public education.[35]

PPPs and network governance do not represent a clear distinction between public interest and private interests, but require a redefinition of the role of the state in education.[36] This shift of the power over education from public towards networks cannot be clearly defined or traced as the public is also intertwined in these networks. Lucas Cone and Katja Brøgger discuss what they call 'soft privatisation'*:*

> What we are witnessing in this shift, we suggest, is not so much the privatisation of previously state-led education as it is the emergence of a public infrastructure of educational governance that allows institutions, corporations, and interest groups to (per)form political-pedagogical assemblages outside the mediating auspices of sovereign governments. Soft privatisation refers to the mechanisms enabling this re-configuration of the public.[37]

This phenomenon of the re-configuration of the public governance of education is the starting point of my study. By analysing how the Finnish public sector co-operates with edu-business and what aspirations edu-businesses have around this co-operation, I set out to look for signs of the course of governance of education in Finland.

Studying the Perspective of Edu-business Actors on Their Co-operation with the Public Sector in Finland

My research on Finnish edu-business draws on the HOPES research project for which we conducted interviews during 2019–20 as discussed in the chapter about edu-business in this book by Seppänen and colleagues. For this chapter, I analysed interviews with 13 actors, who practice or promote edu-business in Finland. The actors were representatives of different types[38] of edu-business related organisations: publishing businesses (Edita and Sanoma Pro), a large-scale technology business (Microsoft Education Finland and their former employee), EdTech startups (3DBear, Eduten, Education Alliance Finland and Seppo) and organisations which promote edu-business (EdTech Finland Ry, EduCloud Alliance, HundrED, xEdu and governmental cluster programme supporting education export, Education Finland).

I focused on parts of the interviews where the actors were asked to discuss the collaboration between edu-businesses and the public sector. [39] Using qualitative content analysis[40] I began by collecting from the interview data the forms of co-operation as well as the interviewed actors' thoughts concerning the co-operation with public actors. Next, I themed the reduced data by connecting similar ways of co-operation and similar thoughts about the current state and future of the co-operation. Finally, I analysed the data in each theme, as a reflection of the background literature of public private partnership and network governance.

The views of these 13 actors cannot cover all of the views of Finnish edu-businesses, but as diverse actors they provide an overview of how business-related co-operation with the public sector had been carried out and is hoped to be carried out. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, therefore the quotations presented here have been translated into English. In what follows, I first look at the forms of co-operation between edu-businesses and the public sector and then at the edu-business actors' aspirations about co-operation in the future.

Forms of Co-operation Between Edu-business Actors and the Public Sector

In this section, I present a spectrum of forms of co-operation between edu-business actors and the public sector, which were mentioned in the interviews. These forms of co-operation are as follows: public sector as a customer of edu-business; public sector funding of edu-business; edu-business actors as specialists; public school teachers as evaluators, developers and promoters of edu-business products; co-development and co-creation projects and formal and informal collaborative platforms for education export.

The work of edu-businesses often revolves around selling a product or a service based on demand. As the education providers in Finland are mainly public, the customers of edu-business companies are thus also public. In other words, a school or a municipality pays the company in order to use their products; in such cases the companies are mainly supplying learning materials, such as books, digital materials and applications. Companies also have license contracts with a school or with all schools in a certain district (e.g., EdTech company Seppo's Helsinki-wide license contract). In addition to buying products from edu-businesses, the public sector also awards grants and funding to support them. Some of the interviewed edu-businesses have applied for and received grants from Business Finland, which is "the Finnish Government organization for innovation and trade"[41] as well as project funding from the Finnish National Agency for Education. The CEO of an edu-business accelerator company xEdu also shared how some EdTech companies utilise incubator services, such as NewCo Helsinki or Boost Turku, which function through funding from these cities. By funding edu-businesses and purchasing their products, the public sector

creates preconditions for these companies to operate and do business, i.e. the public facilitates the edu-business in Finland.

The interviewed edu-business actors also worked with the public sector as specialists offering statements, consulting and training for the public sector. Actors at Edita and Microsoft, companies in Finland that are attached to a global partnership programme, New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL),[42] mentioned various types of consultancy work they do for the public sector. They offer different kinds of training for teachers, for example, they educate certain teachers as tutors for the NPDL programme, they train teachers and give lectures about digital pedagogy or how to utilise "twenty-first century skills and learning design when planning lessons" (Microsoft).[43] In addition to training the teachers that are already practicing in the profession, the companies conduct training in the existing teacher education programmes at universities. By training both in-service teachers and teachers-to-be, the companies have the opportunity to influence the practices and ideas that teachers take into public schools (by which I mean public sector schools). Edu-businesses also offer consultancy services and training to local education departments. For example, Microsoft Finland's digital learning and strategy director explained that they train municipal decision makers and ministers. With the consulting and training services the companies guide teachers, principals and heads of local education departments towards "systemic thinking and making the change in the right way", as Edita's representative explained in the interview. This "right way" represents the company's view of the ideal education system in Finland. As the companies are connected to global actors, like NPDL in this case, their view on education is formed by the combined effect of the global and local context.

According to those interviewed, public sector school teachers can work as evaluators, developers and promoters of edu-business products. Education Alliance Finland for example have teachers as 'freelance' evaluators of EdTech products. In other words, the company pays a teacher to evaluate a certain product using the company's platform. Teachers can also work on the product development of edu-business companies and teachers can be paid or asked to promote the companies' products. For example, the CEO of xEdu explained that one way of introducing edu-business products into schools is to "find those individual teachers, who are the thought leaders, who will make their municipality adopt a position and make the decision, that hey, we will start using this". Teachers in Finland share their experiences on good practices and products with other teachers in their own school communities as well as in wider online groups. When a teacher is promoting a certain edu-business, they can potentially influence their own school, and as in the above quotation, the wider community to use the services and products of the company they are associated with.

In addition to teachers linking the edu-businesses with schools, the companies work directly with public schools through various co-development and co-creation projects. The publicly initiated, coordinated or funded projects and programmes mentioned were MPASSid, DigiOne by the City of Vantaa, EduCloud Alliance and the Six City Strategy (6Aika). The most frequently mentioned project was the Six City Strategy, which was described as a good way for edu-businesses to enter schools

to test and develop their products in an authentic classroom environment. The inter- viewees saw this co-creation with schools as an immense opportunity and they were pleased that the public sector and its schools were participating more than before in the development process of EdTech products. By providing access to public schools, the public sector enables the edu-business to develop and grow in Finland as well as eases their access to the global education industry—as the representative of EdTech Finland Ry explained: "… we are quite agile in Finland, and especially if you can get in for the Six City Strategy's Agile Piloting project, you will be able to get some kind of good reference with which you can go abroad more easily".

In the interviews with those associated with the global NPDL program (Microsoft and Edita), we also discussed a programme called the Oppimisen Pohjantähti [the North Star of Learning], which was implemented in Finnish schools by Microsoft in 2014. The program was based on the NPDL program and lasted three years. The aim of the program was to create a national vision for the future of learning, to guide the professional development of teachers and principals and to effectively utilise technology in the transformation of learning and teaching.[44] In 2017, to continue the work, the OPPIVA network was founded by Finnish municipalities in collaboration with Edita Publishing. In the summer of 2021, the OPPIVA network encompassed 32 municipalities.[45] Through Oppimisen Pohjantähti and now the OPPIVA network, municipalities and their schools are connected to the global NPDL program. That connection allows information, such as ideas about the purpose of education and the ways to implement it, to flow from the global education industry to the schools in Finland and the other way around.

As mentioned, edu-businesses can utilise their experience and references from the co-creation projects to access the global education industry. In addition to these projects, edu-businesses have an opportunity to apply to Education Finland, which is an education export program coordinated by the Finnish National Agency for Educa- tion and funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It was founded in 2015. On Education Finland's website, it is explained how "Finland's exceptional results in education made its educational concept and image famous worldwide", which "gave rise to a global market opportunity" and therefore education "was identified as one of the Finnish government's key export programs".[46] The interviewees, many of whom are members in the program, explain that Education Finland works as a beneficial link between governments abroad and the EdTech companies in Finland. We also interviewed the Program Director, who explained that Education Finland facilitates the networking of its members, and as a public actor, it is easier for them to be in contact with possible international buyers and connect the members with them. This kind of support from the Finnish education brand and a governmental program with its networks strengthens edu-businesses possibilities to scale their product globally. The effect of this desire to export Finnish educational products on domestic education in Finland is not yet clear, but seemingly the public sector schools are participating in the export process as edu-business companies develop their products to be 'export-ready' in the abovementioned co-development projects.

In summary, the edu-business actors in Finland interact with the public sector in multiple ways. Businesses supply products and services for the demands of the public

sector i.e., municipalities and schools and they provide statements on topical issues, consulting and training to education providers and professionals. The public sector provides the businesses with funding and public sector teachers can work for edu-business companies as evaluators, developers and promoters. Edu-businesses and the public sector work together in developing new education products and exporting these products abroad. These forms of co-operation reflect how public education and education business are intertwined in Finland and how private and public actors work together to achieve their own and common goals. Co-operation networks create continuous connections between edu-business actors and public sector actors, such as teachers and teachers to-be. In addition to these concrete ways of collaboration, edu-businesses also have informal connections to the central public sector actors.

The Finnish National Agency for Education as a Central Channel for Interaction

Many of the interviewees reported that there is an ongoing interaction between the edu-business companies and public sector actors, especially with the Finnish National Agency for Education. As a more formal connection, edu-business actors are invited to different workgroups of the Agency or the Ministry of Education and Culture as specialists. For example the chair of EduCloud Alliance mentioned that he is part of a learning analytics workgroup and the creative director of HundrED spoke about being on a steering group for the development of comprehensive schools. In addition, the companies create and maintain informal connection with the Agency. Edita's business director of learning for example explained that they have a close relationship with the Agency as they regularly meet with the director general [Olli-Pekka Heinonen in 2019] and the directors of different departments. He further explained that, even though the Agency is not officially part of their Educode business, they keep them posted about their work and customer feedback. Similarly, the CEO of Seppo commented that in addition to his formal connections, he has informal connections with the National Agency for Education:

> Just previously this week, I messaged the director general of the Agency, saying that we could help in this [COVID and distance learning] situation and he replied saying nice, thank you, let's see and get back to it. And this morning they got back to us. So these kinds of informal partnerships or some partners we have in principle, but of course those formal, we do those formal partnerships.

According to the interviewees, the Agency is active in contacting these businesses in relation to their expertise. For example, xEdu's CEO reported about the interest of decision makers in their work by referring to the fact that the National Agency for Education visited xEdu, to hear who they are and what they do. Sanoma Pro's business director of comprehensive education highlighted the collaboration between companies and the Agency to be, globally speaking, "quite rare, that in Finland public officials and private sector discuss and collaborate. This does not happen in

many countries, at least I don't know in our frame of reference where this happens". Having an active public actor, and especially such a central actor, upholding the connection and interaction is beneficial for the edu-business as the Agency is a channel to national public schools as well as governments abroad through Education Finland. As it is important for edu-business to keep the Agency "on their side", they also lobby decision makers. This was explained by the program director of Education Finland when asked if private actors lobby politicians. The director confirmed that they do, and illustrated further that private actors:

> Just inform about disturbances, inform about legislation, inform about grievances, inform in all ways. Send petitions, approach their own MP, who conducts a parliamentary inquiry, approach the Minister directly, approach the Director General of the National Agency for Education, approach me directly, approach officials.

By lobbying decision makers, the edu-businesses can try to influence policymaking in order to make their views about education heard.

Edu-business Actors' Aspirations for Future Collaboration with the Public Sector

In the interviews, we also asked how the actors see the co-operation between private and public actors in the future as well as what would they like from the public sector. We did not specify any particular area but allowed the actors themselves to highlight what they felt was important. The actors raised numerous themes linked to the desire for public activities to facilitate edu-business in Finland. Here I start with matters around which the edu-businesses wished the public to change, and then look at edu-business actors' perceptions of attitude towards edu-business and their wishes for its improvement.

One problem that EdTech companies were struggling with was accessing the supply chains of public education. Innovation projects, such as the Six City Strategy mentioned in the previous section of results, have opened the doors of schools to businesses. The representative of EduCloud Alliance saw these ongoing innovation projects as a good sign of co-operation, but hoped to have the comprehensive school even more closely attached to "systematic processes where different things could be tried out between a company, an educational institution and students". However, he pondered that a school cannot be "a product development organization" because "there is simply no free lunches", explaining that if a company offers something for free to schools, there is an agenda behind it that should be thought through.

The problem according to the edu-businesses has been the continuation of these innovation projects, and joining the educational supply chains, especially when those are dominated by other powerful players such as publishers and university-run initiatives. A representative of 3DBear explained how it was difficult for edu-businesses to join the supply chains after innovation projects, as large players (publishers) dominate the market. He described this difficulty in accessing supply chains as a

"systemic process problem in Finland". With 3DBear highlighting publishers as "established players", the EduCloud Alliance's representative, for his part, considered that services sold by universities were unfair since they were able to sell with "society's funds". He then called for "open, fair and transparent competition". It is understandable that the smaller edu-businesses experience the situation as unfair, since the larger publishers and university-owned companies seem to have easier access to contracts due to their long history of working with the public sector. Regarding these supply chain processes, the representative of EdTech Finland Ry said that it takes a very long time to make deals in the industry, because the contracts made in Finland are long-term, and prohibit any external purchases. She emphasised that mutual understanding between the public and private sectors is necessary in order to learn how these novel processes could be smarter for both sides and unnecessary work could be avoided.

As described earlier, edu-business actors and the public sector already collaborate in the field of education (product) export, but the edu-business actors required more involvement. Both Seppo and EduCloud Alliance hoped that education business companies would be involved in the education export companies and projects of higher education institutions (university or university of applied sciences). EduCloud Alliance argued further that ecosystemic export is the only way for Finland to export education abroad. Education Finland, a publicly owned export program of Finnish education products, has responded to the need for collaboration in "edu-export". Eduten's CEO for example, has been satisfied with the establishment of Education Finland and would like the organisation to be even larger in size and budget. In his opinion, increasing funding for Education Finland is a clear development target, compared to the financial support received by international education export companies. The edu-businesses clearly see an ecosystem, where the public and private sector work together, as the way forward. Governmental support is important to the companies when exporting education abroad.

Related to education export, the 3DBear representative reported that Finnish edu-businesses are currently seeking growth abroad since they do not have the opportunity to grow in the domestic market. In his opinion, in order for the Finnish education technology ecosystem to emerge and strengthen, there is an absolute precondition that its players must be able to expand in their home market. The publishing company, Sanoma Pro's representative, echoed this view in the hope of doing business in the domestic market, and regrets how the elderly care discussion has presented the situation to be "private versus public". He explained that public money should be used wisely, but at the same time, fierce competition and opportunities to make business are needed. Hence, edu-business actors experience the education markets in Finland as being too regulated and want the public sector to make it easier to compete and do business.

As a way of expanding in the domestic market, the edu-businesses required more public money to be invested in education. Additional funding for municipalities and schools is considered necessary in order for schools to more easily obtain e.g., paid systems and longer-term, more comprehensive training programs. Edita, a publisher that is one of the companies selling these training programs, suggested that ministries

should channel money to schools through grants: "I really hope for a lot more money for education and specifically funding for ministries to channel it through government grants more to education providers so they could better choose what they want training for and they would also then have money to buy it". Requiring more money for public education institutions to use on edu-businesses' products and services highlight the desire of the public sector to facilitate the edu-business in Finland.

The interviewed actors largely agreed on the various issues related to doing edu-business in Finland, but the autonomy of teachers was a controversial topic. In addition to hoping for increased funding for a more independent procurement system for schools and their teachers, some interviewees called for closer involvement of teachers in processes such as digitalisation. However, the CEO of Education Alliance Finland called for the time spent by the teacher as well as the payment for the work done by the teacher to be taken into account in co-development, as there is often an incorrect assumption about how much time teachers have for testing and commenting on the companies' products. Microsoft emphasised that the co-operation between schools and businesses shoud follow the needs, strategy and vision of municipalities and schools.

Contrary to the desire for teachers to have more power and more involvement, the interviews also highlighted the wish for top-down decisions on the use and procurement of educational technology. A representative of EdTech Finland Ry reported that many would like a "top player", such as the Finnish National Agency for Education to be able to assign public "rubber stamps" to their products. Eduten's representative refined this idea by hoping that the Agency would more strongly suggest tools and information about them to schools so that "teachers could genuinely make an informed decision about what they want to adopt and what they don't". He continued: "I think it would be really great if we could create guidelines for teachers in Finland, and why not abroad as well, about how and why they would like to have technology in the classroom". Seppo's representative, on the other hand, described an ideal model as a "national program, in which someone would pay Finnish education providers to use Finnish products, so we could obtain references from there automatically, which could then be used internationally".

Giving top-down instructions contradicts the highly valued autonomy of teachers in Finland. Three actors expressed in interviews that the great autonomy of Finnish teachers to choose their own way of working is a good thing and a strength, but it makes the education business difficult, as they have to sell their product to each school and teacher separately. This view, which presents the dilemma between respecting the autonomy of teachers and doing business, was highlighted by EdTech Finland Ry:

> In Finland, you cannot pour anything from above—everything has to go from below. And that is the strength of the Finnish education system and it makes it so good, but it is a really big headache for companies. Respecting it while you're trying to do business.

The actors seemed to have considered the impact of doing business on teachers and their autonomy. Others emphasised the involvement of teachers and the implementation of co-operation on the schools' terms, which could implicate companies caring

about the position of teachers or knowing that such an approach is more long-term. Some actors, on the other hand, want the governmental actors to have a stronger and broader control over the introduction of edu-business products into schools, which would automatically reduce teacher autonomy. In this way, the governmental actors, such as the Finnish National Agency for Education, could utilise their power by strengthening the position of the edu-business in public schools in accordance with the wishes of the 'edu-business ecosystem'.

In addition to the issues the interviewees wished to see changed, they also reflected on the public's attitude towards edu-business. Edu-business actors hoped that the public sector would be "education-friendly", meaning a positive attitude towards the development of education from the perspective of the education business. Some of the interviewees felt that there is reluctance in Finland towards education business. The creative director of HundrED reported that there has been "unacceptably little interest" in Finland in what is being done in the world and he hoped that global examples would be taken into consideration, for example, in terms of digitalisation and sustainable development. He had also experienced that the interest towards edu-business is much greater in other parts of the world compared to the interest in Finland. This view was echoed by Education Alliance Finland's CEO, who argued that there is prejudice against businesses in schools. He illustrated that private actors, such as Sanoma and Microsoft, which brand themselves as 'non-private' have the best success, which indicates that as those companies have been working with and in schools for a long time, they have been able to integrate themselves in the public system in a way that is not seen as being a separate business. xEdu's CEO also raised the dominant role the publishing companies has had in the education market, but reported how curriculum reform and digitalisation has opened up new opportunities for new actors. Throughout the interviews, the edu-businesses and their products are presented as something new and innovative, whereas the public schools are sometimes depicted as stagnant.[47] In this context, Education Alliance Finland's CEO wished for awareness and dismantling of tradition by the public sector:

> … awareness and recognition of tradition, and somehow openness to your alternative ways of operating. And that doesn't mean, in my opinion, that we have to take any nonsense to schools uncritically, but rather to acknowledge that we do have such a tradition and then, just like on pedagogical grounds, begin to break that tradition and think, what could be some alternative ways to operate.

However, he also felt that the acceptance and openness towards edu-business is increasing, which can be seen in the establishment of Education Finland. He felt it to be ground-breaking that the National Agency for Education as a "traditional public sector actor" has its own unit, which promotes the sales of the products of private companies. In addition, the CEO of Seppo argued that "schools have opened their doors to collaboration". He described how the previously critical view towards edu-business has changed:

> Previously, I remember when I was in school, the attitude towards business collaboration was very critical, and people thought whether it was ethically acceptable. But now it is a totally different situation, and they want the companies to bring new ideas to school.

3DBear's CEO also agreed that "in recent years the public schooling in Finland has begun to open up in a good direction, so that today it is possible to work on for example innovation projects and try out new things". He felt that collaboration with local education departments in different municipalities and their teaching staff is now more open-minded. Similarly, xEdu has experienced their collaboration with public sector as positive, but acknowledged that they have chosen the right partners from the public sector, such as the City of Espoo, to work with. Microsoft's digital learning and strategy director, when asked about possible changes in education or economic policy, turned momentarily to English to say that "*public private partnership*" thinking has increased. This increase in the openness towards edu-business goes hand in hand with the increase and establishment of forms of co-operation between the public and the private sector in Finland.

Conclusion: Will the Public Sector Continue to Strengthen the Role of Edu-business and End up Re-configuring Their Own Role?

The findings of this study show how edu-business and the public sector in Finland are connected via the demand and supply of education products as well as via funding and co-creation projects. Edu-business actors also provide services, such as teacher training and consulting and public school teachers work for the companies in developing, promoting and evaluating their products. Through these concrete forms of co-operation, such as the co-creation projects, companies have direct contact with the public schools and have the opportunity to pass on their own educational and pedagogical values to the schools. As the edu-business actors are increasingly connected to international networks, values from the global education industry are flowing into Finland and its schools. A clear example of this is the teacher training provided by Microsoft and Edita in Finland, which is based on the global NPDL programme. Moreover, the OPPIVA[48] network which is also based on NPDL, connects over 30 municipalities and their schools to GEI through NPDL. The term 'public private partnership' being used in English in otherwise Finnish interviews and discussions also reflects the global influence, thus adding another layer to the notion of 'PPP as a language game'.[49]

In addition to edu-businesses having direct links to schools and teachers, the actors in this study described the Finnish National Agency for Education as a central channel of interaction between edu-businesses and the public sector. The companies having both formal and informal connections to a significant public sector actor in education strengthens the network of the actors, improving their opportunities to affect education policies and practices.[50]

The increase in co-operation and connections between the public sector and edu-business actors is following the global trajectories of commercialisation in education and reflects the emergence of networks and sectoral boundary breaking co-operation

in the Finnish field of education. The Finnish state acts in these co-operations and networks as a significant facilitator by connecting actors such as schools and businesses and through financing co-creation projects or companies directly. This follows Parreira do Amaral and Thompson's[51] description of the change in the role of the state caused by state's activities in GEI.

As the public sector has such a dominant role in Finnish schools, it is understandable that private actors attach their hopes for the future to changes in the role of the public sector. The interviewed edu-business actors hoped for continuity of publicly coordinated innovation projects, more funding for schools to spend on education products and an increase in co-operation in education (product) export as well as in co-operation in general. The role of the public sector is thus an important factor if the edu-business is going to thrive in Finland. In the light of this study, edu-business actors in Finland do not seek to reduce or eliminate the power of the public sector, but hope for the public role to be reoriented to a more favourable stance that would benefit the edu-business. This is also connected to Cone and Brøgger's[52] idea of soft privatisation, as the edu-business actors aim to re-configure the public, instead of competing with it. The edu-business actors want the public to be more strongly involved in financing, guiding and promoting of doing business in Finland, so that the actors could have the opportunity to grow and succeed in the domestic market and continue to global markets and succeed there with the support from the Finnish brand and ecosystem. Thus, edu-business actors do not need a confrontation between the private and public sector, but an "ecosystem co-operation" with other actors and the public sector to develop and export the Finnish edu-business.

Is there an issue with edu-business actors' perception of the ideal role of the public sector? The recognised forms of co-operation between the public sector and edu-businesses as well as the aspired direction of the relationship indicate a possible shift in the governance of education from public governance towards network governance. Although co-operation in itself has strengths and for example during the COVID-crisis the platforms of Finnish edu-business actors and large GEI actors played an important part in enabling distance learning,[53] network governance as a way of governing public education has its threats. Therefore, PPPs and network governance should not be put in place without critique or thorough consideration.

As argued by Stephen Ball and Carolina Junemann,[54] as well as Au and Ferrare,[55] network governance creates ambiguity in decision-making processes as the private actors of the networks are not accountable to democracy and therefore to the general public. With the public sector ultimately responsible for children's right to education, companies don't have to worry about the overall goals of education but can instead focus on their specific goals and thus take greater risks in the pursuit of profit. In addition to such a distinction between the accountability of public and private, network governance often operates in more subtle ways by influencing educational ideologies and decision-making.

Through visible and hidden connections, edu-business actors have the possibility to affect the ideologies behind the Finnish education system. As the interviewees mentioned, the attitude towards edu-business has already changed towards a more positive direction and "PPP thinking" has increased. The dilemma between increasing

and decreasing teacher autonomy in Finland, which was presented by the interviewees, is an example of the emergence of business ideologies in Finnish education. As reflected on by one interviewee, teacher autonomy is a strength in the Finnish school system, but consequently makes business activities more difficult. This embodies how business ideologies have risen to challenge the ideologies of education as a public good, and teaching profession with high autonomy, both of which have guided education in Finland. The interviews showed that the edu-business actors acknowledge and ponder this dilemma and other issues around commercial actors entering the public education space. They nevertheless still aim to find ways to manage to do business in Finland.

At present, when the public sector still has such a central role in Finland as an enabler and a constrainer of commercialisation, the state actors must consider carefully what the purpose of education is and who is responsible for making such a decision and based on what ideologies. It is not a question of whether co-operation and private sector innovation is or is not beneficial, but who has the decision-making power and who is accountable if something goes wrong. At the moment, and increasingly in the future the questions of e.g., data management and ownership, artificial intelligence and inequality will create more challenges to the governance of education. As edu-business actors operate at a rapid pace, creating progressively more connections nationally as well as globally, it is a challenge to stay abreast of the networks being created and their impact. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the commercial actor participation in education even further, as schools worldwide have struggled with creating functional distance learning practices.[56]

Thus far, the state has over time, increased the opportunities for edu-businesses by enabling, promoting and sponsoring edu-business. However, the state still appears to have a strong decision-making power and overall control of the comprehensive education in Finland and especially as regards facilitating commercial business activities. It is difficult to judge where the public sector should draw the line between enabling and constraining edu-business in Finnish schools. One can only hope that the decisions and processes will be made based on information, consideration and transparency.

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Iida Kiesi is Doctoral Researcher in the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. She is a researcher on the Academy of Finland-funded 'Hollowing Out of Public Education Systems? Private Actors in Compulsory Schooling in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand (HOPES) research project. Her doctoral thesis focusses on commercialisation in education, especially in terms of networks and partnerships.

Part II
Equity, Inequality and the Challenges of Diversity, Language and Inclusion

Chapter 11
"Three Bedrooms and a Nice School"—Residential Choices, School Choices and Vicious Circles of Segregation in the Education Landscape of Finnish Cities

Venla Bernelius and Sonja Kosunen

Abstract This chapter asks how socio-spatial segregation, school choices and residential choices are related in the relatively egalitarian Finnish education system. In many countries, school choice policies have been viewed as a means of desegregating schools by removing the immediate link between home address and school allocation through allowing pupils to select schools in different locations. However, international research points to school choice increasing school segregation, and our long-term research on the Helsinki metropolitan area demonstrates this in the Finnish context as well. The tendency towards school segregation is increased by the effect that school and school catchment area segregation have on the residential mobility of families with children. By combining register-based research and qualitative evidence, we describe the complex interconnections of social and spatial processes contributing to growth of segregation and educational inequality in urban schools and neighbourhoods in Finland. Processes operating at multiple scales exacerbate the risk of self-perpetuating vicious circles of segregation, where segregation in schools and neighbourhoods feed into each other. Besides the macro-level patterns of segregation in the cities and their education systems, local hierarchies between neighbouring schools and between school classes may further segregate schools and their individual catchment areas. Such micro-level processes may lead to growing segregation even when initial differences are small, as parents compare and navigate the network of schools close to their residential location, and school reputations mediate choices in local school markets. Our research has unearthed multiple mechanisms creating growing divides between schools, demonstrating that not even a relatively egalitarian educational system with high overall quality of schools is entirely

V. Bernelius (✉)
Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 4, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: venla.bernelius@helsinki.fi

S. Kosunen
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: sonja.kosunen@helsinki.fi

shielded from segregation tendencies, which may lead to a decline in equality and greater risks of educational exclusion.

In many countries school choice policies have been viewed as a means to desegregate schools by removing the immediate link between home address and school allocation. The central argument has been that a policy of free school choice will diminish the impact of socio-spatial segregation on schools by allowing pupils to select schools in different locations, as well as through encouraging competition between schools. However, numerous studies have demonstrated that free school choice has usually led to increasing social and ethnic segregation between schools,[1] as highly educated parents are more equipped to navigate the field of choices. The interconnections between residential and school segregation may even increase through the removal of geographical catchment areas.[2]

In this chapter, we analyse this interdependency in urban Finland: What is the relationship between school choices, school segregation and residential segregation in the Finnish context? Is the universalist, egalitarian Finnish system able to counteract the international trend of growing segregation between schools, as the academic quality of schools is very high across the board? (See also Kalalahti and Varjo in this book on the change in universalism.) We focus our analysis on the Helsinki metropolitan region, where our research using quantitative and qualitative datasets spans more than two decades. We draw on our earlier findings about vicious circles of segregation[3] and add here a new, comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the different patterns interconnecting parental choice with urban segregation and school segregation.

We start by describing the general structure of neighbourhood and school segregation in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, its interconnections to student flows and families' residential mobility—or choices of neighbourhood—and the way these connect with learning outcomes in schools. These intertwined domains of segregation form the macro-level circle of segregation in education and urban neighbourhoods[4] and we mainly draw on statistical and register based studies to look at this macro level. Second, we draw on qualitative research to describe the relations between the families' individual processes of school choice, the school reputations in the local sphere and their interconnection to school segregation. This micro-level analysis focusses on processes of parental choice, and the importance of rumour and 'the grapevine'[5] as well as the emerging local socio-economic differentiation of classes (soft streaming) within schools.

We conclude by drawing together what is known about school choices and segregation in urban Finland in recent years and also note some blind spots in research thus far. This chapter also links strongly to the chapter by Seppänen, Pasu, and Kosunen in this book which discusses institutional-level policies through which municipalities and schools conduct pupil selection and enrol pupils into schools either through local school allocation or through aptitude-tests to selective classes with a special emphasis. The chapter by Ramos Lobato and Bernelius builds further on the topics

addressed in this chapter by considering the resource allocation policies which have been set up as a response to the growing challenges faced in disadvantaged schools and the risk of vicious circles of educational segregation we present.

Macro-level Patterns of Segregation

Compared internationally, Finland has become widely known for its relatively low between-school variation in student composition and educational outcomes. The egalitarian ethos and public provision of education are mirrored in the school network, which is mostly comprised of public schools with high academic quality, and the number and relative share of private schools is low even in the largest cities. In the first PISA assessments in 2000 Finland stood out for its remarkably high attainment not only overall, but particularly in the lowest deciles, and in 2003 the poorest quartile of learners in Finnish schools still outscored the respective groups in other OECD countries by the equivalent of more than 1.5 years of education.[6] In the first PISA assessment in 2000, the outcome score difference between the lowest and highest scoring school deciles was also very low even compared to other Nordic countries, and less than half of the OECD average.[7]

The high level of educational equality appears to have had a strong link to the social and spatial structures in the country. At the time of the introduction of the universal basic education (*peruskoulu*) in the 1970s, the socially equalising policies of the welfare state also began to reach their peak. Socio-economic gaps were moderate and shrinking throughout the society, and the welfare state policies resulted in particularly small differences in household disposable income. To complement this, several municipalities introduced policies of spatial social mix. For example, Helsinki implemented a strong policy approach whereby all neighbourhoods were set a target level of owner-occupied and social housing. Socio-spatial segregation diminished throughout the following decades, and in the beginning of the 1990s, Helsinki demonstrated the most equal pattern of social mix in its recorded history.[8] These developments were reflected in the education system, where both school segregation and the effect of home background on pupil attainment decreased.

As school choice policies were introduced in Finland in the 1990s, the assumption was that increased mobility between schools would encourage the availability of specialised subjects to all pupils to complement the core curriculum.[9] Our research suggests that educational equality in Finland has been affected by increasing socio-spatial segregation, and that Finnish school choice is associated with growing school segregation through middle-class choice patterns.

Pupil Flows and Growing School Segregation

The long-time trend towards diminishing segregation in Finnish cities during the latter half of the twentieth century was reversed in the recession of the early 1990s. Unemployment grew rapidly in the neighbourhoods which had initially had lowest levels of highly educated adults, and the growth of socio-spatial segregation was mirrored in growing socio-economic school segregation through the connection between pupils' residential addresses and school allocation (see Ramos Lobato and Bernelius in this book). At the end of the 1990s differences in educational achievement between schools in the largest urban areas were discovered to be relatively significant as the schools with both poorest and highest educational outcomes were found in the capital region in the first national outcome assessment in 1998.[10] While these differences between schools were probably not entirely due to the recession, and reflected some educational gaps between neighbourhoods which the pre-1990s equality policies had not been able to entirely close, the role of growing neighbourhood segregation resulted in further widened gaps between schools in the following decades. On the one hand, this demonstrates the strong relationship between urban socio-spatial segregation and school segregation. On the other, it reflects the additional effects of school choices on school segregation.

The relationship between school segregation and school choice is a two-way process, where both phenomena feed into the other. First, mobility towards schools outside one's own residential area is strongly linked to existing school segregation in the Finnish context. An analysis of pupil flows between schools in Helsinki showed that the flows are systematically and selectively directed towards schools with higher socio-economic status (SES) and better educational outcomes than the pupils' own catchment area school.[11] This finding was consistent in a macro-level analysis where all schools are included, without consideration of local choice patterns between neighbouring schools, or the availability of selective classes. In other words, school segregation, or the SES of the school student body, is strongly linked to the pupils' choice patterns in Finnish cities, as elsewhere.[12]

Second, school choices affect the level of school segregation. The families who are particularly active in the school market are, on average, somewhat more educated,[13] and the pupils achieve higher educational outcomes than those families and pupils who opt for catchment-area-based classes in their own catchment area school,[14] even if there is of course local variation in this pattern. The link between family background and pupil outcomes has also strengthened alongside growing societal segregation. In the first PISA assessment, the relationship between SES background and educational outcomes was clearly below the OECD average for Finnish pupils, but during the last two decades, the statistical effect of home background has increased relative to the OECD average.[15] The selective profile of 'active choosers' means that the pupil flows carry with them higher SES characteristcs and higher educational outcomes to schools the flows are directed to, and away from the schools which are rejected in these patterns of choice.

Combined with the macro-level choice patterns of pupil flows from more disadvantaged schools towards schools with higher SES levels, the selectivity in the SES and outcome profile of the pupils making up these flows has led to the growth of school segregation. The effect is felt at both ends of the scale: both in the schools losing catchment-area pupils to other schools, as well as the schools receiving pupils from other catchment areas. The effect of these choices has also been quantitatively demonstrated by comparing the actual educational outcomes in all lower-secondary schools in Helsinki to a hypothetical scenario where all pupils have been artificially reallocated to their own catchment area school. The analysis clearly demonstrated that when the real-life school choices were introduced to the scenario, educational outcomes fell in the disadvantaged schools losing catchment-area pupils, and rose in the popular schools. These changes were statistically significant.[16]

Residential Mobility and Schools as Drivers of Neighbourhood Segregation

The macro-level processes of school choice are structured around residential spatial mobility in cities. Internationally, schools are known to be important motivators in families' choice of neighbourhood across many urban and national contexts. Families with higher SES are especially active in looking for schools which they expect to most benefit their children.[17] In the Finnish context, schools are typically also mentioned in housing preference studies, where parents often note that finding a neighbourhood that is good for children is one of the most important considerations when choosing where to live, and schools are seen as an important 'part of the package'.[18] The importance of schools has been picked up by many Finnish real estate agents, who often include "a good school" in real estate descriptions alongside information about other neighbourhood amenities.

The importance of schools as motivators of housing choice can also be observed in the effect that schools can have on housing prices especially in contexts where catchment area boundaries directly mediate access to a certain school. In one UK study the estimated effect of a popular school was as much as 34% of real estate prices in the catchment areas with most popular schools, when other factors were accounted for.[19] A similar study in Helsinki showed corresponding effects in the Finnish context, although the price effect was more modest: one standard deviation increase in school outcomes was associated with a 3% increase in housing prices within the catchment area.[20]

The ability and tendencies of families to navigate school markets are both linked to questions of class or SES across different national contexts, and this is also the case in Finland. Higher status families' residential choices appear to be strongly connected to perceived socio-economic and ethnic differences in schools and neighbourhoods, especially internationally, leading to choices correlating rather more with pupil composition than any measurable academic qualities of schools.[21] School

segregation therefore appears to be one of the key drivers of school-related residential decisions.

Somewhat counterintuitively, the socio-economic differences as motivators of school choice may perhaps be even more pronounced in Finland, compared to countries with a stronger level of differentiation in the academic quality of schools. In many countries, the landscape of school quality is highly differentiated due to lack of regulation, divisions between private and public education, or strong dependency on local revenues. In the Finnish context, however, the institutional quality of schools, measured for instance by teacher qualifications, academic curriculum or school resources, is very consistent, especially within the same city or municipality. As a result, a large part of the perceived differences and reputations of schools are constructed around the social composition of schools.[22] Thus, the comparatively high institutional stability of Finnish schools might even increase the relative importance of the schools' pupil composition as a factor influencing the way schools are perceived and the choice of schools that parents make.[23]

Neighbourhood segregation and school segregation have a similarly reciprocal relationship as school segregation and school choices described above; each affects the other. There are several international studies documenting the interconnections, where the socio-economic structure of the catchment areas affect the schools' student base and educational outcomes, which then have a further effect on the residential choices made by families with children.[24] Finnish studies analysing the links between school catchment area segregation and residential mobility have also found that school-related mobility patterns are not only related to the initial levels of segregation in the school catchment areas, but also considerably exacerbate the level of segregation between these areas.[25]

In the capital region of Finland, school catchment area segregation has grown considerably during the last two decades. The level of ethnic segregation has grown particularly noticeably in the school catchment areas in Helsinki and the neighbourhoods surrounding schools in Espoo. There is also a strong path dependency in these developments, where initial levels of socio-economic disadvantage or share of ethnic minorities are strong statistical predictors of future developments in the area.

When compared to adults or the population as a whole, children and youngsters are even more segregated between school catchment areas. Figure 11.1 depicts segregation indices (index of dissimilarity) in Helsinki for children under 16, and the population at large. The index describes the share of the compared groups which should theoretically relocate in order to achieve a complete mix in all areas. An index value of 0 would mean a completely mixed spatial distribution with no segregation between the compared groups, whereas the value 1 represents a situation of complete segregation, where all of the individuals in one group would need to relocate in order to achieve a mix between the compared groups. This index value is approximately 10% points larger for children than for the overall population. For example, in order to achieve a spatial mix of children living in high- and low-income households, well over 50% of children in either group should move into other neighbourhoods, while this figure is just over 40% for all population. In practice this means that children are living even more separately than adults, and it has been interpreted as a signal

of (white middle-class) families with children being particularly selective in their residential decisions, compared to childless households. The differences in segregation levels between children and adults are also statistically highly significant (p < 0.001).[26]

Deeper socio-spatial segregation of children and youngsters is further reflected in schools, which as a result of this age-related demographic difference become more segregated than neighbourhoods as a whole, when school allocation is based on residential address. It is empirically difficult to pinpoint the schools' exact role, or magnitude of the school-related effect, in the growing levels of urban segregation. However, analysing residential patterns and real estate prices close to school catchment area borders shows that even when all other neighbourhood characteristics are similar, access to a particular school does affect the socio-economic and ethnic composition and housing prices.[27] In this process, residential patterns and urban segregation are structured by schools and their catchment areas.

Fig. 11.1 Segregation indices (index of dissimilarity) for children and total population in school catchment areas in Helsinki 1995–2015[28]
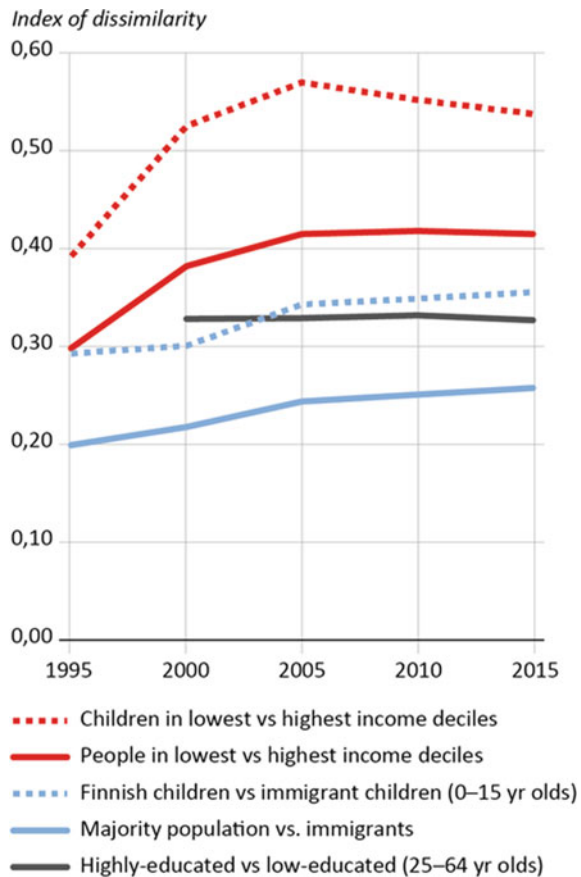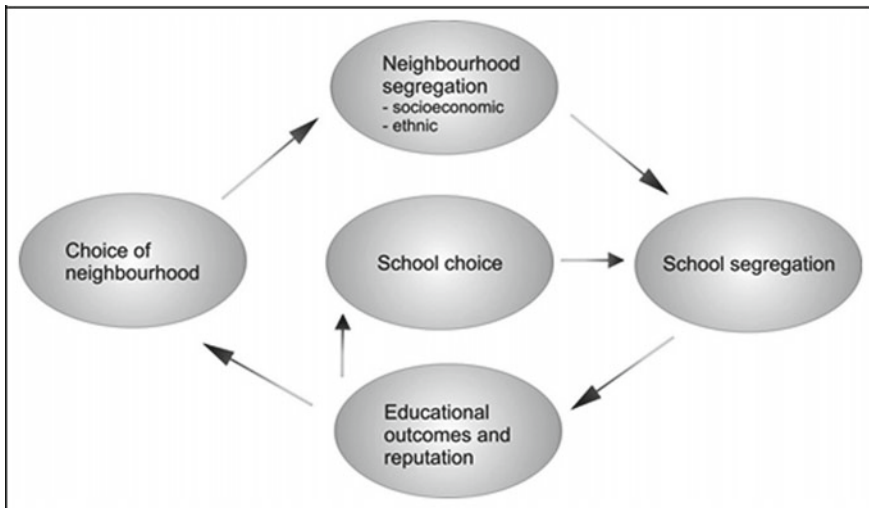
Fig. 11.2 The vicious circle of school and residential segregation[31]

The macro-level patterns of urban school choices and residential choices together form a vicious circle of educational segregation. First, residential segregation affects the initial levels of school segregation through the address-based school allocation policies. As children live even more separated than adults, the degree of school segregation would exceed neighbourhood segregation for the total population even in if all pupils would attend their own neighbourhood school. Second, the school segregation patterns are linked to the school choices of families with higher SES, leading to further segregation of schools. As the pupil flows are also implicitly selected by pupils' educational outcomes,[29] the process of school segregation through choices differentiates the schools' educational outcomes when compared to initial differences between schools. The differences are most visible through choices of emphasised teaching (see Seppänen, Pasu and Kosunen in this book), as well as language choices.[30] These processes, in turn, appear to motivate the residential decisions of many families, which then further shape the socio-economic and ethnic landscape of school catchment areas and increase the segregation of school-aged children. All of this feeds a vicious circle (Fig. 11.2).

Micro-level Patterns of Segregation

The micro-level processes involved in vicious circles in education are mediated by individual parental choice strategies and local hierarchies between schools and neighbourhoods. Parental choice of schools is a heavily investigated area in Finland. What is generally known is that school choices are conducted successfully by many

kinds of families, but primarily by families from higher social classes.[32] This is in line with international research[33] and with the quantitative aspects of student flows and macro-level choice patterns described above. Parental choices are traditionally constructed in the discussions between members of a family as well as their friends and acquaintances. The earliest studies on parental choice indicated that physical proximity to a school and existing relationships to friends from primary school were key determinants of school choice.[34] However in 2010, depending on the municipality in question, some 11–39% of the pupils in lower secondary schools in the largest cities opted out of their local school allocation by applying to selective classes with emphasised teaching.[35] In Helsinki, the share of students choosing a school outside their own catchment area has typically been 15–20%.[36]

A central feature of an educational system with no official school rankings of comprehensive schools (and a minor private sector) is that the reputations of public schools' flow 'through the grapevine' of local discussions amongst parents. The discussions usually concern nearby schools, and thereby the analytically interesting unit are the closest schools, their mutual relations in a social hierarchy as well as their provision of selective classes. While macro-level processes of school choice can be analysed across the city at large, local hierarchies in school choices are constructed on a smaller geographical scale and on relative differences between schools.[37] In these local hierarchies even a school or neighbourhood which is qualitatively close to the city average—for example in terms of SES—may become rejected as a choice, if it is compared to more elite concentrations nearby.[38] Individual and local processes form micro-level circles of segregation operating locally, and also feed into macro-level processes that are creating segregation in education.

In parental discussions,[39] the reputations of schools varied at the level of the city, by selective classes, and by the local catchment area, which in many of the Finnish cases comprises several schools that may be appointed as the 'local school'. Local discussions usually described reputations and their hierarchical relationships in relation to general classes, even if hierarchies were constructed in relation to selective classes:

> Well, these are rumours of course, but, for example, in [this area] and nearby, the schools, more than one of them, are considered good. They have classes with a special emphasis like [with an emphasis on theoretical subjects], one at least in [School 3] and another one here [School 4], and then there are several classes with an emphasis [on art], so I think they are all kind of good at least according to their reputation, and you need high average grades in order to be accepted. Eva, middle class (public sector), son in the general class of the neighbourhood school.

Some local areas have very strong hierarchies of reputation amongst their comprehensive schools. Upper social classes often seem aware of these reputations and actively make school choices *away* from certain schools and taught classes *towards* other schools and classes. When discussing the popularity of schools and classes, both push-factors and pull-factors therefore need to be acknowledged.[40] Often the logic of action seems to be that unfavourable general classes "push" families into choosing either other schools or selective classes in the local school or some other school. Local concentrations of disadvantage appear to be a particularly important

consideration in "push" factors. In the Finnish literature this phenomenon has previously been called the "rejected-school phenomenon".[41] On the other hand, some selective classes with a good reputation—not necessarily the most competitive or demanding—seem to "pull" pupils even from other areas of the city, which also often means longer school journeys and increasing transport costs for the families concerned:

> And now I know I'm being selfish, but it is totally clear that I would not have my children in the [general class of the local neighbourhood school], so if only you can, you will go for some other option. Andreas, upper social class (private sector), son in a class with a special emphasis.
>
> This [school]—does not have an especially flattering reputation, and in that situation [being allocated to a general class in the school] we would have seriously considered applying to some other school. Leo, upper social class (private sector), daughter in the general class of the neighbourhood school.

Choices may be towards selective classes, as in the case of Andreas' family, or to the general classes in particular schools, as in the case of Leo. The higher social classes seem to want and be able to avoid the schools with 'the worst' reputations through these choosing strategies, which reflects a well-researched division between skilled, semi-skilled and disconnected choosers.[42] Families with more social, cultural and economic capital are more able and often more willing to exercise their choice of schools. On the other hand, families with fewer resources might be as willing but less able to make successful choices with their children.

Reputation-wise, the 'worst' classes in schools are considered to have problems with risky behaviour such as using alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, as well as classroom study conditions amongst pupils in terms of peaceful conduct (misbehaviour during lessons, bullying).[43] These directly relate the risk of school rejection to questions of socio-spatial segregation and concentrations of disadvantage in neighbourhoods and in schools and school classes. There are also other concerns, such as problems with school buildings and their (microbe-related) quality of air, which has been a noticeable topic of public discussion in Finland in recent years.[44] 'Problem' schools tend to be avoided, even if the information about them consists mainly of rumour and perception in the neighbourhood:

> I don't know so much about rumours, or I actually don't even care about them. But of course, if it is generally known that in a certain school there are significant problems with order, or problems with intoxicants or other. And if I'm able to exclude that school from our options, it is crystal clear that I wouldn't put my own child into that sort of an environment. Tomas, upper social class, son applying for a place in a class with a special emphasis.

Another group of classes to be avoided, according to parents, were those with the most elite reputations:

> I said then that I wouldn't let my child go to [the most prestigious class with a special emphasis focusing on the same theoretical subject], that it was a too competition-oriented environment, so this is a good solution. Lena, middle class (private sector), son in a class with a special emphasis in the neighbourhood school.

Parents described how some classes were considered very competitive and stressful for children as young as 13 (which in the Finnish context is thought to be far too early). This was also a central reason why some urban parents, even if aware of rumours and social hierarchies concerning schools across the city, were only considering nearby schools as relevant options for their own children. Fierce competition in comprehensive schools was considered irrelevant by many, including those from the higher social classes.[45] At the same time, many parents, and increasingly over time, seem to be willing to make a selective choice. This influences neighbourhood schools and their locally allocated classes, as the children attending selective paths are taken out of the 'ordinary' groups. The wish for a 'good-enough school' was present in the parental discourse:

> This is the interesting thing: the specialisation seems to create an A- and B-class division among the pupils … The problem is how to ensure a good education in these general classes as well. It can't happen that the most enthusiastic and dedicated teachers teach only the classes with a special emphasis, and then the less eager ones cover the general classes: No. Everybody should have the right to as good an education as possible. Lisa, upper middle class (public sector), son applying for a place in a class with a special emphasis.

Selective choices, even if based on the reputations of the schools in the local area, are noted to be creating social class divisions in addition to the circle of urban segregation:

> I checked with [my son's] friends, who were the ones who applied to [a selective class]. Every single one of them came from engineering families. So, is it really the case that this engineering talent for some reason is concentrated in families where the dad works at an IT-enterprise? [laughs] That makes me laugh. Sebastian, upper-middle class, son applying for a place in a class with a special emphasis.

These notions of using pupil selection as a tool for creating social distinction within a public education system are the patterns that also contribute to increasing between- and within-school segregation. It has been noted that the choice of selective classes, the choice to study languages over many years starting in primary school, and the combination of the two, function as the relevant choosing strategies.[46] Families whose children have chosen both a lengthy study of a language other than English or in addition to English (which more than 97% of the age cohort study nationally) and a class with a special emphasis, come far more often from housing blocks with highly educated adults and higher average annual incomes per household than those with local school allocation to general class and having English as their first or only foreign language.

In these ways the micro-level circles of segregation feed themselves by the same mechanisms observed in the macro-level: the school choices are informed by the reputations of schools and their classes, which on their part are influenced by the socio-economic structures—or assumptions about these—associated with particular schools. The socio-economic structures are dependent on school enrolments and pupil selection conducted by the city and schools and applied for by families. Since school choice possibilities are applied for predominantly by families from higher social classes, their micro-level logic of choice feeds into growing segregation within

and between schools. The individual choices and local processes of segregation in turn feed into the larger-scale processes and macro-level circles of segregation in Finnish education.

Conclusion: Segregation Reshaping the Universalist Landscape of Education

Although school choices were introduced in the egalitarian Finnish context with the expressed hope of equalising access to different educational opportunities for all pupils, the resulting macro- and micro-level choice patterns have a highly selective element within this universalist vision. Geographical analysis shows that shopping for schools is structured not only by a systematic socio-economic selectivity, but also by a spatially systematic selectivity: families with children are spatially even more segregated than other population groups, and residential choices correlate strongly with school catchment area characteristics and the push or pull factors associated with certain local schools. Proximity to popular schools, or the willingness to avoid others, may therefore strongly influence decisions about where to reside, which then contributes both to neighbourhood and school segregation, and school choices add to this effect by flows of students towards schools in wealthier locations.

Processes operating at multiple scales create risks of self-perpetuating vicious circles of segregation, where segregation in schools and neighbourhoods both feed into each other through a complex network of contributing factors and mechanisms. Besides the macro-level patterns of segregation in the cities and their education systems, local hierarchies between neighbouring schools and between school classes may further segregate schools and their individual catchment areas. The micro-level processes may lead to growing segregation even when initial differences are small, as parents compare and navigate the network of schools close to their residential location, and school reputations mediate choices in local school markets.

Our analysis of long-term research evidence demonstrates that in Finland increasing inequality is strongly tied with socio-spatial segregation, which is associated with socially selective school choice. The growth of school segregation and the resulting differences in educational gaps between schools have had a profound effect on the Finnish education system. Nationally, a very large portion of these most disadvantaged schools, as well as of the best-performing schools, are located in urban areas. This highlights the importance of intertwined processes of neighbourhood and school segregation: local processes have wide-reaching consequences for the whole education system.

Our findings unearth multiple mechanisms of growing divides between schools, demonstrating that not even a relatively egalitarian educational system is shielded from circles of segregation which may lead to decreasing equality and risks of educational exclusion. The resulting inequalities are not driven by the educational system as such, but the system appears to lack protections against the internationally well

described social and spatial macro- and micro-level processes, which are also operating in Finnish urban schools and neighbourhoods, fuelled mainly by the underlying socio-economic and ethnic differences in neighbourhoods. Our results also demonstrate how some educational policies have had unintended consequences and have contributed to the growing divides. As shown in this chapter, policies allowing a degree of freedom in school choices appear to have provided a pathway to growing segregation between schools.

The presented findings also demonstrate the complexity of the processes connected to educational equality in an egalitarian education system, and open multiple questions on how to support educational equality in the context of growing socio-spatial divisions. One of the key questions for future research is whether growing neighbourhood and pupil segregation can have a further effect on the institutional quality of schools. This may happen, for instance, if the school system is not equipped to efficiently support institutional equality through increasing school resources in disadvantaged communities.

A recent report published by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture suggested that the growing divides between schools may lead to teachers' workload and working environment becoming so strained in the most socio-economically deprived schools that it can increase the risk of staff recruitment and retention problems in those schools.[47] The resulting teacher segregation—the difficulties of acquiring and keeping qualified staff, and related increase in staff burnout—is recognised in several countries.[48] Expert interviews used in the report warned of early signals of teacher segregation becoming more noticeable in Finnish basic education and early childhood education, but there is currently no reliable research evidence on the scale of this phenomenon. If growing challenges in disadvantaged neighbourhoods indeed lead to problems in recruiting, maintaining and supporting qualified teachers in such schools, the universalist ideals of stable institutional quality throughout all schools may be put at risk in Finland, and fuel more segregation through simultaneous and correlated pupil segregation and institutional decline in the same schools.

Other open questions relate to educational policies aimed at alleviating school segregation and supporting disadvantaged students and schools. As the processes leading to school segregation operate at multiple levels and through a complex network of factors including residential segregation, the Finnish education system faces challenges in tackling the growing inequalities. Solutions such as considering housing policies together with educational policies to reduce residential segregation between school catchment areas have been discussed in Finland, but large-scale national or local initiatives and related research evidence are still limited. One of the pressing questions is the policy of school choice, and the way this is locally implemented and interpreted in many municipalities causing, for instance variety in pupil selection by schools (see Seppänen, Pasu and Kosunen in this book). It is possible that if parental choices and pupil selection of schools were forbidden, school segregation might increase through residential segregation, if the middle- and upper-class desire to choose schools would have to find an outlet in the housing market: school choice by mortgage. However, it remains an open question whether this would happen if it was

only pupil selection by urban schools that was abolished. On the other hand, international evidence points to completely unregulated school choice probably leading to even higher levels of school segregation than the levels caused by closed catchment areas without choice of other schools.[49] As Finnish educational policies attempt to find new solutions and innovative strategies for supporting equality in the face of complex socio-spatial challenges, the challenge is to understand multiple factors and mechanisms affecting educational (in)equality, and the effects of different policy responses aimed at reducing inequality.

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Venla Bernelius is Assistant Professor and Docent of Urban Geography at the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, Department of Geosciences and Geography, University of Helsinki, and heads the Geographies of Education and Divided Cities (GED) research group. She focuses on themes of urban segregation, immigration and housing, as well as social and spatial dynamics of education. Besides school research, Bernelius has worked extensively on the development and assessment of targeted funding schemes with Finnish municipalities and ministries.

Sonja Kosunen is Associate Professor of Education (tenure-track) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, where she leads the research unit Social studies in Urban Education (SURE). Her research focusses on the fields of sociology of education and urban studies. She is currently leading five research projects focusing on diversity, inequality and segregation across early childhood, comprehensive, secondary and higher education.

Chapter 12
Pupil Selection and Enrolment in Comprehensive Schools in Urban Finland

Piia Seppänen, Terhi Pasu, and Sonja Kosunen

Abstract There is a pervasive myth that education policy for comprehensive schooling in Finland is non-selective, meaning that all children attend similar schools (peruskoulu) catering for the children who live nearby. Following from this is the idea that the Finnish education system must be relatively uniform and fair, since there is no obvious ability-grouping by tracks or streams for pupils under the age of 15. In this chapter we challenge these claims by analysing the ways in which public comprehensive schools select and track their pupils through different admission criteria for different teaching classes within schools. We argue that schools' selection of pupils and the enrolment policies of cities vary nationally in a way that raises questions about the opportunities of attending 'one school for all'. Our results indicate that selection processes for admission to emphasised teaching classes are fierce with schools not just evaluating pupil's aptitudes for certain subjects but applying numerous criteria when enrolling pupils to emphasised teaching. Ways of testing, and the means by which they include and exclude pupils, may include aspects which reproduce existing social and economic inequalities in comprehensive schools.

The Nordic idea of 'one school for all'[1] underlies the comprehensive school system that was built up in Finland from the 1970s. At that time the legislation abolished the previous arrangement of different tracks in lower secondary level (when students are aged 12–15) and municipalities became responsible for organising schooling. Until 1998 the municipalities were then obliged by law to divide their geographical area into catchment areas so as to allocate all pupils to comprehensive schools. From 1998

P. Seppänen (✉) · T. Pasu
Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: piia.seppanen@utu.fi

T. Pasu
e-mail: terhi.p.pasu@utu.fi

S. Kosunen
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: sonja.kosunen@helsinki.fi

municipalities were only obliged to allocate a school place to each pupil within the municipality, but not specific pupils to each school.[2] Nowadays the pupil composition of each comprehensive school is constructed on the basis of pupil enrolment policies and practices, and how they are regulated and conducted at both municipality and school level.

School websites in the biggest cities of Finland in recent years show a picture far from non-selection but rather a range of very detailed aptitude-tests for accessing emphasised teaching, which is organised for a separate group than the pupils being admitted to their geographically closest school. For example, in music in the capital city area:

> [The] Music aptitude test is organised for first graders [once they apply at the age of six] and 6th grade students [at the age of 12] at the time defined by the City of Helsinki. The dates and times of the tests is advertised in schools' websites. The aptitude test for first graders includes a group section and an individual section. The group section measures musical basic readiness. […] The individual section is about identifying musical readiness (basic beat, the sense of rhythm, repeating melody and singing). For the individual test [two well-known childrens'] songs should be practiced. In addition, it is possible to give a voluntary sample of playing or singing. The aptitude test for 6th graders includes a group section and individual section. The group section includes a musical test and theory test. The individual section includes a sample of singing and playing, which the applicant can choose for themselves. In addition, staying in pitch and musical interpretation are being assessed.[3]

Little of the discussion amongst education policy makers and the general public has recognised how some comprehensive schools select a significant share of their pupils in urban Finland. People have started to talk about 'entrance exams' to particular 'streams' in comprehensive schools due to their aptitude tests even if officially there should be only one uniform comprehensive school. Only where a school offers some "emphasised teaching in a particular subject" can a school legally use "aptitude tests" for admission to the particular emphasis.[4] There is no national policy that these selected pupils are intended to study all subjects in permanent study groups, but this seems to be what happens in practice. Journalists eagerly seek out information about the proportion of pupils that get selected to emphasised classes but the numbers are not easy to compare across cities and schools. In 2010 we compared selection to emphasised classes across four cities and this showed a variation in selected 12-year-olds of between 11 and 39%.[5] In public discussions the differentiation between schools is linked to reasons for choosing schools in Finnish cities and the relevance of those choices in Finland's supposedly non-segregated school system.

The policy change in pupil selection that emerged officially in 1998 legislation took place against a background of pupil selection to classes with a special emphasis had had already been occurring during the 1990s[6] and indeed, in the case of music classes since the early years of comprehensive schooling.[7] Over recent decades Finland's urban areas, especially the metropolitan capital area, have gone through tremendous changes in demographics, social structure, migration, and segregation of neighbourhoods. In the capital area the division of population between primary school catchment areas have seen significant segregation since the mid-1990s in terms of levels of education, income and speakers of languages other than Finnish

or Swedish. With parental choice policies also emerging, a worrying combination of both school and neighbourhood selection has become evident in segregated Finnish cities.[8] The significant pupil selection inside schools to classes with special emphasis interconnects with the trend towards urban and school segregation by increasing socio-economic differences between and within schools.[9]

In this chapter we draw a national picture of pupil selection by schools and enrolment policies for comprehensive schools by cities across Finland in early 2020. We argue that schools' selection of pupils and the enrolment policies of cities vary nationally in a way that raises questions about the opportunities of attending 'one school for all'. Our concern is both about differences between and within cities in Finland's comprehensive school system and about equal opportunities for all children to enrol in the emphasised classes. Drawing on previous Finnish literature on socio-economic stratification of the school market linked to pupil selection,[10] we also consider how pupil selection conducted by the schools together with the choices intended by the families from different social class backgrounds enable the social distinction of Finland's higher social classes through selective choices for their children within the public system.[11] Next we sum up how socio-economic status (SES) is related to pupil admission policies for comprehensive schools in urban Finland. Based on an analysis of the web pages of Finnish schools and cities, we then report on how pupil enrolment and selection took place in Finland's 12 biggest cities in the school year 2020–21.

The Needed Capitals of Families and Enrolment in Schools

The overall landscape of "options to choose" and perceived differences between schools and their enrolment practices, are viewed differently by families with dissimilar social, cultural and economic capital. In many countries where school choice policy has taken over, researchers have pointed out that once entrance to schools is organised as process of consumption it will maintain and produce social distinctions. This is because parents with a great range of relevant capitals can interpret the signs and messages and also have the confidence to challenge norms for their advantage.[12] When two of us interviewed parents in Finland in early 2010 about their process of school choice and images of schools, it was evident not only that the reputation of schools varied, but also the reputations of various classes within schools varied in terms of their expected academic demands and social composition. This was based on rumours among families as well as their perceptions of the process of selection against admission criteria.[13] Family surveys combined with statistics of pupil flows out of schools' catchment areas also showed how pupil selection connected to socio-economic differences. The most sought after and selective schools were favoured by higher educated families, particularly children of university educated mothers.[14]

In public discussion pupil enrolment based on testing pupils' aptitudes in particular emphasised subjects has been portrayed as a rather neutral, uncomplicated matter, particularly among policy-makers. However, in legislation the term 'aptitude

testing'[15] is used, and this often translates into entrance exams as a 2015 interview with the then Minister of Education and Culture Sanni Grahn-Laasonen illustrated:

> In my opinion, entrance examinations are acceptable, provided that the entrance admission criteria are clear and transparent and the possibility of applying for special emphasis classes is informed to everyone.[16]

As this statement shows the common belief is that if information of admission criteria is available openly to all in the internet, this makes the system fair and equitable. Yet Finnish research shows that the same 'pure' information does not reach families in the same way.[17] Interviews show that it is also a question of how school choice is made inside families. Highly educated parents tend to guide and support their child more, especially university educated mothers. They often choose a child's school or pre-select schools for their child to "choose" from. In less affluent families children are often left to make a choice of school more independently.[18]

Previous findings indicate that the application and selection processes undertaken by schools seems to cause socio-economically selective student compositions in classes with special emphasis,[19] and that this is the case even when students' achievement levels are analysed.[20] Aspects of the actual admission process are central to understanding this pattern: how the pupils get information about the entrance tests, how they enrol, and by what means success gets measured. Pupils with a background in institutionalised hobbies such as sports or music seem to get ahead when it comes to the entrance examinations of special emphasis classes that are highly selective. In the tests for lower secondary school, it is especially evident that some of the applicants may have played an instrument or some sport for almost a decade by the time of the testing. This means that their peers who are 'only' interested in the topic but have little experience would likely not achieve as well in the admission test/s, since skills in the subject matter are tested and competition may be fierce.[21] Skills in different subject areas are usually derived from extracurricular activities outside school hours and thereby strongly related to family resources, especially money. In this way success in admission testing for selective classes is also a question of economic inequalities, despite the official discourse of tuition-fee-free, public education.[22]

Ways of choosing leisure activities are known to be differentiated according to social class background in Finland as elsewhere.[23] The successfully selected and enrolled children would likely have relevant hobbies in any case. The real question is whether it is fair that the educational system selects pupils based on skills that are known to be connected to family socio-economic background. Resources become naturalised into "talent", even if it is actually the difference in the chosen hobbies and the embedded amounts of practice included in them which is differentiating children into separate classes within a school. The combination of knowing the ways in which to access entrance examinations,[24] the strategies of school choice families use[25] and the potential for schools' admission criteria to be unequal[26] are fairly thoroughly investigated themes in Finnish cities. It seems that in each phase of the admission process family resources seem to make a difference, and the process itself thereby seems to function to exclude those with less capital or with capital deemed less relevant in ways that are often hidden.

Recent studies also show differences between types of emphasis in relation to student composition: classes with language emphasis have students with the highest GPA and the most educated mothers, science and arts classes also had high-achieving pupils, whereas sports classes were most similar to classes without a special emphasis, but differed significantly from them regarding achievement in grade seven. So far, little research has been conducted on how the grouping might impact pupils studying in selected groups and the variation of those groups by subject emphasis. For example, recent research measuring group effects on pupils' control expectancies of success found that in language and arts classes, pupils' agency beliefs of abilities declined more than in other class types.[27] It would also be particularly significant to evaluate the effects of selection on pupils in neighbourhood-based groups as well as the effects of groupings on entire school communities. Recent findings indicate that the border-work conducted in schools between selected and non-selected classes happens along these lines of selection, when young people are taught in groups based on selective practices. Additionally, the grouping practices lead to the problem that "… organising emphasised teaching in separate school class groups, aligns the structurally produced inequalities of social class and racialisation with school class group boundaries".[28] This means that the election conducted in schools need to be intersectionally investigated, as it produces phenomena that relates to both social class and ethnicity in the everyday-life at schools. Gender has also been found to associate with the class type statistically so that the selective school classes with special emphasis attracts slightly more girls than boys. Gender differences has appeared particularly between emphasised subjects, for instance example Satu Koivuhovi and colleagues report that science classes attracted especially boys while art classes attracted more girls.[29]

Pupil Enrolment and Selection in 12 Biggest Cities of Finland

In this section we examine how pupil enrolment and selection are conducted in the 12 biggest cities in Finland in the school year 2020–21. The population of the cities, varying between 657,000 (Helsinki) and 76,000 (Joensuu),[30] accounted for 44% of the population of Finland in 2020. The proportion of families with children in comprehensive school age is most likely higher in cities compared to whole country that has low population density. In addition, comprehensive schools in these urban centres, especially some lower secondaries, serve small number of pupils who come from surrounding towns.

Policies to Allocate Pupils to Local Schools

Policies and practices varied between cities in terms of how they assigned a local school for each child and in what ways families could (try to) influence which school their child attended in each local system. In the most of the cities the schools had

their own district or geographically defined enrolment area for primaries and lower secondaries and then the place of residence usually determined a place in a particular school. However, in a few cases schools shared the same catchment area and then equalised numbers of pupils between schools. A few cities also announced that geographical boundaries of catchment areas could be changed annually if necessary to form pedagogically and economically appropriate teaching groups.

Significantly different enrolment policies were in use by some cities with large catchment areas (Espoo, Vantaa, Oulu, Jyväskylä) as the schemes included multiple school and employed various enrolment criteria other than proximity.[31] Under such enrolment policies that placed several schools in each catchment area parents could not guarantee a place for their child in their desired school by buying a house or an apartment in a particular area or renting a place to live in a particular neighbourhood. Rather enrolment was also influenced by other "choices" by pupils, especially those applying to emphasised teaching in some subject based on success in their entrance examination (discussed in the next section) and choice of a foreign language. Only some of the lower secondary schools provide long courses in certain foreign languages other than English, typically French, German, Spanish, Swedish or Russian. Choosing such a long language course during their primary schooling meant a child could not be enrolled in some lower secondary schools in the local area, as they did not provide those language courses in their curriculum. As a result, the choice of special emphasis, the choice of an exceptional (other than English) language in primary school, and especially the combination of these two proved socio-economically differentiating from the rest of the pupil population when it came to enrolling in schools.[32] Indeed in areas with large catchment areas with several schools many forms of capital of a family may be needed in order to influence enrolment possibilities.

Transfer from primary schools (6th grade) to lower secondary schools (7th grade) took place in most cities (7 out of 12) according to pathways intended to provide a continuum from a particular primary school to a particular lower secondary school. This policy of pathways did not necessarily depend on whether the municipality assigned the local school for a first grader according to a geographically defined enrolment area or large catchment area. Some comprehensive schools include grades 1–9 and the pupil does not change schools. Every pupil has also the right to apply for a school other than the assigned local school. These secondary applicants can be admitted only if there are places available in the school they are applying for. In addition, schools use various criteria when admitting pupils, which should however be equal according to the Basic Education Act.

Emphasised Teaching with Selection

The municipalities are entitled to construct selective classes for emphasised teaching and thus are entitled to apply pupil selection criteria.[33] This has resulted differing profiles of the provision of selective classes across the country. The descriptions

Music: As an art subject, music plays a key role in supporting a student`s emotional growth and creativity. Special music class teaching offers plenty of opportunities for collaboration and social interaction. Experiences gained in collaboration increase the sense of security and thus support the development of the student's positive self-perception. Awakening curiosity, playful activity and happy togetherness are prerequisites for the development of the student's creative musical thinking. The primary goal of music classes is not to educate the music professional, but people who enjoy music in a variety of ways.[34]

Sports: The goal of sports lower secondary (urheiluyläkoulu) is to enable a total of about 20 hours of exercise, training and sports per week in a planned cooperation between educational institutions, sports clubs and the sport academy. Of these total weekly hours, the schools provide for 10 hours of exercise and training within the school week in close cooperation with sports clubs and the Sport Academy of Turku Region.[35]

Bilingual teaching: The aim of bilingual education is to give a pupil fluent language skills in both languages used in the classroom. Studying in two languages develops the child's problem-solving skills, creative thinking and adaptability. The goals and content of teaching in bilingual education are the same as in regular basic education. In bilingual education, the languages of instruction are Finnish and a second language. In bilingual education, 25–50% of the teaching is in the target language, and the rest is in Finnish. Each school specifies the amount of the second language instruction in its curriculum. Bilingual education helps pupils develop a fluency in listening to, speaking, reading and writing an additional language, and creates general interest towards language learning. Like all basic education, it develops grade-appropriate skills in all subjects of the curriculum.[36]

Mathematic—natural science: Mathematical—natural science emphasised studies include research and study visits are planned and carried out during the studies. Natural science research with all its aspects will become familiar to everyone. Each grade has its own study entity and theme each year, which also includes one art and practical subject.[37]

Visual arts: The main aim of a visual-arts-class-student is to develop and strengthen one's own visual expression. The pupil is challenged to a dialogue between him- or herself and the world by observing, researching and experimenting together—with a picture, by making a picture and learning from pictures. The pupil is encouraged to look and try open-mindedly for new solutions, to polish up technical skills and to improve material knowledge. Making independent choices, acquisition and application of knowledge, learning concepts and self-evaluating are also important parts of the working process of visual arts.[38]

Swedish-language immersion: Language immersion class follows the general curriculum of school and the foreign language is both a tool for learning and its object. In the first grade, teaching is entirely in Swedish and pupils learn to read and write in Swedish first. However, pupils can use their native language until they have adequate readiness in the Swedish language. The teaching of native language begins at the second grade under the guidance of a teacher other than pupils' own. Swedish and Finnish-Swedish cultures are also introduced in Swedish-language immersion class.[39]

Fig. 12.1 Examples of descriptions of the most typically emphasised subjects

of the content of these different emphases seem somewhat shared across cities but the magnitude of selective classes differ across the 12 biggest cities. Figure 12.1 illustrates the most typical emphasised subjects (translations to English are by the authors).

Some of the emphases were provided country-wide. Music, partly due to the historical reasons noted earlier, seemed to be the most prominent and was provided in all cities. Sports was also an emphasised subject area (with slightly differing wordings) present in almost all cities (11/12), except in Vantaa which had no exams to enrol emphasised physics education. Bilingual teaching in English was also provided in almost all cities (11/12).[40] Apart from these three areas, there was variation between cities in what is provided and what subjects are used to select the pupils. Other relatively common emphases were in mathematics and natural science or solely mathematics (9 cities), visual arts (8 cities) and Swedish-language immersion (5 cities). Table 12.1 illustrates all emphasised subjects that applied an aptitude or entrance test to selective classes and the school grades in which those subjects were taught in each

city in 2021. In addition, the schools offered school-specific emphasised teaching for pupils in the school and mainly no entrance requirement was mentioned (not in the table).

The three most densely populated cities (Helsinki, Espoo and Tampere) provide the largest variation in selective classes (Table 12.1). The fourth biggest city Vantaa clearly differs from the others with fewer emphases provided. This can be interpreted as a matter of education policy applied in Vantaa based on political decision-making, or as a matter of relatively moderate level of urban segregation, which can be kept up in the socio-economic profiles of the schools by mainly enrolling pupils through local school allocation. Helsinki, Espoo and Turku are relatively more socially segregated as urban areas, and additionally apply a more selective patterns for school allocations through selecting pupils to emphasised classes: in a more segregated area the possibility of applying for selective classes may on the other hand provide space for less urban segregation, as the (middle-class) families may enrol their children at their local school and use the selective route in emphasised teaching, and thereby remain in the area.

Admission Criteria

As presented in earlier studies on parental interviews,[41] the ways in which selection in the admission process is handled embeds some social distinctions not only in finding means for a child to attend the aptitude tests, but also in succeeding in them. The ways in which the cities and the schools inform and test the candidates play a crucial role in (re)producing as well as in preventing inequalities. The majority of urban schools used aptitude tests and/or other admission requirements to enrol pupils into the classes with emphasised teaching. As we discuss in detail elsewhere[42] the admission criteria and the ways cities inform or describe them, express the characteristics required of the student and it is a signal to families about the "right" pupil who is suitable for emphasised teaching. In addition, the descriptions about emphasised teaching often underline the selected teaching group and its significance for teaching. In the following we describe the entrance criteria in the most common emphasis: music, sports, bilingual teaching in English, mathematics and natural science and visual arts in order to give an overview of the ways in which the public system selects (some) of its pupils and furthermore streams them to separate teaching groups for their entire time spent in comprehensive schools.

In music the aptitude tests were described as including various aspects in musical aptitude and skills. Most in the later music entrance examination (for children age 12–13) included singing (in 10 cities), playing an instrument (optional in 7 cities and in addition voluntary in 4 cities), an interview (in 7 cities), musicality test (in 6 cities) and repeating rhythm and/or melody (at least in 5 cities). With these tasks, different aspects of musicality, e.g., intonation, sense of melody and rhythm and musical interpretation, are evaluated. This was expressed in a requirement of 12-year-olds applying to the 7th grade in the city of Kuopio:

Table 12.1 The subject areas of emphasised teaching with admission criteria and their grade of instruction in 12 largest cities in Finland in 2021

	HE	ES	TA	VA	OU	TU	JY	LA	KU	PO	KO	JO
Music	1–9*	3–9*	3–9	3–9	3–6, 7–9	3–9	4–9	3–9	3–6, 7–9	3–9	3–9	7–9
Visual arts	3–9*	7–9	3–9		3–6, 7–9	3–9		6–9	3–6, 7–9	3–9		
Crafts								3–9				
Creative design			7–9									
Dance	3–6, 7–9	7–9							3–6, 7–9			
Dance and performing	7–9											
Drama												7–9
Expression/artistic expression	3–6, 7–9	7–9									7–9	
Circus art			7–9									
Physical education	3–9*	7–9			3–6, 7–9	3–6		3–9	3–6, 7–9	4–6, 7–9	3–6, 7–9	7–9
Sports	7–9	7–9	3–6, 7–9		7–9	7–9	7–9	7–9	7–9	7–9		
Sports and mathematics	7–9											
Home economics and physical education	7–9											
Mathematics—natural science	7–9	3–6, 7–9	7–9					3–9*	3–6, 7–9	7–9		7–9
Mathematics	7–9		7–9			3–9					7–9	
Nature and science	7–9											
Experimental science			7–9									
Science						7–9						
Technology	7–9	7–9	7–9									
Hitech											7–9	
Communication	7–9							7–9				

(continued)

Table 12.1 (continued)

	HE	ES	TA	VA	OU	TU	JY	LA	KU	PO	KO	JO
Media	7–9		7–9								3–9	
Entrepreneur										7–9	7–9	
Latin	7–9		7–9									
Basic education in English/Bilingual Finnish—English	1–9*	1–9	1–9	1–9*	1–9	1–9	1–9	1–9	1–6, 7–9	1–9		1–9
Swedish language immersion	1–9	1–9		1–9		1–9		1–9				
Bilingual Finnish—Russian	1–9					1–9						
Bilingual Finnish—German/French			1–9			1–9						
Bilingual Finnish—Chinese/Spanish/Estonian	1–9											

HE = Helsinki, ES = Espoo, TA = Tampere, VA = Vantaa, OU = Oulu, TU = Turku, JY = Jyväskylä, LA = Lahti, KU = Kuopio, PO = Pori, KO = Kouvola, JO = Joensuu

1–9/3–9/4–9 = There is a continuum through comprehensive school and only new applicants take an aptitude test in the seventh grade for lower secondary

1–9*/3–9* = There is a continuum from primary to particularly lower secondary in some schools, but the emphasised subject is also provided in lower secondaries (grades 7–9) where an aptitude test is required

3–6/4–6, 7–9 = The applicant takes an aptitude test at both primary and lower secondary school

The compulsory song evaluates specifically the singer's technique and among other things the aspects of intonation and rhythm perception (0–4 points). In the optional song, the more artistic side of the performance is evaluated e.g., phrasing and interpretation (0–4 points). The playing sample is performed unaccompanied or without backing tracks. In the playing sample, both the playing technique and artistic aspects are evaluated during the same sample. Other sections: extra-curricular activities (0–2 points), degrees in music (0–1 points), musicality test (0–2 points), interview (0–3 points).[43]

As this example shows, not only the "musicality test", but also an interview with a pupil and their previous achievements in the hobby were used in evaluating applicants to music classes. The interview was mentioned to be used as a tool in the selection in most of the cities in at least one of the classes with emphasised subject curriculum at the 7th grade. Overall, attached to 'aptitude tests' some schools evaluated previous grades in specific subjects and the written statement of the pupils' aptitudes by a previous teacher (both mentioned as criteria in four cities, and in five different emphasised subjects). There are several points in these tests that are technically testing skills learned from extra-curricular activities (e.g., mandatory or voluntary playing of an instrument), evaluating obtained degrees (from music institutes), and assessing by way of the interview social relations as well as cultural patterns obtained in extra-curricular activities that often cost money. Several of these are points at which having had extra-curricular activities in music prior to this aptitude-test will serve as a trump card in the event of tough competition. As an outcome testing 'aptitudes' that are in practice strongly connected to social and economic inequalities amongst children, the system legitimises these social class-related aspects. Such patterns of inequalities are operating within the public comprehensive school system, in which the role of economic inequalities is hidden as the system is public by nature and tuition-fee-free.

In sports or physical education there were three different ways to organise the emphasis and pupil selection in use: (i) so-called sport lower secondaries (urheiluyläkoulu) and sports classes (urheiluluokka) as a permanent study group in those schools that used a national aptitude test with basic selection and a sport-specific test for intake, (ii) schools with physical education emphasis and physical education class (liikuntaluokka) that used the basic section of the national aptitude test and no sport-specific test, and (iii) so-called physical education local schools (liikuntalähikoulu) that typically had no separate grouping for student nor aptitude tests. All 12 cities offered at least one of these formats of selection for sports in their schools. All three types were used in the City of Helsinki, and as a contrast the City of Vantaa run all as physical education local schools. Helsinki had also added another subject to sports, namely sports and mathematics and physical education and home economics.

To apply to sport classes or physical education class the applicant took a national aptitude test, which consists of seven evaluated sections: (1) mobility skills and speed, (2) perseverance, (3) strength, (4) balance and rhythm, (5) mobility, (6) skills to handle sport equipment and (7) optional school-specific section. If the seventh school-specific section was used, the weakest test sections 1–6 was ignored. This

seventh section was not in use in all schools and the content of it was not always explicitly available in the internet resources.

An actor involved in pupil selection to classes specialised in sports is the Finnish Olympic Committee as it has coordinated the national tests since 2017 and also defines the above three-tiered classification of selected sports classes. They aim at a model where "… the athletic pupil is training and preparing for the athlete's career, while at the same time acquiring the skills for the desired postgraduate studies so that both goals are achieved in the desired way".[44] In the Metropolitan area these activities were coordinated by the Metropolitan Area Sports Academy (Urhea) at grade 7–9 schools (a total of about fifty schools in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in 2021) with a goal to "support the young athlete in combining scholastics and sports and growing up as an athlete".[45]

The aptitude tests for **bilingual teaching in English for Finnish speaking pupils** included several criteria. The bilingual classes typically started at 1st grade (age of 7), some in pre-schooling (age of 6) and previous bilingual daycare, but some also in the 7th grade (age of 13) or the classes could enrol additional pupils starting in the 7th grade (Table 12.1). The most used aspects in the 7th grade test were the oral skills in English (7 cities), English language test (6 cities), Finnish language test (6 cities), reading comprehension (5 cities), written skills in English (5 cities), interview (5 cities) and listening comprehension (4 cities). As an unexpected part of the test for bilingual teaching, there was a mathematical test (described as age-appropriate skills in mathematics) in three cities when admitting additional pupils to the bilingual classes. Table 12.2 provides an example of the aptitude test for 12-year-olds applying to bilingual English teaching (applying as additional pupils) where a minimum of 110 points of 140 points was required for the admission.

Mathematics and natural science or just mathematics (provided in 9 cities) aptitude tests for the 7th grade had little detail of what the tests included compared to other subject tests. Most often mentioned were a test of mathematical skills (6 cities) or of natural science or environmental studies (3 cities). There was no information of the content of the test in one city and little in another city, for instance "a written section measures the applicant's aptitude, competences and logical thinking in matters relevant to the [natural science] emphasis. In addition, pupil's motivation is clarified in an interview".[46] Extracurricular activities in mathematics as a leisure activity for children is scarce in Finland compared to hobbies in music, arts and sports.

In visual arts (provided in 8 cities) the most mentioned criteria in the 7th grade aptitude test were drawing or painting (7 cities), a shaping or designing task (3 cities) and pre-assignment (in 3 cities). The most mentioned specific targets evaluated were pupil's motivation (4 cities), creativity/originality/personality (4 cities) and/or motoric skills (for example eye-hand coordination, 3 cities). Points were also given based on previous school grades in art (2 cities) and some other city-specific criteria were mentioned for visual arts emphasised teaching. The following selection criteria in one school covered most of the typical aspects:

Table 12.2 An example of entrance criteria for bilingual teaching in English (7th Grade) in the city of Joensuu

Assignment	Aim	Subject of evaluation	Scores (total 140)
Reading a written text and answering questions related to the text in Finnish	To understand the key points of written text	Reading comprehension	20
Listening to the spoken text and answering related questions in Finnish	To understand the key points of spoken text	Listening comprehension	20
Filling the gaps in the text	Complete by inferring the missing words that fit the context in a structurally correct form	Vocabulary and structure management	20
Essay in English	Telling about yourself	Written communication: transmission of the message, vocabulary and structural diversity of the expression, handling of the matter in accordance with the instructions	30
Interview in English	To tell as diverse as possible about matters relating to oneself on the basis of the interviewer's questions	Oral language skills: fluency, communicativeness, extend of content, versatility of narration, pronunciation, correct language	20
Essay in Finnish	To produce clear and consistent writing in Finnish	Text structure; clarity of language, versatility and correctness, as well as compliance with the content	30

The entrance examination is twofold:

a) Instruction of the pre-assignment: Drew and colour/paint on A3 paper a work representational the story below. Feel free to interpret the story according to your own imagination: the final work can be either coloured drawing of painting. Read the story carefully: People, animals and nature, as well as different distances and light of the horizon, create their own mood in the picture. If you want, you can add other things. Use your imagination.

The story: An adult and a child are standing in the shade of the forest closest to you in the picture. They are looking together at the forest square where the horned moose is standing. The light of the horizon illuminates the landscape and shows a moose and variety of trees dark against the background. The child has also a pet; a big dog and rabbits that bounce in the grass.

b) Exam organised at school (2 assignments): The criteria for the assessment of entrance examination are the same as the criteria of national curriculum (6th grade). At least a good grade (8) [of 10] is required for admission to the emphasis class. The entrance examination evaluates the pupil's 1) artistic- and 2) motor skills, 3) imagination and 4) creative thinking and 5) the ability to complete a given task within a given time.[47]

As this example shows, some selection criteria were very specific. When an entrance exam contains such detailed and diverse criteria, it can unnerve some applicants and create uncertainty about whether their skills are sufficient to even bother applying.

Conclusion: Mechanisms of Selection and the Myth of Uniformity in Comprehensive Schools

This investigation of the criteria used to select pupils to comprehensive schools in the 12 biggest cities of Finland in 2021 shows extensive pupil selection. The choices provided for families form selective routes inside officially non-selective comprehensive schools. The most common emphasised subject areas are music, sports and bilingual teaching, which all can be reached in almost every corner of urban Finland. The differences in the magnitude of the provision of selective routes varied across cities, which we interpret as being attached to local educational politics as well as the current levels of urban and school segregation: see Bernelius and Kosunen in this book.

It seems that admission to study in particular emphasised teaching groups in particular schools can be fiercely competitive and that selection is not just evaluating pupil's aptitudes for certain subjects, but much wider criteria. In the absence of national policies on pupil selection and how to organise emphasised teaching, the practices of selection and grouping by schools and municipalities not only vary as is visible in this data, but also contribute to the reformulation of the entire comprehensive schooling system by creating new social divisions within and between schools between pupils from different backgrounds (see Peltola and colleagues in this book).

When investigating more closely the criteria for selection, it is not only a technically challenging task for a child and family to find out the options and meet the criteria and aptitude-tests to attend selective classes in these cities, but there is a large question of equality of opportunity embedded in the selection of pupils. As we examined the admission criteria and the very details that are assessed in the aptitude-tests, it became clear that the ways of testing pupils may include aspects of reproducing existing social and economic inequalities. Some of the entrance criteria were narrow and exclusive such as presenting degrees derived from music-institutes, which would require having attended costly extra-curricular activities for years. Even if some of the formulations in the admission criteria seemed inclusive, one may reasonably question whether, for example an optional test in playing an instrument is really optional when there are far more candidates than may be admitted. Another issue is the pool of applicants: how many possible candidates self-exclude themselves even

from sending in the application if they perceive their chances of being admitted are remote? This pool of children who do not apply are difficult to capture in research. It is also clear from interviews with families that complicated and demanding admissions practices also construct imagined others who are the 'capable' pupils as opposed to the 'ordinary' or 'loser' pupils that some children consider themselves to be.[48] This all means we should question the numeric proportions of applicants versus admitted ratios, as they may not tell the whole story of selection.

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Piia Seppänen is Professor of Education, especially on comparative education and education policy at the University of Turku and also works as Vice-Dean for research in its Faculty of Education. Her research with research groups at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE) focusses on pupil selection, urban social segregation and classed practices within comprehensive schooling as well as on commodification in public education systems and its connections to the global education industry.

Terhi Pasu is Doctoral Researcher in the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. She works as a researcher on research projects on pupil selection and local schooling principals funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and Turku Urban Research Programme. Pasu's doctoral research is examining admission criteria, enrolment and organization of emphasised teaching in Finland's largest cities. Her research interests include equity and equality in education.

Sonja Kosunen is Associate Professor of Education (tenure-track) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, where she leads the research unit Social studies in Urban Education (SURE). Her research focusses on the fields of sociology of education and urban studies. She is currently leading five research projects focusing on diversity, inequality and segregation across early childhood, comprehensive, secondary and higher education.

Chapter 13
Everyday Life in Schools in Disadvantaged Areas

Marja Peltola, Heidi Huilla, Tiina Luoma, and Riikka Oittinen

Abstract In Finland, urban segregation has been identified as a new and increasing challenge for pursuing the ideal of the egalitarian comprehensive school. Yet very little is known of particular school contexts, and public concern over school segregation runs a risk of reproducing segregation by focusing in a stigmatising manner on schools in less advantaged areas. In this chapter, we draw on interview data from five comprehensive schools in the metropolitan area of Helsinki to examine how students of schools located in areas that may be considered disadvantaged talk about their everyday life in the school and residential area. We build on the idea that young people represent their lives as ordinary rather than adopting 'in-risk' positions, and examine ways in which the schools and residential areas are discussed. We argue that despite their awareness of local problems and racialised and social class-based inequalities, young people are attached to their schools and residential areas, and tend to describe the problems encountered as manageable. While there are statistical similarities between disadvantaged residential areas, the particular local contexts and their effects for young people's everyday lives vary from one area to another and according to the young people's social class and racialised background. This highlights the need to understand the particularities and connections between schools and residential areas in discussions of segregation and in attempts to address it.

Over the last couple of decades, urban segregation has been identified as a new and increasing challenge to pursuing the egalitarian ideal in Finnish schooling. Urban segregation has consequences for schools by shaping the socioeconomic and ethnic composition of their student bodies which, in turn, influences everyday life in schools

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After the first author, the author names are in an alphabetical order.

M. Peltola (✉)
The Unit of Social Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, 33014 Tampere, Finland
e-mail: marja.peltola@tuni.fi

H. Huilla · T. Luoma · R. Oittinen
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland

and produces cumulative challenges for some schools.[1] Urban segregation is also related to schools' reputations and parental school choice strategies. School choice is one of the mechanisms maintaining and exacerbating the phenomena of school segregation.[2]

Despite public concerns about the issue, there is relatively little research on everyday life in schools in less advantaged areas in the Finnish context. In international studies, schools in disadvantaged areas have been found to face challenges related to material poverty, pupils' varying skills and competencies, and parents' resources to engage with their children's schoolwork. These may also relate to inadequate resourcing and higher teacher turnover rates.[3] Public and media discussions over school segregation run a risk of reproducing and strengthening the phenomenon. They often focus on schools in disadvantaged areas in a homogenising manner and assume that they share similar challenges related to socioeconomic disadvantage and ethnic diversity. However, despite some common features, there are always local variations and specificities related to geography, demography and school practices in how disadvantage manifests in schools.[4] Furthermore, the experiences of children and young people in schools and areas considered disadvantaged are often more nuanced than the "disadvantage" label suggests.[5]

Overall, there is a need to recognise greater complexity when thinking about disadvantaged schools. This perspective is examined here through pupil interviews drawn from ethnographic studies in five comprehensive schools in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, all located in areas that can be considered disadvantaged. We argue that young people's experiences are more varied than the public problem-oriented discourses about such areas suggest.

Reproduction of Inequality in Education, Place Attachment and Ordinariness

Research literature shows that egalitarian ideals of schooling in Finland have always been only partially achieved, and education continues to reproduce inequalities related to social class, racialisation and gender. Internationally, the research tradition drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu has been influential in showing that the education system tends to normalise and favour middle-class life styles and pupils attached to them, and correspondingly, that it is easier for families with middle-class resources to navigate the education system and capitalise their resources in order to reproduce their privilege in the younger generation.[6] There is a myth of Finland as a "classless" society,[7] which may explain why the effects of social class and poverty remain largely unrecognised in Finnish schools.[8] However, the same mechanisms of reproduction found in other countries have been found working in the Finnish context too.[9] There is also a tendency to understand white majority status and middle classness as interconnected and normalise them in educational institutions.[10]

With urban segregation, the issues of reproduction of inequality appear differently in schools located in different residential areas. In schools located at areas with low socio-economic status—such as those studied in this chapter—an increasing share of pupils do not embody the capitals and characteristics attached to white middle-classness. However, public and political discussions rarely take into account the specificities of local contexts or the agency and place attachments of local residents, children and young people in particular. Previous studies have shown that there are differences between schools that are recognised as "advantaged" or "disadvantaged", but there are also significant differences between "disadvantaged" schools.[11] Thus, the disadvantage label or the statistical characteristics are not adequate in recognising the qualitative differences between schools' everyday challenges and strengths. School contexts should therefore be understood as rather specific, consisting of the combination of national and local policies, location, history and practices within the school and characteristics of the pupil body.[12]

Another problem with the disadvantage label is that it does not grasp the heterogeneity of lived experiences in the residential areas considered disadvantaged. According to Fenne Pinkster, the notion of "neighbourhood attachment acknowledges that residents' lives over time become intertwined with or embedded in their residential surroundings".[13] The concept refers to residents' social, economic and institutional ties to the residential area that may take emotional or more practical forms. Disadvantaged urban residential areas are usually associated with low attachment and social problems, and the media often give a homogeneous picture of them. However, studies on young people living in disadvantaged residential areas have found that although young people are aware of the negative aspects of an area, they often think positively about it, and the area also provides them with resources, such as social relationships, activities and attachments to institutions such as schools.[14] At the same time, residents living in such areas also have to use different strategies to avoid unwanted phenomena in the area[15]; something Kirsten Visser and colleagues call the "environmental competence" of the young participants in their study.[16]

Given the contradiction between "in-risk" discourses on residential areas and schools seen as disadvantaged and the more nuanced experiences of the residents and young people in these areas and schools, we are attracted to John Smyth and Peter McInerney's claim—drawing from Thomas Popkewitz—that "notions of space and place as they relate to young people are never innocent".[17] By this is meant that defining an area or a school as "disadvantaged" functions as attaching disadvantaging attributes to the children and young people in this area or school, in ways that demarcate their agency and participation. Smyth and McInerney show that young people themselves, rather than adopting "in-risk" positions, represent themselves as *ordinary* young people who struggle to make the best of the possibilities available for them, in the circumstances they are in and navigating the cultural scripts known to them.[18] This led us to examine our pupil interviews from the viewpoint of ordinariness and how both positive and negative aspects attached to the residential area and the school were present in their narratives of their everyday lives.

Ethnographic Interviews in Five Schools in Metropolitan Helsinki

The interview data reported here is part of wider ethnographic studies of five comprehensive schools located in different residential areas in Helsinki metropolitan area, drawn from two recent projects, *Well-Functioning Local Schools* and *Local Educational Ethos*.[19] These projects have both examined the interrelationship between schools and their social and societal context.

The choice of areas and schools were guided by our overarching interest in how schools seek to answer the challenges posed by urban segregation. The schools were all located in residential areas whose residents' socioeconomic backgrounds remain statistically below the mean of the city. The residential areas share similar socioeconomic characteristics, in three different cities in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The schools also achieve higher learning results than what could be statistically predicted based on their socioeconomic contexts. They share the national context and some demographic characteristics of catchment areas, however, their local contexts and school cultures (history and practices) differ, and so do local politics and policies, given that the cities act as municipal providers of education. Since they are located in different cities in the metropolitan area, the socioeconomic mean that they are compared to is different in each city.

The "disadvantaged" position of these residential areas and schools must be understood as relative: in the Finnish context, disadvantage is concentrated in small (but potentially growing) clusters *inside* residential areas, which therefore remain socioeconomically heterogeneous.[20] What is common to the residential areas in this study is that they comprise smaller areas with distinctive characteristics in terms of residents' social class and ethnic and racialised backgrounds, and include middle class areas. We interviewed a total of 117 students in Grades 6–9 (aged 11–15 years) as summarised in Table 13.1.

For each school we went through the interview narratives and separated the parts where the discussion contents related to the school (what kind of school is this?) and

Table 13.1 Interviews across the five schools

School (pseudonym)	Number of school class groups studied	Grades studied	Interviewees		
			Girls	Boys	Total
Eider primary	1	5–6	8	3	11
Whistler primary	1	5–6	10	4	14
Whistler lower secondary	3	7–8	25	21	46
Penelope lower secondary	2	7[21]	17	7	24
Gavia lower secondary	2	7–8	17	5	22

the area (what kind of area is this?), and the interrelationship of the school and the area (what is it like going to school in this particular area?). We then brought these sections together to analyse commonalities and differences between the different schools and residential areas. We identified two broad themes. Firstly, the participants had positive local identities and they represented their lives both at school and in the residential area as "ordinary" and good. Secondly, they described events and phenomena in the residential area and in the school that they considered problematic or inequitable, and how they managed these issues. Local differences are significant in shaping the experiences.

Our study did collect information related to the ethnicity of the specific students interviewed, including migrant backgrounds and racialised minorities, but they are often difficult to characterise briefly (see also the chapters by Mikander and by Helakorpi, Holm and Liu in this book). In this chapter we mention ethnic backgrounds in a general way and only in the section that discusses students' experiences of racism.

Ordinary Schools in Ordinary Neighbourhoods

> Leona: When you get used to [a place], then you like that place and know all the spots. I don't know, I couldn't imagine, if I went to live somewhere else, how I'd get used to that. And if we speak about school, if I changed schools, I wouldn't even like, because here I really have my loveliest friends whom I couldn't leave. (*Penelope Lower Secondary School, girl, 13 years*)

> Interviewer: Could you imagine living [in Whistler] for your whole life (…)?

> Sakari: I can't think of another [possible] place in Finland. (*Whistler Primary School, boy, 12 years*)

Kirsten Visser and colleagues found that although young people were aware of the negative aspects of disadvantaged areas, most of them thought positively about it.[22] As illustrated in the extracts from interviews with Leona and Sakari, we found a shared theme that could be named as "an ethos of ordinariness". By this, we refer to the ways those interviewed identified positively with their residential area and school through describing their everyday local lives as "ordinary" and good. Like Sakari above, many of them thought it was a place they belonged to and did not consider they would want to live elsewhere.[23] The residential areas were described as "nice", "quite ordinary" and "tranquil", and social networks (friends and relatives), proximity of services, leisure activities and nature sites were referred to as things which the children and young people appreciated in the area. As is illustrated in the extract from Leona's interview above, the positive attachments to the school and the area often had a temporal element in them—the attachment derived from long histories and social and other resources accumulated locally over time, which would be lost if one moved to another area.[24] This was not, however, an equally shared narrative in all schools or by all children and young people. While in all datasets the interviewees participated in constructing the residential area as ordinary and "good",

the positive descriptions were the most pronounced in Whistler (in both schools) while the narratives were more mixed in Eider, Gavia and Penelope.

School was a central social hub for all participants, and generally, the schools were described in positive ways. The positive attachments with the schools were even stronger than the neighbourhood attachments; even those pupils in Gavia, Eider and Penelope, who described the residential area in more problem-oriented ways, talked about the local schools in positive ways. They constructed the school as "nice" and "good",[25] and emphasised the importance of friends, good teachers—by which they meant that the teachers had the pedagogical skills needed, were empathic and strict enough—and a friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Practical issues related to the school building, the yard and school meals were also relevant for the participants.

The emphasis on ordinariness in narratives on attachment to both school and the residential area may be understood as resonating with the Bourdieusian idea of habituality and the tendency to take the social world as granted.[26] However, the narratives of an ordinary and "good" school and residential area may also be understood as a way to cope with some of the negative assumptions publicly attached to disadvantaged areas and their schools, and to "develop counter-spaces of representation".[27] Yet another angle to narratives of "good" school is that of distinction: while the participants acknowledged that there were "better" schools locating in more reputable areas of the city, in comparisons between the local schools in similar ways in Whistler, Penelope and Gavia, they constructed their own school as better than the other local schools. These narratives mostly drew from rumours, and it was assumed that the other schools had nastier teachers, a less favourable atmosphere or more "problems", which often referred to pupils' misbehaviour such as substance use and violent behaviour, and general unrest.

> Mikael: If I had gone [to another school] I would have gone to the same class with my friends. (…) And I would've remained as far as possible from all the other guys, because those others are always fighting about who is who and who gets to be this and that and. (…) Those two friends of mine [who go to the other school] they try to speak to them and they say that it's hard for them to adjust to the group although they have been there already almost a year. (*Whistler Lower Secondary School, boy, 13 years*)

According to Keith Kintrea and colleagues,[28] living in disadvantaged settings is often associated with low educational aspirations by both policy makers and researchers; an assumption they prove wrong in their study, in which young people in three disadvantaged localities show locally patterned but generally high educational aspirations. Throughout our interviews, too, the participants generally valued the school and considered it important for their futures.

At the same time, differentiations related to school and school success manifested differently across the schools.[29] The primary school pupils in Eider and Whistler were about to enter lower secondary schools, and the discussions on educational aspirations largely revolved around this upcoming change and the school choice attached. While these younger pupils were generally not worried about the reputation of their own, current school, some of the pupils, particularly in Eider, worried about ending up in the local lower secondary school, which was considered to have a bad reputation, even potentially harming its pupils' future employment possibilities.

In the lower secondary schools of Penelope, Whistler and Gavia, educational aspirations were discussed as related to both current school work and future education plans. In Penelope, nearly all interviewees had a positive attitude towards studying and were interested in marks they received. With a few exceptions, in Penelope, pupils with minoritised ethnic backgrounds appeared more school-oriented than their ethnic Finnish peers, and often had concrete and ambitious educational plans. In Whistler Lower Secondary and Gavia, there were more marked differences between pupils who considered themselves and were considered by others as academically oriented and aspirational, and those who were not, and school success formed one element in the complex school hierarchies. In Whistler, this difference also intertwined with the differentiation between selective and non-selective classes, with selective classes described as more academically oriented, while non-selective classes were considered (and considered themselves) as "wilder" and less attached to school regulations.[30] However, such constructions were simplistic and ignored the inner heterogeneity of those groups constructed as "caring less" about the school. In Whistler and Gavia, there were also pupils who considered school as "boring" or "hard". It was, however, not that they saw school insignificant as such, but that they had to struggle with challenges in learning or difficult life situations which did not support their school-going, or both. In many ways, the latter resembled the pupils Smyth and McInerney described as struggling "to make the best of the possibilities available for them, in the circumstances they are in".[31]

Local Challenges Recognised: Social Problems, Racism and Socioeconomic Differences

Despite positive descriptions of both the schools and their residential areas, local everyday life included elements the pupils considered unpleasant or unfair. In this section, we discuss these narratives through three themes: social problems in the residential area, encounters with racism, and poverty and socioeconomic differences amongst pupils. These were relevant for all the pupils in the residential areas; however, they influenced them in different ways and were amongst the mechanisms that produced cumulating inequalities in the young people's lives.

In public space, pupils in all schools encountered phenomena and people considered disturbing or even scary. Encountering intoxicated adults was mentioned in all the schools.[32] Each of the following were mentioned in at least two schools: experiences of threats or harassment, encountering groups of young people who behaved in disturbing ways, and rumours and facts concerning local crimes, such as illegal drug trade. These descriptions intertwined with the otherwise favourable descriptions of the residential area; they were considered as characteristic to the area, but often spatially concentrated and therefore relatively predictable and manageable.

Many of our study participants were highly aware of which places to avoid at particular times of day, and reported choosing their walking routes accordingly, especially after dark. This shows their "environmental competence"[33]:

> Mona: Every once in a while, next to the [local Mall], if I come home very late from the training, I rather take a bus or walk [a different route], because there may be those people who have drunk more, so it's like, a bit of fear [laughs] to walk pass them. (*Mona, 13 years, Whistler Lower Secondary School*)

Discursive strategies to render the negative local experiences as manageable included describing them as "not serious"; and they were used together with other strategies, such as avoiding certain routes or places. This is illustrated in the extract from an interview with three girls (below), who are balancing defending their residential area against the stigmatising assumptions and acknowledging some of the problematic characteristics of the area. While identifying certain spots they consider "rough" and wish to avoid, they still claim the area is safe. This illustrates the intertwinement of constructions of the area as ordinary and the narratives about encounters with social problems—it is, for instance, familiarity that makes the intoxicated adults appear not as threatening:

> Silja: These public transport stations are like that [rough]. (…).
>
> Interviewer: What makes them rough?
>
> Linnea: Well, because there are those (…) drunkards and some dealers. Yesterday I saw that someone sold drugs. (…) But it is still, even if ... I told [a friend living another area] that we have drunkards here and like that. So, she was like "oh terrible" and wondered how I dare live here or how I dare walk here in the evenings. But it's not somehow, they are not the kind of drunkards who would somehow attack us. They are there and they are sitting somewhere on the bench, like passed out, but they are not doing any harm to you. (…).
>
> Silja: But I don't even often go to that public transport station area. (…).
>
> Linnea: It's pretty safe here. It feels weird to say safe when you know what you can find here, but it's still safe. (*Gavia Lower Secondary School, three girls aged 14*)

To some extent, age shaped the pupils' relationships with local public spaces. As the lower secondary school pupils were allowed to move more independently in and between the areas, and at later hours, they were more often exposed to encounters with social problems than the primary school pupils. However, between the primary school pupils in Whistler and Eider, there were marked differences, since unlike in Whistler, in Eider, the school, services and transportation were located very close to the 'hot-spots' where the social problems concentrated, and thus the Eider primary school pupils also frequently encountered people and situations which they would have preferred to avoid:

> Elisa: [We were at a public transport station] and a man came there and started to act like a madman.
>
> Jessika: It was disgusting, extremely distressful and gross.
>
> Elisa: I was really afraid of him…

Jessika: I took my cell phone out, because it was very scary (…). (*Eider primary school, two girls, aged 12*)

Residential areas considered disadvantaged, and schools located in them, generally are represented in the media in homogenising and problem-oriented ways,[34] however, there is temporal variety in how often certain areas are named and discussed in the media. We found media representations having pronounced influence for the place attachments in one of the residential areas, which had at the time of the interviews been a focus of a series of media reports on local crimes. This negative attention was referred to by the pupils, who said that the area felt more unsafe than before. Both rumours and media representations of the residential area's problems caused clear discomfort to some of them.

The second major theme in narratives of negative local experiences was racism. Racism has been found to be a part of children's and young people's everyday life in Finland, as elsewhere.[35] Reproduction of racialising assumptions and racism in school context is not a phenomenon characterising only or especially schools in disadvantaged residential areas. However, it is one of the elements producing potentially cumulating inequalities in the school. School is also not detached from the experiences of racism outside of the school. Indeed, racist behaviour that takes place in public spaces may even be intertwined with the school day. This was exemplified in Salman's and Daniel's narrative (both had minoritised backgrounds):

Interviewer: Have you encountered [racism]?

Salman: We have, I have. Not in the school, but when we went to a (school) trip. A man just came, and pushed me. (…) I was with these guys. [refers to Daniel]

Daniel: Oh right. I remember. (…)

Salman: When we were [at public transport stop], talking with these guys, he just came and pushed me.

Interviewer: That's outrageous. I mean, did he say, or, did the teacher do something?

Salman: No, he, the teacher didn't do anything.

Interviewer. Does that sort of things happen, is it like often or seldom or how?

Salman: A lot. (*Whistler Lower Secondary School, two boys aged 13 and 15*)

In Eider, some pupils experienced racist bullying, which seemed to be part of their everyday life.[36] The narratives reveal—following earlier studies—that in many cases, the school and teachers do not see or recognise racism. Lack of intervention normalises racist behaviour and discourages those who face it from disclosing their experiences. Furthermore, teachers sometimes maintained racialising assumptions or even acted in racist ways. In both Whistler Lower Secondary and Penelope, several pupils with both majoritised and minoritised backgrounds talked consistently about incidents where a teacher had either talked in an offensive way about pupils with minoritised backgrounds or treated them unjustly. According to Tilda, who was from a minoritised background, one teacher favoured (white) Finnish pupils when grading:

Tilda: We have noticed that the teacher takes off points [when grading tests], in general she doesn't mark incorrect answers for those who are completely Finnish, but she takes off points from those who are partly foreigners or completely foreigners. (*Penelope Lower Secondary School, girl, 13 years*)

The ways in which the school misrecognises racism, thus allowing it to continue, or even reproduces racialised inequalities in its own practices are a powerful mechanism of racialising social class.[37]

The socioeconomic heterogeneity of the residential areas manifested inside the schools in socioeconomic differences between pupils. These were talked about in different ways in different schools. In Penelope, pupils were aware that families had different economic positions, but emphasised that money did not play a role in social relationships. In Whistler lower secondary, too, this was a common discourse; however, school hierarchies intertwined with valuations of pupils' appearances and lifestyles in a way that had classed connotations. For instance, active participation in organised leisure time activities, together with exclusive brand clothes, were commonly associated with a group of more well-off pupils in the school. In Gavia in turn, socioeconomic differences were rather openly discussed. Certain parts of Gavia (particular apartment building areas) were described as "looking poor" and those living in the more reputable and middle class areas detached themselves from these areas.[38] While it was hard for pupils to verbalise exactly how the socioeconomic differences between pupils manifest in their appearances and everyday life, the extract with Viktor stating that he "can recognise people of his kind"—people less well-off—is telling of the importance that having or not having money made for social relationships:

Interviewer: Does it matter if someone has money, or can it be noticed in any way? (…).

Nikolas: At times like, someone, [Boy], he tries to brag every day, that he has a tenner in his cell phone case when he goes to [a grocery store].

Viktor: Yeah, and then he tries to brag about him being rich and me being poor, yeah, yeah, bum, bum.

Interviewer: Can you see it in the school if someone doesn't have money or someone has? (…) How does it show?

Nikolas: Well, I don't really know.

Viktor: Yeah, I can't say. I recognise people of my kind, when I see them, but I cannot say [how], I think.

Interviewer: … and by "your kind" you mean?

Viktor: Myself. [laughs] (…) I don't have any rich family. (…)

Interviewer: How do you recognise people like you?

Viktor: Based on clothes. Based on the character. (*Gavia Lower Secondary School, two boys aged 13*)

Their narrative about a boy boasting about having ten euros, and in this way representing himself as "rich" in comparison to Viktor, tells a story about the disadvantage of the residential area, where such an act may be considered a relevant way to establish a social hierarchy. Further, Viktor's defensive response to being targeted this way as "poor", and his statement that he can recognise "people of his kind" confirms that social class has not lost its affective power, nor its embodied markers, in young people's everyday lives.[39]

Conclusion: Particularity of School Contexts in Young Peoples' Everyday Lives

In this chapter, we have shown how young people living and going to school in residential areas considered disadvantaged talk about the everyday life in their school and the surrounding area. We wish to highlight two issues. First, the young people are mostly attached to their residential areas, and even more so, to their schools, and consider their lives as ordinary and good. Their narratives of ordinariness diversify and challenge the problem-oriented assumptions attached to less advantaged residential areas and the "in risk" positions assumed for young people living in these areas in public discussions. These narratives also do not exclude recognition and reflection about the local problems and inequities; rather, in the young people's everyday life, warm attachments to the school and the residential area, experience of ordinariness, and social problems and vulnerabilities exist side by side. Following Smyth and McInerney,[40] we see a risk of bypassing young people's agency in the problem-oriented discourses, and hope to contribute in showing how they use their local know-how, and how their local attachments provide emotional and social resources that help making the challenges encountered manageable.

Second, we wish to highlight that while there are shared themes across the pupil interviews in schools in different residential areas—the importance of local attachments, the challenges encountered—their local manifestations are always specific to one school and one area, and vary according to the young people's social class and racialised backgrounds. For instance, the sudden and intense media attention that one of the residential areas had received was one of the area-specific differences creeping into the narratives of the participants. In Eider, the local geography, including the concrete locations of different services, made it hard for the young people to avoid the social problems in the area, which in turn affected how they were able to form positive attachments to it. In terms of racialised backgrounds, young people with minoritised backgrounds were disproportionally exposed to racism in all schools, but there was local variation: in Eider, such encounters took place between peers and in public space, while the official school actors remained "outsiders" who didn't recognise the phenomenon.[41] In Whistler lower secondary school and Penelope in turn, individual school teachers were considered acting sometimes in racist ways. Different social class backgrounds and their influence to pupils' resources were

recognised in all three lower secondary schools; however, how they were verbalised and how starkly they generated differentiations amongst the pupils varied between Gavia, Whistler lower secondary and Penelope. Thus, when seeking to find ways how to manage the challenges encountered in schools located in residential areas considered disadvantaged, it is not enough to assume that certain phenomena form challenges for the schools; instead, the specificities of the school contexts need to be taken into account.[42]

Problem-centred public discourses about schools in disadvantaged areas run the risk of producing a homogenising image of not only the schools but the young people studying in them,[43] which does not capture the heterogeneity and local variation in the school context, or the heterogeneity and the ways how social class-based and racialised inequalities are lived in schools. This relates also to the Finnish particularities in urban segregation. As segregation remains moderate and so-called disadvantaged residential areas remain socioeconomically heterogeneous, the boundaries between privilege and disadvantage materialise not only between schools, but also inside them.[44] In Diane Reay's UK study on middle and working class children living in stigmatised residential areas, it was found that the middle class children largely shared the stigmatising understanding that the local schools were 'crap' and went to schools in other areas; yet the working class children who had to attend the local schools, were familiar with the stigmatising notions but worked hard to represent their schools as "good enough".[45] Our findings depart from Reay's since in our study schools there were both middle and working class children, who shared the narrative of a "ordinary" and "good" school—albeit maybe with different emphases. While this may be an advantage in the fight to mitigate the negative effects of urban segregation, it also highlights the need to understand the specific social contexts of each school. These include not only pupils' different backgrounds but also the social norms and practices that encourage or discourage crossing social class-based and racialised divides in the school's everyday life, and the specific position of the school in the local urban geography.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, in Finland, like elsewhere, we have seen periods of distance schooling and heated public discussions on how to balance between public health efforts and children's and young people's right to receive face-to-face teaching. While the thorough analyses on the effects of the pandemic are still on their way, we already know that the risks related were not equally shared geographically nor in terms of social class and ethnicity. It therefore seems possible that the pandemic is yet another factor producing cumulating challenges for certain areas and for certain groups of people. This highlights the need to understand schools' role not only in providing knowledge and teaching but in reproducing or combatting inequalities and enabling and securing well-being and normal everyday life for children and young people.

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Marja Peltola works as University Lecturer in Gender Studies in the Social Research Unit of Tampere University. She was previously a postdoctoral researcher in the research group Social Studies in Urban Education (SURE) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. Peltola's research interests cover themes related to intersectionality, (multi)ethnicity, gender and social class in the lives of young people.

Heidi Huilla is Postdoctoral Researcher in the research group Social Studies in Urban Education (SURE) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. Her research interests and current studies include disadvantaged schools, urban and teacher segregation, inclusive education and school choice. Previously she spent seven years as a secondary teacher of history, social sciences, and religious studies.

Tiina Luoma is Doctoral Researcher in the research group Social Studies in Urban Education (SURE) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. She is conducting her PhD study as a part of the project 'Local Educational Ethos: A study on well-performing comprehensive schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods' (LEE). Luoma's current research focusses especially on democratic education and social justice in schools.

Riikka Oittinen is Doctoral Researcher in the research group Social studies in Urban Education (SURE) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. Her research interests cover themes related to urban and school segregation, domains of segregation and the daily life of school communities in disadvantaged urban areas.

Chapter 14
Divided Cities—Divided Schools? School Segregation and the Role of Needs-Based Resource Allocation in Finland

Isabel Ramos Lobato and Venla Bernelius

Abstract For a long time, Finland stood out in international pupil assessments with a rare combination of excellent overall performance and a high level of equality. However, recent PISA studies point to both deteriorating learning outcomes and increasing importance of pupils' social background for their learning outcomes in Finland. In addition, strongly increasing socio-economic and ethnic residential segregation in many Finnish cities has had a marked effect on schools since residential patterns are a central factor in school segregation and over one third of Finnish school children live in larger cities. The growing differences between the student intakes of schools have led to strongly diverging learning outcomes and learning conditions between schools in Finland. Urban segregation has therefore become a key question for educational equality and Finnish educational policies. In this chapter, we scrutinise the ways in which school segregation is related to societal and spatial differentiation in the Finnish urban context and how this relationship is further reflected in the differentiation of the schools' educational outcomes. Moreover, we analyse the existing needs-based resourcing responses and their effectiveness. Our empirical material is focused on the city of Helsinki, as it is currently the only city with a systematic needs-based resource allocation policy. Our chapter illustrates that the traditional egalitarian and universal "same level for all" approach of the education system in Finland seems increasingly unable to overcome the growing differences in a segregating Finnish society. To compensate for children's unequal starting positions and the increasingly divergent learning and social conditions between schools, the Finnish education system needs stronger support mechanisms that systematically allocate resources towards the individual needs of schools.

I. Ramos Lobato (✉) · V. Bernelius
Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 4, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: isabel.ramoslobato@helsinki.fi

V. Bernelius
e-mail: venla.bernelius@helsinki.fi

In the first PISA assessment in 2000, Finland stood out with its excellent educational outcomes. The lowest quartile of learners outscored their international peers by an average of almost 80 points, or two years of education. In this and following years, the particularly outstanding quality in Finland's PISA success was a rare combination of excellent overall performance and high level of equality. However, more recent PISA results point to deteriorating learning outcomes and growing differences between pupils. While outcomes of all groups have declined somewhat, a worrying trend is that the largest drop is amongst the learners with the lowest scores. Moreover, the learning gaps between higher and lower socio-economic status (SES) pupils have increased.[1]

These growing inequalities in Finland's education system seem to be strongly related to growing social and spatial differentiation in Finnish society. Since the mid-1970s, social inequality has increased significantly in most countries of the Global North—also in the egalitarian Finnish welfare state. According to a recent study on the state of inequality in Finland, while wealth inequality had already grown before the global financial crisis of 2007–08, income disparities have started to increase in recent years as well. These socio-economic disparities are increasingly reflected in other social dimensions, such as in education or health.[2]

As social inequality tends to translate into spatial inequality, the increasing levels of social polarisation have become clearly visible in numerous cities around the world. Residential segregation—the unequal distribution of different social groups across the city—is on the rise.[3] This is also true for many cities in Finland, where socio-economic and ethnic disparities between residential areas have clearly increased since the 1990s.[4] This development is driven by growing social inequalities in Finland's society, rapid population growth in large urban areas, significant changes in the labour market, and increasing ethnic diversity.

Where children live still largely determines where they go to school. This is even true in cities with free school choice[5] but is particularly strong in education systems with geographic school catchment areas, as in Finnish cities. Since school segregation—the unequal distribution of children of different social and ethnic backgrounds across schools—strongly resembles residential patterns,[6] socio-spatial polarisation has become a key question for educational equality and education policies.[7] Consequently, the question arises whether the Finnish education system's traditionally held interpretation of an egalitarian model as a "same for all" approach is still capable to overcome and compensate for the growing differences of an increasingly segregating society.

In this chapter, we analyse the ways in which school segregation is related to societal and spatial differentiation in Finnish cities and scrutinise how this relationship is further reflected in the differentiation of schools' educational outcomes. We seek to draw particular attention to urban areas. This is because educational disadvantage has traditionally been located in rural regions in Finland in the national discourse. We then analyse the needs-based resourcing models in the city of Helsinki and at the national level—both being responses to the observed challenges by supporting disadvantaged schools.[8] This chapter fills a gap in previous perspectives on educational

inequality in Finland where declining equality has neither been linked systematically to urban development at the national, institutional scale, nor connected to the scrutiny of needs-based resourcing as a new approach in Finland's egalitarian educational framework. On an international level, our contribution is to uncover the ways in which the egalitarian educational system in Finland is challenged by a similar dynamic of segregation observed in other countries. We therefore aim to shed new light on a country that has been, and still is, associated with a high level of educational equality and excellence.

Our empirical material is mainly focused on the city of Helsinki. Being the largest city in Finland, Helsinki is one of the most segregated urban environments, with neighbourhoods and schools representing both ends of the national socio-economic and ethnic spectrum on zip-code and school catchment area level.[9] Helsinki was also the first city to implement a needs-based school resourcing policy, and is still the only city in Finland where this approach is implemented in a systematic way, using segregation indicators.[10] However, since the spatial dynamics are very similar across Finnish cities, our findings are similarly relevant for other urban contexts in the country. We focus on segregation in urban schools, which house a large and growing share of all pupils in Finland.[11]

Cumulative Decline in Helsinki's Neighbourhoods and Schools

In its report on "Divided Cities", the OECD raised concerns about the increasing levels of residential segregation in urban areas and the potential negative consequences on individuals, institutions, and societies.[12] In both political and academic discourses, residential segregation is expected to reduce social mobility and thus to limit life chances of those living in these segregated areas.[13] Being closely related to segregation in schools, residential segregation also constitutes an important factor, often overlooked, shaping equality in education. Although segregation levels in most European cities are still lower than in other world regions, they have been growing over recent decades.[14] This trend can also be observed in Finland.[15]

While segregation used to be very low in most cities in Finland after WWII when egalitarian housing and strong social policies played an important part in the building of the welfare state, the economic downturn in the 1990s in Finland resulted in the spatial concentration of growing unemployment and decreasing income in certain neighbourhoods.[16] Later, economic growth did not even out the spatial patterns, but rather exacerbated growing gaps between neighbourhoods through faster growth in already well-off urban neighbourhoods. With increasing immigration since the mid-1990s and many immigrant groups facing challenges in entering the Finnish labour market, rising levels of ethnic segregation added to the already existing residential segregation.[17]

Over the last 10 years, these trends have continued in Finland and ethnic segregation in particular has risen markedly.[18] Even in the capital city Helsinki, with its strong policy of social mixing producing a balanced mix of different tenure types in housing construction, housing policies have not been able to ward off the growing gaps in terms of education and income levels between neighbourhoods. Consequently, Helsinki's socio-spatial segregation levels nowadays correspond to those of many other Nordic and European cities. Some well-off areas in Helsinki show five times the number of highly educated adults and three times the annual income of the poorest ones.[19] Moreover, as in other countries, children tend to live even more segregated lives. While the segregation index between the highest and lowest income deciles for the whole population is currently 0.4, the corresponding figure for children living in high- and low-SES households is over 0.5. Consequently, while around 40% of the Helsinki population would have to move to achieve a complete population mix, over 50% of households with children would need to. The difference is similar for segregation of adults and children with non-Finnish and Finnish backgrounds.[20]

As in other (European) cities, different dimensions of segregation tend to overlap in certain Helsinki neighbourhoods.[21] While indicators of social privilege, such as higher levels of educational attainment, income, and employment, accumulate in some neighbourhoods, different aspects of disadvantage pile up in others. In other words, segregation results in patterns where those neighbourhoods in Helsinki facing challenges resulting from low levels of adult education are the same ones that are confronted with socio-economic and labour market related challenges. Moreover, socio-economic dimensions often overlap with race and ethnicity. Since ethnic minorities in Helsinki tend to have a lower SES, they are disproportionately represented in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

As the development of socio-spatial inequalities is increasingly reflected in Helsinki's school system, a better understanding of this interconnectedness has become "crucial for understanding the socio-spatial mechanisms behind social reproduction and intergenerational social mobility".[22] This is particularly so because school segregation does not only reflect existing social and spatial inequalities but also contributes to maintaining and exacerbating those.[23] One relevant dimension of the problem is that segregated schools can produce different *conditions of learning* reproducing unequal educational outcomes. International research has shown that while mixed schools can positively affect the performance of low-SES pupils,[24] negative consequences exceeding the effects of pupils' individual characteristics can arise when the schools' student composition becomes severely disadvantaged.[25] These consequences are possible for Helsinki considering that schools located in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods face challenges produced by a combination of socio-economic disadvantage, low levels of adult education, social problems of families, and the integration of high proportions of pupils with a foreign mother tongue. Another dimension is that schools additionally offer a *setting for social interaction* where children can learn to deal with social and ethnic diversity.[26] Segregated schools in combination with segregation in Helsinki's neighbourhoods can therefore contribute to a growing disconnection between children's social realities. This can be

a risk for social integration and cohesion and can therefore undermine the egalitarian idea behind Finland's welfare state and society.

Increasing School Segregation and Growing Educational Gaps in Helsinki

The learning outcomes of 15-year-old schoolchildren in Finland have been decreasing throughout the past two decades. The particularly worrying trends are that this decline appears to be stronger among lower-SES pupils and that the results in the lowest learning outcome deciles have weakened faster than in the best ones.[27] In other words, while the learning outcomes of the best performing pupils have remained roughly as good as they were, or declined only a little, the results of the poorest performing pupils have weakened significantly. At the same time, pupils' socioeconomic and linguistic family backgrounds have become stronger in predicting educational performance since they are connected increasingly to educational attainment. The learning outcomes of pupils with an immigration background in Finland are clearly weaker than those of pupils with a Finnish or Swedish mother tongue, and this gap has grown significantly even by international standards.[28] Thus, while for a long time Finland's education system has been able to minimise the impact of individual characteristics on learning outcomes—or to compensate for them—this is no longer the case.[29]

However, the decline of learning outcomes and the growing education gaps between different social and ethnic groups are not equally distributed across the country and different types of neighbourhoods and schools but have a clear spatial dynamic. While the learning gap between the lowest and highest decile of schools corresponded to one year of education (40 points in PISA evaluation) in 2000, it increased to over 2.5 years of education (over 100 points) in 2018. The majority of those schools with the weakest and declining results are located in socioeconomically and ethnically challenged areas.[30] While educational disadvantage in Finland has traditionally been located in rural regions with declining population and relatively low educational levels among the adult population, the schools characterised by the highest levels of social and economic disadvantage are increasingly located in urban areas, mainly in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods in urban fringes. Even though the exact reason for the overall decline in educational outcomes in Finland has not yet been explained convincingly, it has become clear that the growing gaps between schools are at least partly due to rising levels of school segregation.

School segregation is predominantly an urban phenomenon and particularly shaped by residential segregation in cities. As over 70% of pupils in Finland live in urban areas, and over one third in larger cities over 100,000 inhabitants, Finland's education landscape is generally becoming more urban. Moreover, over 50% of all Finnish pupils with immigrant backgrounds live in the Helsinki Capital Region[31]—in the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa—where the average school catchment area

population already corresponds to the average size of a Finnish municipality. Since the socio-spatial developments in Finland's cities increasingly shape the country's educational outcomes and equality, the growing levels of residential segregation and their tremendous effects on school segregation have become a nationally important question for education.[32]

The growing gaps between schools in Finland demonstrate that providing a universal level of resources and a consistent quality of education to all pupils does not automatically guarantee a universally high level of educational outcomes. Therefore, the question arises how educational and urban policies can and should react to the increasing polarisation between both neighbourhoods and schools and the persistent patterns of spatial concentrations of educational disadvantage. Both in the fields of urban development and education, there already have been numerous attempts to combat segregation by actively trying to promote social and ethnic mix. In particular in education, these attempts have mostly not been able to fully counteract the ongoing processes of segregation. Consequently, another line of policies has focused on alleviating the consequences of school segregation by allocating additional resources systematically towards the individual needs of schools. This approach is also increasingly used in Finnish cities and will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Needs-Based Funding in a Universalist Welfare State? School Segregation and Targeted Funding Schemes in Helsinki

As a reaction to the growing differences between urban schools, the idea of targeted funding has found its way into the Finnish education sector mainly over the last two decades. Needs-based funding, or weighted funding, is internationally widespread and perhaps one of the key concepts to support equality in learning.[33] It is used in several other countries including The Netherlands, Germany, France and Canada, where it is strongly linked to the existing achievement gaps between pupils from different social backgrounds and/or foreign mother tongue, and, consequently, between schools that disproportionately serve these pupils.[34] Needs-based funding is thus based on the idea that equal learning opportunities at schools with high proportions of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds cannot be achieved with financial equality, but require the allocation of additional resources systematically assessed by the individual needs of schools.[35] Additional resources are therefore intended to compensate for some schools' context-specific disadvantages. Needs-based funding might not only alleviate the negative effects of school segregation, but might even be successful in addressing its causes, for instance, by increasing the popularity of a school in parents' school choices once that school is provided with more resources.[36]

In Finland, targeted funding in education has traditionally not featured strongly. The interpretation of the egalitarian ideal of educational equality has included a strongly Universalist principle of having the same curriculum in all schools and

providing every school with the same public funding to both ensure equal academic institutional quality and to keep institutional variation between schools as low as possible. In principle, the level of funding has been assessed by the number of pupils in each school, with further individual allocations for pupils with special needs or Finnish as a second language. Nevertheless, additional funding has been allocated nationally since the 2000s in Finland. The latest funding scheme initiated by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture covered 74 million Euro annually and was distributed as part of the so-called "Right to Learn" ("*Oikeus oppia*") programme to municipalities.[37] Municipalities have been able to apply for and channel this funding to schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Additionally, some but only a few municipalities in Finland, such as the cities of Helsinki and Vantaa, have implemented their own targeted funding schemes.

The first municipal needs-based funding scheme was started in the late 1990s by the city of Helsinki and was renewed in 2009.[38] It is based on a systematic and research-based approach that seeks to assess the starting point of schools to achieve good learning outcomes by taking their specific school segregation factors into account. Initially only used in comprehensive schools, it was recently expanded to early childhood education. The additional funding is generally not earmarked so that schools and day-care centres can decide how to best use it themselves.[39]

The needs-based funding in Helsinki aims to support schools and early childhood education without tying financial support to current performance, as measured by test scores, in order that schools with improved learning outcomes are not penalised by reduced access to support. In order to model the school's ability to produce good learning outcomes without school's own activities affecting support, the current calculation model is based on an index combining several area-based characteristics proven to correlate with school performance. From a statistical point of view, the model therefore aims to predict a school's learning outcomes by using variables describing its segregation of pupil composition.[40] These variables are: (a) the share of adult population with only basic education in the catchment area; (b) the average annual income in the catchment area; (c) the share of foreign-language (non-native Finnish or Swedish speakers) pupils in school; and (d) the popularity or rejection of school in school choices (measured by the number of pupils who leave the catchment area compared to the number of pupils in the local school coming from outside the catchment area). To allocate the extra resources, each school's index is multiplied by the number of pupils in the school.[41]

A study analysing the weighted funding policy's effects on pupils' educational outcomes in Helsinki points to a highly favourable impact on secondary school transition outcomes.[42] It illustrates significant improvements such as reduced dropout rates after middle school and increased likelihood that students will attend the academic track of upper-secondary school. The impacts are particularly large for male natively Finnish speaking pupils and female pupils from an immigrant background. By using data on pupil applications to secondary education as well as performance in academic and non-academic courses, the study also allows for more insights into the underlying mechanisms of these improvements. It reveals that the improved results are not only based on academic coursework; there is also improvement in non-academic subjects

since high school acceptances for immigrant pupils is mostly driven "by increased or better targeted applications to high school instead of improved academic performance".[43] Overall, the study indicates that targeted funding schemes can support the improvement of educational outcomes significantly in the schools where resources are allocated, particularly for pupils from recent immigrant backgrounds and those who are natively Finnish speaking who would not otherwise achieve as well.

How successful and effective needs-based resource allocation in education can be—and how urgently it is needed—is additionally demonstrated by further programmes the city of Helsinki initiated to support schools and early childhood education in challenging contexts. As part of the city's "Development Plan for Immigrant Education" (*"Maahanmuuttajien kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen kehittämissuunnitelma"* (MAKE)), the so-called 'multilingual tutor' model seeks to give extra support to 45 day-care centres, primary and upper secondary schools with a comparatively high share of pupils with an immigrant background. In these day-care centres and schools,18 multilingual tutors were hired to support the inclusion and well-being of such pupils and their families, for instance by supporting the pupils' development of both Finnish and their own mother tongue, helping them in planning their studies, providing parents with information about the Finnish education system, and facilitating home-school collaboration.[44] Although unsuitable for detecting a direct statistical correlation between the programme and recent developments, a recent evaluation of the programme points to lower rates of unauthorised absences and school dropouts among pupils with immigrant background at those schools or day-care centres with multilingual tutors. Moreover, interviews with staff members, parents, and children have revealed additional benefits, such as improvements in staff cultural skills, fewer school conflicts, better school-home collaborations, parents' increased knowledge about the Finnish education system, and the multilingual tutors' important role as role models for immigrant children.[45]

Challenges of the Current Needs-Based Funding Scheme

Due to the complexity of governance and educational systems, the appropriateness of targeted funding mechanisms and the provisions for use depend on the needs of the pupil population and the educational context, including the existing capacities of schools and school systems to meet those needs.[46] As a result, mechanisms of supplementary funding vary considerably across countries. Differences include the amount of funding, the identification of target groups, and whether or not weights are added to the primary funding formula or are allocated solely as additional funding.[47]

Comparing the targeted funding scheme in Helsinki with those in other countries, several differences as well as potential shortfalls become visible.[48] One very crucial aspect refers to the *available data necessary to assess school specific needs for additional funding*. While a systematic assessment and monitoring of school funding and neighbourhood or catchment area factors has not been done in Finland, an early study covering at least a few Finnish municipalities revealed that the overall funding

for schools is only marginally linked to increasing levels of inequality and school segregation.[49] However, to compensate for unequal starting conditions in schools, identify school-specific needs, and target additional funding more effectively, an assessment system including school-specific composition characteristics is required. This is an ongoing debate in other countries with needs-based funding schemes as well. Yet in contrast to some of those countries, data on pupils' family background has not been made available in Finland at the local level, although it does exist.

A second potential shortcoming of the current model refers to the *level of targeted funding and its subsequent effectiveness*. Due to structural differences in the funding of educational systems, a direct comparison between countries is difficult. The most significant difference is that in some countries, such as the Netherlands, needs-based funding is not used as additional support scheme for selected schools. Rather, pupil weights are already added as part of the primary funding of schools.[50] As a result, schools with high proportions of weighted pupils have access to substantially more resources than schools with few weighted pupils—the highly weighted schools have 57% more teachers per pupil on average and almost twice as many additional support staff per teacher.[51] In contrast, the 2.5 million Euros the city of Helsinki spent in 2019[52] for weighted funding seem to be relatively modest, although they are complemented with several more million Euros from the Finnish Government. Moreover, the amount of needs-based funding in Helsinki varies tremendously between the selected schools, ranging between €5000 annually per school up to €300,000. While in most countries, supplementary funding is spent on additional staff (e.g., to lower class sizes, to provide for socio-emotional and family support, or to allow pupils with migrant backgrounds to catch up with their language and academic work[53]), this hardly seems possible for many schools in Helsinki considering the limited funding.

A third aspect refers to the *financial stability of funding*. As demonstrated earlier, the patterns of school segregation are relatively stable. In other words, those catchment areas or schools that are now at the low end of the income distribution or education level have been in the lowest segments in relative terms for several decades.[54] Since educational disadvantage seems to be associated with strong path dependency, schools require a stable funding scheme that is assessed regularly. The need for a long-term and predictable additional support system is also emphasised in interviews with several school and early childhood education actors.[55]

Last but not least, it is important to consider the e*fficient use of targeted funding*. Current research indicates that additional funding in Helsinki, where sufficient, is predominantly used for additional classroom assistants.[56] However, a systematic assessment of the use of the targeted funding has not been made so far. Deeper insights into the mechanisms through which the policy operates in different schools as well as how it is interpreted, carried out, and used are therefore still limited. Although school principals and day-care centre managers have enough competence in identifying the needs of their own units, information on best practice and research-based monitoring of operating models for the use of additional resources would bring valuable information.[57] For instance, if additional funding is sufficient to hire additional staff, the question arises whether schools use the additional staff in a targeted manner to compensate for the starting disadvantages of individual pupils.[58]

International experiences with weighted funding illustrate that many schools have probably not yet developed the capacity to serve socially, linguistically, and culturally diverse pupils effectively.[59]

Conclusion: Finland's Universalist System Requires Targeted Support to Combat the Effects of Segregation

After years in which Finland stood out in international pupil assessments with a rare combination of excellent overall performance and a high level of equality, the recent evaluations show a rather worrying development. Our findings reveal three simultaneous trends that together pose a significant challenge to comprehensive schooling in Finland: (1) worsening social inequalities; (2) the increasing significance of pupils' social background for their learning outcomes,[60] and (3) growing socio-spatial differentiations in many cities across Finland. In other words, while pupils' social and educational starting points are becoming more unequal and growing residential segregation has led to an increased differentiation of student intakes in schools, the significance of these individual background factors for pupils' learning outcomes has been growing throughout recent decades.

The growing differences between the schools' socio-economic and ethnic compositions have been leading to strongly diverging learning outcomes and conditions. These gaps are growing predominantly in urban areas, where the socio-economic differences between neighbourhoods already exceed the differences between municipalities in the whole country. Since residential and school segregation are interlinked strongly, school segregation levels in Finnish cities are increasing. Residential segregation thus presents what could be called an urban paradox of education: while urban regions are generally characterised with high levels of economic success and educational well-being, they simultaneously 'host' the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods with concentrations of educational disadvantage.[61] Since the vast majority of children and young people in Finland live in urban areas, with most of the immigrant-background school-age children living even more concentrated in the capital region, increasing levels of school segregation are a question of national importance. Challenges of educational equality, including particularly immigrant groups' access to the education system and labour market in Finland, can therefore be only solved in cities.

For decades, when compared internationally, the strength of the education system in Finland has been the high and stable institutional quality of both early childhood education and care and basic education. While there were no major differences in quality between schools, the system seemed to be able to minimise the impact of individual characteristics on pupils' learning outcomes. In times of low inequality and segregation levels and a socially and ethnically comparatively homogenous society, the Finnish system has therefore proven to be successful in producing equal results. It was not only good in producing high overall educational outcomes, but also in

ensuring a high level of educational equality. However, Finnish society has been changing in recent decades; its increasing diversity combined with growing social and socio-spatial inequalities seems to challenge the education system in a way that segregates the everyday life of school communities, the burden experienced by staff, and the learning outcomes of pupils. The egalitarian and universal "one size fits all" approach of the education system in Finland seems to be increasingly unable to overcome the growing differences in a segregating society. This demonstrates that even a highly egalitarian, Universalist system is not shielded from the effects of societal and spatial segregation, but is rather challenged by it in a very similar dynamic as observed in many other countries.

To compensate for children's unequal starting positions and the increasingly divergent learning condition between schools, the education system needs stronger support mechanisms that deliberately allocate more resources to schools in more socially challenging contexts. Since various factors of social and educational inequality (such as learning difficulties, multi-faceted social problems, language or other challenges exacerbating home-school cooperation) accumulate in some schools and day-care centres, it is difficult for teachers to focus on high-quality pedagogy unless there are enough skilled staff and other support measures to meet these school-specific needs. Moreover, due to the COVID-19 pandemic's unequal repercussions on families, and, subsequently, on schools, it is likely that the polarisation between children and schools has intensified further.[62] According to a recent government report, the most vulnerable children and young people in Finland were hit hardest by the financial and social burden of the pandemic.[63] On a spatial level, this means that the neighbourhoods already most fraught before the pandemic might be the ones worst affected by it as well. The current pandemic situation has therefore likely intensified the extent to which schools in these areas need additional resources.

The first evaluation of the needs-based funding scheme in Helsinki points to its favourable effects on pupils' learning outcomes, despite some important weaknesses, such as the data availability and the financial scale of the funding. needs-based funding in Helsinki is supported by additional targeted support systems, such as the multilingual language tutors. The programme's first evaluation illustrates that focusing solely on learning outcomes and grades when assessing educational programmes distorts the view of other positive effects. The evaluation results reveal how significant the multilingual tutors are to levelling the playing field in which schools operate, and enabling conditions in schools and early childhood education that are fundamental to preparing the foundation for pupils' successful learning. Considering the close relationship between neighbourhood and school segregation and reputation,[64] the results illustrate the need to pay additional attention to what is happening outside schools.

Considering (middle-class) parents' socially selective school choices that are predominantly led by concerns about the schools' social and ethnic composition (see Bernelius and Kosunen in this book), it becomes clear that high-quality comprehensive education alone is not enough to protect urban schools from negative spirals. The choices of both families and pupils[65] contribute to a further differentiation between and within schools in the bigger cities in Finland. Consequently, they feed into a

multi-domain vicious cycle of segregation, deprivation, and inequality, in which segregation in one domain of life feeds into other domains.[66] It seems that vicious circles of segregation are only likely to grow if affected schools do not receive adequate support. Targeted resource allocation schemes to disadvantaged schools are therefore an important means to counteract this risk.

Notes

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8. While using the term "disadvantage", we are aware of the fine line between raising the necessary attention towards the challenges schools with a high proportion of students whose home background hampers their educational progress on the one hand and contributing to the reproduction of stigmatising labels on the other. However, schools are not attended by average students in terms of their readiness to learn (including emotional, physical, social, and financial dimensions). To pretend they are would incorrectly imply that some students' lower educational outcomes are entirely a result of the schools' failure. We therefore agree with Thrupp's and Lupton's (2006) argument that using completely neutral terms is rather even counterproductive. "Failing to recognise the 'messy detail' of school populations … effectively screens out the need of students who are from working class, minority or indigenous group backgrounds" and makes it more likely that those schools "will be treated as deficient, failing, and not worthy of support in a system geared to the needs of 'typical' or 'normal'

students" (p. 319). Rather than taking up a deficit perspective, we thus try to pay attention to the particular challenges some schools face when referring to them as being 'disadvantaged'.

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Isabel Ramos Lobato is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, University of Helsinki, and part of the Geographies of Education and Divided Cities (GED) research group. Her research interests are broadly rooted in urban and social geography, with a particular emphasis on processes of social inclusion and exclusion in the fields of education and housing. Ramos Lobato's doctoral research examined parents' choice of primary schools and its impact on school segregation in Germany.

Venla Bernelius is Docent of Urban Geography at the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, University of Helsinki, and heads the Geographies of Education and Divided Cities (GED) research group. She focuses on themes of urban segregation, immigration and housing, as well as social and spatial dynamics of education. Besides school research, Bernelius has worked extensively on the development and assessment of targeted funding schemes with Finnish municipalities and ministries.

Chapter 15
The Significance of Socioeconomic Background for the Educational Dispositions and Aspirations of Finnish School Leavers

Tero Järvinen, Jenni Tikkanen, and Piia af Ursin

Abstract This chapter examines the significance of socioeconomic background (SES) for the educational dispositions and aspirations of Finnish comprehensive school leavers. After demonstrating the existence of the relationship between the students' SES background and their dispositions and aspirations, the main question addressed is whether this relationship changes when controlling for the effect of students' academic ability as measured by their literacy skills. In our examination, we draw on a study of 15-year-old lower secondary school students (n = 1058) in Turku sub-region consisting of the city of Turku and ten smaller, surrounding municipalities. The results of our study are mixed. Students with high-level literacy skills have positive dispositions towards learning and education despite their socioeconomic background. The same is, however, not the case with educational aspirations. Among low-SES students, individual ability does not predict high educational aspirations in a similar manner that it does among high-SES students. This finding poses a challenge for the Finnish education system. If SES is a more significant predictor of educational aspirations of an individual than ability or motivation, there are negative effects for both individuals themselves and society. From the individual point of view, self-exclusion of gifted low-SES students from higher education decreases their future labour market opportunities and outcomes. From the societal point of view, in turn, it means that many occupational fields will lose potentially talented and skilful employees. In these respects, the Finnish education system would not only be unequal but also inefficient.

T. Järvinen (✉) · J. Tikkanen · P. af Ursin
Department of Education/Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education, University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: tejuja@utu.fi

J. Tikkanen
e-mail: jenni.tikkanen@utu.fi

P. af Ursin
e-mail: piia.ursinaf@utu.fi

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Education Systems and Equality

Although education systems of developed nations are largely built on the merito-cratic ideal of equal educational opportunities, the connection between one's socio-economic status (SES) and educational success and failure has proved to be one of the most consistent findings in the sociology of education. Despite all the equalising policy initiatives and implementations made over the past 50 years, research has regularly shown how advantages and disadvantages related to socioeconomic posi-tion are associated with educational attainment and outcomes of individuals.[1] This can be seen in the SES-based differences in learning results,[2] dropout,[3] as well as in how students are selected into hierarchically different educational ability groups, tracks or streams. Students from low-SES backgrounds are more likely to be selected into vocational than academic educational routes, which decreases their future labour market opportunities.[4]

However, although the positive association between one's social origin and educa-tional attainment seems to hold true across the world,[5] some systems and coun-tries have been more successful in promoting equality than the others. According to research, the structure of an education system plays a significant role in how equality is promoted and inequalities generated.[6] Hence, each education system produces inclusion and exclusion, and equality and inequality in its own unique way. In their review of the comparative literature on the impact of national-level educational insti-tutions on educational inequality, Herman Van de Werfhorst and Jonathan Mijs[7] conclude that countries with a more strongly differentiated education system tend to have higher levels of inequality of educational opportunity by social class and ethnicity. Comprehensive systems with a delayed selection of students are, in turn, associated with high educational equality.[8] In addition to the level of stratification, standardisation of a system is also a significant factor in this respect: countries with a more standardised education system have lower levels of inequality of opportunity compared with less standardised systems.[9]

Since the structure of an education system is associated with the magnitude of the connection between SES and educational attainment and outcomes, one could assume that this connection is weak in Finland. Compared internationally, the Finnish education system is highly standardised across schools and other educational settings and has a relatively low level of stratification.[10] Officially, there is no ability grouping in the Finnish comprehensive school, and as most of the special needs education is provided on a part-time basis,[11] this means that pupils with different abilities and backgrounds are kept together until the age of 16. Therefore, due to delayed tracking, the first choice all students have to make is whether to continue with academic or vocational studies (VET) after comprehensive school.

Moreover, as in the other Nordic countries, promoting educational equality has been the cornerstone of educational policy since the Second World War in Finland.[12] Since a comprehensive school reform during 1972–1977, the officially stated aim of Finnish educational policy has been that all individuals should have equal access to

education, including higher education, despite their gender, religion, socioeconomic or cultural background and their place of residence.

Due to recent education policy changes promoting privatisation, marketisation, individual responsibility, accountability, and parental choice, the situation has changed in the Nordic countries, although there are important differences between the countries in terms of volume and consequences of the changes.[13] In Finland, the most important changes that have had an impact on the basic education system, decentralisation of administrative power and introduction of a school choice policy, took place in the early 1990s. Simultaneously with this policy change, the new understanding of educational equality began to take shape. In comparison to the old social democratic agrarian tradition that emphasised the right of every comprehensive school student to receive an education of similar quality, the neo-liberal version of equality spoke more clearly for individual rights emphasising everyone's right to receive schooling that fits their needs and abilities.[14]

However, although policies designed to promote, for instance, parental choice have been defended based on equality arguments—making same kind of choices available to disadvantaged parents that were available to advantaged parents,[15] research evidence shows that the educational policy approach promoting parental choice has actually amplified educational inequality in many countries.[16] In the Finnish context, according to studies undertaken by Piia Seppänen and colleagues, education policy promoting parental choice in basic education has increased tracking in Finnish comprehensive schools, since practices within the system lead to the grouping of pupils into programs or classes offering specific curricula.[17] Since the opportunities provided to the families by the school policy are mostly exploited by high-SES parents,[18] the establishment of this policy has encouraged and promoted early selection of children from high-SES backgrounds to particular educational paths within school levels. Moreover, while the connection between students' SES background and their learning results and educational outcomes of various kinds has traditionally been relatively weak in Finland in international comparison, there has been a recent trend towards the opposite. The PISA 2015 study revealed, and PISA 2018 confirmed, that the inequalities between students coming from different SES backgrounds are increasing in Finland,[19] which has raised new interest in the perennial question about the relationship between SES and schooling in this Nordic country.

In this chapter, we examine the significance of SES for the educational dispositions and aspirations of Finnish comprehensive school leavers. Examining these dispositions and aspirations is important from the point of view of educational selection and, thus, equality. It seems logical to think that educational dispositions, which refer to one's general attitude towards schooling, education and learning, are reflected in the educational aspirations of individual students. According to research, educational aspirations, in turn, predict future educational outcomes of individuals rather well.[20] In this chapter, after demonstrating the existence of the relationship between the young people's SES background and their educational dispositions and aspirations, the main question addressed is whether this relationship changes when students'

academic ability is taken into account in the analyses. The importance of this question relates to the efficiency argument used in supporting the policy aim to reduce SES-based educational inequalities: if high-ability students from low-SES backgrounds do not develop their potential in full, the resulting educational inequality is not only a loss for themselves but also for society.[21]

In our examination, we draw on a study of 15-year-old lower-secondary school students in Turku sub-region, consisting of the city of Turku and ten smaller, surrounding municipalities.[22] Turku sub-region is mainly an urban region, which is a relatively strong economic area in the Finnish context. This area has 307,000 inhabitants of which 176,000 are living in Turku, the capital city and economic centre of the region. With its two universities and versatile options for post-compulsory education, Turku sub-region is also a strong educational area in Finland. Altogether 12 of the region's 27 lower secondary schools from eight municipalities participated in the study we present in this chapter.

The Connection Between Students' Socioeconomic Background and Their Educational Dispositions and Aspirations

In Finland, studies on educational selection are traditionally made from the viewpoint of inequality of educational opportunities. Typically, this research has included large-scale quantitative studies focusing usually at selection into higher education.[23] The studies have focused on intergenerational educational mobility, which is viewed as a sign of an open and just society. In addition, particularly since the 1990s, there have been a growing number of qualitative studies with the aim of understanding the connection between SES and educational choices of individuals from the actor's point of view.[24] Recently, PISA studies have raised interest in examining the connection between SES and learning achievement. Generally, in the Finnish context, attention has been paid more to educational attainment and outcomes than to educational aspirations. International research findings, however, show that students from high-SES backgrounds typically aspire to more and higher education as well as to more prestigious occupations than those from low-SES backgrounds.[25]

Further, it may be assumed that positive dispositions towards learning and education are connected with high educational aspirations, such as a preference for university education. Although there are international studies on the impact of SES on students' educational aspirations,[26] studies on the connection between educational dispositions and aspirations and students' SES are scarce. Differences in the educational dispositions and aspirations of young people coming from different SES backgrounds can, however, be a significant background factor that explains the class-based differences in young people's selection into educational tracks providing unequal future opportunities, such as their selection into academic versus vocational track after common comprehensive school.

The question concerning the interplay of individual ability and SES in determining educational aspirations is particularly important from the viewpoint of educational equality. If gifted low-SES students 'voluntarily' give up achieving higher levels of education, it means that education system is not able to encourage and support them to make choices that differ from their family tradition. The self-exclusion of gifted low-SES students would mean that a nation, such as Finland, loses a large share of its talent potential.

The relationship between SES and educational dispositions and aspirations can be informed by Bourdieu's work, his concepts of *habitus* and *field* in particular. Bourdieu defines habitus as "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions".[27] It refers to a tendency to act in a specific way in a given field, such as in the field of education. Drawing on Bourdieu, Kalalahti[28] sees educational dispositions as an educational orientation, which manifests itself as one's general attitude toward education and schooling, which is, in turn, associated with one's success or failure at school. Based on these views we see educational dispositions consisting of relatively stable values and beliefs on and attitudes towards education internalised in one's habitus, and operationalised them in our study as a student's general attitude towards schooling and the value that student gives to education both intrinsically and instrumentally.

According to Bourdieu,[29] the basic structure of habitus consists of dispositions that an individual internalises from social and cultural environment through socialisation. This implies that the basic structure of habitus and the dispositions internalised in one's habitus are similar among people who have grown up in similar social and cultural environments and who share a similar kind of social class background. Habitus itself, however, is continually responsive to new experiences that either confirm or restructure it.[30] In other words, the habitus acquired within one's family underlies the structure of one's educational experiences. The habitus is then confirmed or restructured by educational experiences.[31] These experiences can be habitus-confirming or habitus-transforming by nature, meaning that they can gradually or radically transform habitus, which in turn creates the possibility for the formation of new and different dispositions.[32]

Based on such theorisations and results of previous studies it can be assumed that there is a connection between students' SES and their educational dispositions and aspirations. Furthermore, one can argue that educational experiences may change individual's habitus and, therefore, also their educational dispositions and aspirations. At a conceptual level, this chapter looks at the question whether individual ability, which is indicated by a high-level of literacy skills and which most likely promotes one's success at school, causes changes in one's habitus and, consequently, in educational dispositions and aspirations. If so, in the case of students coming from low-SES backgrounds, this may strengthen their academic self-beliefs and lead to a widening of their *horizon for action*,[33] which both limits and widens their view of the world and the choices they can make within it; what they think is possible for 'people like them'.

Our Study on the Educational Dispositions and Aspirations of School Leavers in Turku Sub-region

The findings discussed here are based on our study on the significance of SES background for the educational dispositions and aspirations of Finnish comprehensive school leavers. The study is part of the larger international research project *International Study of City Youth*, in which young people's school experiences as well as their educational transitions and the development of educational trajectories have been followed up for a four-year period in 15 cities around the world.[34] The aim of the project is to study how well education systems are working, for whom, and why. As part of the research project, we have studied, for example, Finnish young people's school engagement and learning of the twenty-first century skills with the aim of understanding the schooling and learning experiences of Finnish young people in an international context.[35]

The objective of the study discussed in this section is two-fold. First, we explore the relationship between SES and students' educational dispositions and aspirations. Second, and more importantly, we examine whether this relationship changes when students' ability and gender are taken into account in the analyses. Although we are not primarily interested in studying the connection between gender and educational dispositions and aspirations, we include gender as a control variable in our analyses for two reasons.[36] Firstly, in international research, it has been shown to have a significant influence on the educational aspirations of young people.[37] Secondly, since there is a possibility that the connection between SES and dispositions and aspirations is different for boys than girls, we cannot draw reliable conclusions from our analyses without taking this possibility into account.

To put this in the form of a research question, we are interested in finding out: What is the effect, if any, of the socioeconomic background of young people on their educational dispositions and aspirations, and how does the relationship change when controlling for the effects of individual ability and gender?

The study participants were 15-year-old lower secondary school students living in Turku sub-region, Finland. A total of 1058 students (42.5% of all region's lower secondary school students) participated in an online survey and a reading literacy test in 2014. In the study, educational dispositions were measured by students' general attitudes towards schooling and education, and educational aspirations by students' views on the highest level of education they plan to complete (whether a student, at the age of 15, plans to apply to university or not). We constructed a principal component of educational dispositions from three observed variables: '*I like being at school*', '*Working hard in school matters for success in the workforce*', and '*School teaches me valuable skills*' measured on a four-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Strongly agree).[38] We view that the chosen variables measure different sides of educational dispositions: a general attitude towards schooling and the instrumental and intrinsic value of education, respectively. To measure students' ability, we used a modified version of PISA 2012 literacy test. The classification of the socioeconomic background of the students is based on the International Socio-Economic Index

of Occupational Status (ISEI 88) classification.[39] Cross-tabulations and regression analyses were used in analysing the data.In the following, we report and interpret the main findings of our study.

First, we explored the relationship between students' SES and their educational dispositions controlling for gender and PISA literacy test results. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis[40] showed that SES, female gender and the literacy test score, were all associated with more positive educational dispositions.[41] While SES was a statistically significant predictor of educational dispositions in the first two regression models, when literacy test score was added to the model, SES no longer predicted dispositions significantly. This finding means that when students have high-level literacy skills, they have positive dispositions towards learning and education despite their socioeconomic background. This is an important finding, since literacy skills do not only form a basis of all learning, but also help students to integrate into the literary-academic culture of school. It also shows that students' educational dispositions cannot be explained simply by referring to their family environment and SES background.

According to Bourdieu's theory,[42] both students' school success and their integration into school environment require a compatibility between their habitus and the field of education. When different habitus meet with the requirements and cultural practices of the school, the consequences for students coming from different social and cultural backgrounds are different. The further apart the culture at home—such as values and language—is from the literary academic culture at school, the harder it is for the child to adapt to the cultural demands school sets for the students. Different forms of general education, where emphasis is put on liberal arts and mastering of theoretical knowledge, particularly favour children of highly educated parents who have internalised the 'right' kind of dispositions from their home environment already in their childhood. Based on the findings of this study, however, high-level literacy skills of low-SES students are associated with positive educational dispositions, which may significantly promote their successful integration into the school environment.

Next, we explored the association of students' SES background and their educational aspirations as follows: firstly, the relationships of students' SES, ability (i.e., their literacy test score), and educational aspirations regarding university education were examined with cross-tabulations. For this examination, both SES and literacy test score values were categorised into three groups based on quartiles (lowest 25%, middle 50% and highest 25%). Then, the data was split into the three SES groups, and educational aspirations and literacy test score groups were cross-tabulated in each SES group. The shares of students who plan to go to university are summarised in Table 15.1. In each SES group, the higher the literacy test scores were the more frequent were also the university plans among students. Also, in each of the literacy test score groups, the higher the students' SES was, the more frequently students were planning to go to university. What is particularly noteworthy here is that a larger share of those high-SES students belonging to the lowest literacy test quarter were planning on going to university (28.6%) than of those low-SES students in the highest literacy test score quarter (27.6%).

Table 15.1 Share (percentage) of students who plan to go to university (n = 318) according to SES and literacy test score

		Literacy test score		
		Lowest quarter	Middle half	Highest quarter
SES	Lowest quarter	14.3	19.0	27.6
	Middle half	27.0	26.7	52.0
	Highest quarter	28.6	38.1	58.7

When reflecting on results presented above, it can be seen that even though high-level literacy skills of low-SES students are positively associated with their educational dispositions, the same is not the case with their educational aspirations. Despite having good competences in reading and writing, which form the basis of all learning and knowledge acquiring, they do not see university education as an option in their future in a similar manner that high-SES young people do.

Next, we continued our analyses by performing a hierarchical binomial logistic regression[43] to analyse the effects of SES, gender, and literacy test score on the likelihood that students plan to go to university.[44] Here, the main interest was in the relationship of SES and university plans when controlling for gender and ability. The main finding of this analysis is that students' SES was a statistically significant predictor of their educational aspirations, and this relationship remained significant when controlling for the effects of gender and ability. This finding confirmed the results of cross-tabulation by showing how strongly young people's SES impacts on their aspirations to university education.

Conclusion: Low Aspirations of High-Ability Students as a Challenge of the Education System

The aim of our study in the Turku sub-region was to examine the relationship between school leavers' SES background and their educational dispositions and aspirations, and how that relationship changes when controlling for the effects of individual ability and gender. The results were mixed. First, there was a statistically significant connection between student's SES and educational dispositions, and this relationship remained significant when controlling for the effects of gender. However, when literacy test score was taken into account in the analyses, SES no longer predicted students' dispositions significantly. A student with high-level literacy skills has positive educational dispositions despite their socioeconomic background. It seems that having high-level literacy skills helps one to integrate into the literary-academic cultural environment of the school, which can be a habitus-transforming experience for low-SES students making their dispositions towards learning and education as positive as the dispositions of their middle-class peers.

What we found in the case of educational aspirations was somewhat different. SES remained a statistically significant predictor of students' educational aspirations when controlling for the effects of both gender and ability. In the case of low-SES students, individual ability does not predict high educational aspirations in a similar manner that it does among high-SES students. It does not widen the horizons for action of low-SES students, that is what they think, is possible or desirable for them. Our finding that the weakest readers of the high-SES group aimed at university education more often than the best readers of the low-SES group suggests that many gifted low-SES students do not see university studies as possible for them and, hence, 'voluntarily' give up achieving higher levels of education. This is in line with a recent Finnish study undertaken by Laura Heiskala and colleagues showing that, among students with equal school success, the high-SES students continue their studies significantly more often in higher education in comparison with students from low-SES backgrounds.[45]

The above-mentioned finding is understandable if we take a standpoint according to which the aspirations of individuals are socially and culturally constructed and have their origins in the cultural environment one lives in. University education is a field that may be unfamiliar to low-SES students and their families. They do not have a first-hand experience of the field of higher education, and without the knowledge and experience of it, aspiring to higher education may feel like an inaccessible and risky option, which is not compatible with their culturally constructed view of 'a good life'.[46]

When interpreting our results in the light of Bourdieu's theory, having high-level literacy skills most likely promotes one's success at school, which may turn out to be a habitus-transforming experience that has an effect on one's dispositions, but not so much on aspirations. According to Diane Reay,[47] school also has an important role in the formation of students' educational aspirations. Reay argues that class-based differences in educational aspirations can be understood as a result of the complex interaction of familial and institutional habitus. While familial habitus results in a tendency for young people to acquire expectations adjusted to the educational experiences and history of their family, the concept of institutional habitus may help us to understand how these class-based expectations are reinforced through the institutional practices of everyday life at school.

Institutional habitus refers to the set of predispositions and taken-for-granted expectations on the basis of which schools are organised.[48] At the level of an individual school, the key element is the school culture with the expectations teachers have concerning the students' inclinations and educability being its central part. In her case study of ten students engaged in the higher education choice process, Reay shows how the expectations of students' educability are different for students from different SES-backgrounds within the same school. It is likely that different expectations towards students from different SES-backgrounds are more obvious in highly stratified systems in comparison to comprehensive systems such as the Finnish system, where students from different SES-backgrounds are kept together until the age of 16. However, the recent changes in the Finnish basic education system, such as the introduction of a school choice policy and an increasing number of specialised

classes inside common comprehensive school, have led to increased segregation both between and within schools in terms of student populations. A division of students according to their interests, which has become more common in Finland during the recent decades, in practice means a division by socioeconomic background. This may mean that the expectations Finnish schools and teachers have concerning students' educability are linked to their social origin more strongly than before. However, since we have not studied teachers' expectations towards students, answering this question is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Our findings about the significance of SES background for students' aspirations poses a challenge for the Finnish education system, comprehensive school in particular. The Finnish comprehensive school is built on the idea of promoting equality of educational opportunities. According to this principle, all individuals irrespective of their background should have equal access to education, including university education. However, despite the Finnish education system being highly standardised with a low-level of stratification when compared internationally, recent PISA studies have demonstrated that inequalities in the learning outcomes of 15-year-old students have increased in Finland. Social class-based differences in school leavers' educational aspirations, in turn, seems to be an important factor explaining educational inequalities in the higher levels of education system. If SES is a more significant predictor of educational outcomes of individuals (including getting access to universities) than individual ability or motivation, it has negative effects for both individuals themselves and society. From the individual point of view, self-exclusion of gifted low-SES students from higher education decreases their future labour market opportunities and outcomes. From the society's point of view, in turn, it means that many occupational fields will lose potentially talented and skilful employees. In these respects, Finnish education system would not only be *unequal* but also *inefficient*. In other words, the system is not able to encourage and support students to set themselves educational goals that differ from their family tradition. By not succeeding in this, the system functions towards the social inheritance of education and reproduces the social divisions and hierarchies of a society. In the case of Finnish society, policy makers and educators must work against such social reproduction and loss of talent if Finnish education is to truly offer the life chances it wants to promise.

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36. In general, when analysing aspirations and dispositions related to education, it is necessary to acknowledge the complexity of the phenomena by including and controlling for various factors (see e.g., Härmälä, M., D. Leontjev, and T. Kangasvieri. 2017. Relationship between students' opinions, background factors and learning outcomes: Finnish 9th graders learning English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 27: 665–681. Also Järvinen, J., and J. Tikkanen. 2019, op. cit.

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38. The first step of the analysis process was to assess the suitability of principal components analysis: all variables had at least one correlation coefficient greater than 0.3, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure was 0.63, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The educational dispositions component had an eigenvalue of 1.83 and explained 61.10% of the total variance. The component loadings were 0.50 ("I like being at school"), 0.62 ("Working hard in school matters for success in the workforce"), and 0.71 ("School teaches me valuable skills").

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40. First, the assumptions of the regression analysis were tested. Linearity was assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values, residuals were fairly independent (Durbin-Watson value 1.038), there was homoscedasticity as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values, and no evidence of multicollinearity (tolerance values greater than 0.1). There were seven studentized deleted residuals slightly greater than ± 3 standard deviations, but as there were no leverage values greater than 0.2 or Cook's distance values above 1.0, they were retained in the analysis. Lastly, the assumption of normality was met as assessed by Q-Q Plot.

41. The full model of SES, gender, and literacy test score to predict educational dispositions was statistically significant, $R^2 = 0.063$, $F(3, 847) = 19.003$, $p < 0.001$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.060$. In this final model, gender ($p < 0.05$; β 0.082) and literacy test score ($p < 0.001$; β 0.213) were statistically significant predictors of educational dispositions. The changes in R^2 were as follows: model 1 0.008, model 2 0.013, and model 3 0.042; and Cohen's f^2 values (effect sizes) model 1 0.001, model 2 0.02, and model 3 0.07 (values between 0.02 and 0.15 considered small).

42. See e.g., Bourdieu, 1990. op. cit., Bourdieu and Wacquant, op. cit.

43. Regarding the requirements of the regression analysis, the assumption of linearity of the two continuous variables with respect to the logit of the dependent variable was assessed by the Box-Tidwell procedure, and there were no outliers.

44. In the hierarchical binomial logistic regression, the variables were entered into the model in the following order: SES, gender (male $= 0$) and literacy test score. The full logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 95.968$, $p < 0.001$, it explained 14.8% of the variance in planning on going to university, and correctly classified 71.4% of the cases. All three predictor variables were statistically significant: SES $p < 0.001$, OR 1.021; gender $p < 0.05$, OR 1.380; and literacy test score $p < 0.005$, OR 1.149 (in model 1, OR for SES 1.024; in model 2, OR for 1.025 and for gender 1.555).

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Tero Järvinen is Professor of Learning and Education at the Department of Education/Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. His main research interests are related to comparative studies on educational and school-to-work transitions of young people, as well as education systems and policies governing these transitions. Järvinen is currently leading a Finnish team in the European Union-funded CLEAR project, in which factors affecting the learning outcomes of young people are being studied across eight European countries.

Jenni Tikkanen is Postdoctoral Fellow of the Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS) at the Department of Education, University of Turku. Her main research interests relate to the sociology of education, educational policies, youth studies, life course research, and international comparative education. The focus of Tikkanen's most recent work has been on youth trajectories, educational and societal segregation, and the evolving relations of social change and social reproduction. She is a Visiting Research Fellow in the Academy of Finland's research flagship Inequalities, Interventions and a New Welfare State (INVEST).

Piia af Ursin Ph.D., is Research Coordinator at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. She has a background in child and youth studies, comparative education and educational inequalities. Her research interests cover themes related to student agency, engagement and participation in diverse educational settings and transitions.

Chapter 16
Controversies and Challenges in the History of Gender Discourses in Education in Finland

Elina Lahelma

Abstract Finland is famous for high scores in PISA league tables as well as for high scores in gender equality indexes. Sometimes these two championships seem to be competing. Since the first PISA tests, an old concern for boys' underachievement has received new emphasis and the gender gap in results has detracted from national pride in the excellent overall results, as well as hiding a growing social and ethnic gap. In the 1980s concern about underachieving boys in Finland was matched by efforts towards gender equality in education following global declarations and resolutions of gender equality after the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979. Supported by the first equality projects, gender research in Finnish education took the first steps in the late 1980s. Since that time, gender researchers in education have collaborated in carrying out gender equality administration and projects. A constant task has been to challenge the simple juxtaposition of girls and boys that is sometimes evident in the concerns about boys' achievements. In this chapter, I describe and analyse the interlinked histories of gender equality work, feminist studies in education, and the boy discourse, with reflections on changes and sustainability in Finnish education policies. The bodies of data include documents associated with gender equality projects, national PISA reports, reviews of research articles and PhD studies that draw on feminist research in education. I also use my own experience as an actor in the field since the early 1980s.

In Spring 2020, Finland showed itself to be a well organised welfare country with strong women when its government, made up of five parties all with female leaders, developed comparatively successful strategies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Twenty years earlier Finland had been celebrated as a welfare country with equal and high standards of education, following the results of the first PISA tests. A quote from the PISA report of the time provides justification for Finland's pride:

E. Lahelma (✉)
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: elina.lahelma@helsinki.fi

In the light of PISA, the Finnish educational structure appears in international comparison as high standard and equal. Good learning results mean a steady background for further studies of young people and a promising future for the whole nation, the cultural originality, economic success and social justice of which are built on the know-how and willingness to study of each citizen. Finland's results in PISA clearly indicate that in an educational system it is possible to unite high standards and equality.[1]

This totally unexpected triumph silenced the plans of some right-wing political groups to follow the example of Sweden towards more choices and privatisation in education.[2] However, in the same report gender differences in achievement that were larger than in other OECD countries, were regarded as a problem, being described as "… a clear threat in guaranteeing for both genders equal educational opportunities".[3] This concern detracted from celebration of Finland's excellent results, because it was Finnish girls who were world champions.

The concern for boys was older, and so was gender equality politics with a focus mainly on girls. The constant flow of declarations and resolutions concerning gender equality started with United Nations' Convention 1979.[4] The recommendations forced even reluctant national politicians to take steps towards legislation and administrative practices, and to provide resources for supporting gender equality in the field of education as well. By 2010 almost all European countries had, or planned to have, gender equality policies in education. The primary aim has been to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Other objectives include enhancing the representation of women in decision-making bodies, countering gender-based attainment patterns and combating gender-based harassment in schools.[5]

In Finland, the same period witnessed, in collaboration with the equality discourse, the growth of feminist studies in education into a growing and respected field of educational research.[6] A constant task for both research and equality politics has been troubling the simple juxtaposition of girls and boys that sometimes is visible in the worries about boys' achievements. Ambivalence between 'equality discourse' and 'boy discourse' has prevailed in the educational politics and policies of Finland.[7]

In this chapter, I will describe and analyse the interlinked histories of gender equality work, feminist studies in education, and the boy discourse, while reflecting on the changes in Finnish educational policies. I will reuse and discuss my earlier articles that drew from various bodies of data: documents associated with gender equality projects, national PISA reports, reviews of research articles and PhD studies that draw on feminist research in education.[8] Moreover, I will use my own reflections because since the 1980s, I have acted as a gender researcher and an active agent in equality projects in education as well as in political and media discussions concerning the boy discourse. Accordingly, I will use the method of critical discourse analysis, but also auto-ethnography, using my personal experience to describe and interpret cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices.[9]

Long-Term Persistence of Gendered Patterns

Education has a history of strict gender and class segregation. At the beginning of organised schooling, education everywhere was a privilege of upper-class boys. The question of gender equality in education has been a question of girls' right to participate, as articulated by the pioneers of the women's movement in the 1700s. Globally speaking, this aim has not been fully achieved, and still is the goal of national and international recommendations, action plans and developmental programmes. In most European countries, girls' rights to go to school are realised and European girls and women generally outnumber boys in higher and further education.

In Finland, girls have achieved well in education whenever they have had the possibility to participate. Women were a majority in academic upper secondary schools already in the 1940s and in universities in the 1980s.[10] The comprehensive school reform that started 1972 provided practically the same curriculum for all children aged 7–15. The idea of gender-neutrality in the documents suggested a political willingness to promote equality. Following the international resolutions, obligation to promote gender equality in schools was included in school legislation in the 1980s, and the law of equal opportunities gave special responsibilities for school authorities. However, processes, contents and outcomes of schooling remained gendered in numerous ways.[11] In spite of decades of work towards gender equality, stubborn continuities remain.

Continuing structural patterns include subject choices with gendered effects. Early choices between textile and technical craft, with impact on the division of material cultures into technical and aesthetic, has been difficult to challenge.[12] On the other hand, streaming conducted in maths and foreign languages was given up with legislation by early 1980s when it was realised that boys tended to choose lower streams, restraining their possibilities for academic upper secondary education. Gender segregation continues in post-compulsory education with a constant small female majority, 55–60%, in the academic route, and a wide segregation amongst the other half of the cohort that continues in vocational education. With just small changes since the 1980s, 80–90% of students in the technology sector have been male and an even larger share of students in health and social science sector have been female.[13] Without assessment of gender impact, gendered patterns tend to appear unnoticed with reforms. Accordingly, the possibility of parents choosing schools or classes,[14] as well as the possibility of schools to select pupils by emphasising particular subjects and use of various entrance criteria,[15] have brought as a side-effect gender-segregated classes. Gendered choices within academic upper secondary education are persistent as well; girls tend to choose Mathematics and Sciences less than boys, with impact on their future choices. Within the most current reform, these subjects have become more significant for gaining entry into higher education, but there has not been much reflection on the gender impact of this reform.

Taken-for-granted cultural images of girls, boys and gender are repeated in practices and processes of education, for example in text books[16] and teachers' perceptions.[17] Even if open stereotyping is less visible than in the 1980s, schools typically

lack active gender policies for combatting the existing stereotyping that children encounter everywhere outside of schools. It also means that sexual and gender-based harassment or heteronormativity are not actively addressed in schools.[18] When it comes to teacher education, it was possible to become a teacher without any studies concerning gender and equality in the 1980s, and this is still the case thirty years later.[19]

In 2014, some positive changes took place. Firstly, the requirement for writing an equality plan annually, in cooperation of staff and students, was extended to comprehensive schools.[20] Secondly, in the new curriculum framework for comprehensive schools,[21] equality is noted in relation to all subjects, and gender diversity as well as sexual harassment are mentioned for the first time; a discursive change in relation to the framework of 2004.[22] New guiding materials for teachers and teacher education are provided by administration, NGOs and projects. In the conclusion section of this chapter, the impact of such changes will be discussed.

Gender equality is a social and political term that has been actualised in the demands for social change and promoted through political struggle, legislation, research and equality training. I have shown above, that in the field of education, changes towards this aim have been slow. In the following section, I present this work in Finland until the early 2010s.

History of Gender Equality Work in Education

Faced with the international obligations for gender equality, in 1984 the Ministry of Education founded the Commission of Equal Opportunities in Education (CEOE) in which the author worked as secretary. The 1988 report of CEOE, based on three years of research and development work in experimental schools, included dozens of recommendations pertaining to educational structures and curricula, school textbooks, counselling and teacher education.[23] From the 1990s on, the flow of equality projects in schools and in teacher education has been constant. The projects have repeated aims towards gender equal education and implemented experiments on curricula and practices, provided new materials and improved gender-sensitiveness among teachers and counsellors. Typically, efforts are taken to challenge gender segregation and gender stereotyped processes and contents in education as well as insufficient knowledge about gender in teacher education. By the 2000s, addressing heteronormativity and sexual and gender-based harassment have been included in gender projects, with intersectionality and diversities of gender occurring as usual concepts. Changes, however, tended not to be sustainable.[24]

A 2008 evaluation of CEDAW[25] about the gender situation in Finland was critical concerning education. Concerns were expressed about lack of gender-sensitivity in curricula and teacher training, and teaching that addresses structural and cultural causes of discrimination against women. Following this evaluation, the first Government Report on Gender Equality was given by the Ministry of Social Affairs and

Health,[26] presenting views on future gender equality politics. The main recommendations for education included the task of incorporating goals and actions to promote gender equality in education policy planning and development. The report noted that legislation and plans concerning education, training and research included very few gender equality goals and gender awareness was lacking. Furthermore, gender segregation in education and the labour market has remained especially strong in Finland. The main problems in education, as defined in the report, were the persistence of gender and lacking gender awareness. Gender-based harassment and women in leadership positions were mentioned in other sections of the report, carrying obligations for the educational authorities too.[27]

From the flow of equality work in teacher education, I will note two national projects, supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, with acronyms TASUKO (2008–2013)[28] and SETSTOP (2018–2019).[29] The ambitious task given to the TASUKO project was to include gender awareness in curricula and practices in all teacher education institutions in Finland. I was invited as a responsible leader, and from the experience of the earlier projects, I was afraid that this would be 'mission impossible'.[30] The strategy adopted was to organise workshops, research and gender courses in universities in collaboration with committed feminist activists, rather than trying to convince deans and administrators. A web page for teacher educators was provided, but no significant guiding materials. Drawing from joint discussions, gender awareness was defined as consciousness of social and cultural differences, inequalities and otherness, which are built into educational practices but can be changed. The concept includes understanding gender as intertwined with other dimensions of difference, such as ethnicity, age, sexuality, health, local and cultural opportunities.[31] Thus, it was a wide concept and avoided dichotomic and politically laden connotations of the concept of gender equality.

For a few years afterwards, the sustainable impact of TASUKO was analysed. The collaborators evaluated it in relatively positive terms. The project had provided more space for students, teachers and teacher educators for some agency and small steps towards gender-aware teaching. Because researchers were listened in the position of actors in a national project—rather than as feminist academics—it also had some impact on educational politics. However, gender awareness remained the responsibility of those teacher educators who were already committed to it. One step forward was sometimes followed by two steps back. When universities in the 2010s were under pressure for resources, and teacher educators under pressure for time, gender issues often were the first to be sacrificed.[32]

SETSTOP took place a few years after the policy requirements to provide equality plans in comprehensive schools and new emphasis on gender and equity in curriculum had affected the atmosphere in teacher education. The aim of the project, to develop contents for teacher education on gender equality planning and equality work, was now justifiable. Working in the project was research-based, phenomenon oriented and motivated by acute challenges of equality work in education. The focus was in teacher education but by the aid of students, equality work was advanced also in school environments. The list of new, easily available materials is impressive and versatile.[33] SETSTOP defined its mission as follows:

> The main aim of this nationwide project is to realise finally our long-term dream to include themes of gender equality and non-discrimination to the curricula of all the levels of teacher education in Finland…. In spite of numerous efforts in the history of the gender equality projects this dream has not yet become true.[34]

Why do the same problems remain, despite decades of active equality work? First of all, gender equality is a controversial issue in other sectors of society as well, and therefore an arena of continuous negotiations and confrontations.[35] Struggle over the concept is an integral part of gender equality policy, and meanings ascribed to equality at any given time reorganise and transform social power relations by defining certain differences as more central for equality than others.[36] Gender projects are regarded as feminist issues that challenge structures and cultures. They often encounter reluctance or indifference on the part of the educational authorities and institutional administrations at the universities. Policy documents tend not to take into account the requirements in equality declarations.[37]

Another constant problem has been the difficult and sensitive concepts around gender. Gender goes beyond your skin. Whenever people start to see how gendered inequalities are built into the practices and processes of teaching and learning, they start to see the same patterns in society—and in their own lives and partnerships. Young people who study to become teachers, for example, are not necessarily willing to change their whole world view. The following reflections of a female teacher educator in a study conducted at the University of Lapland are very familiar in my courses as well, and reported widely in other studies too:

> When discussing these themes, it is kind of experienced—the boys experience it—as if it is directed towards them as individuals, and that, kind of, men are being evaluated and criticised, and this is just the traditional, classical expectation. [Sometimes] even girls have stood up […] to strongly defend men.[38]

The myth of Finland as a country where 'we are already gender equal' is an obstacle to long-term, efficient work. There is evidence of Finnish people's positive attitudes to gender equality as a principle, but studies reveal counteraction and hostility towards it as actual deeds.[39] To proceed as if the categories do not matter because they should not matter would be to fail to show how they continue to ground social existence.[40] On the other hand, a gender perspective sometimes means repeating existing hierarchies and essential understandings of gender. Emphasising the difficulties around the concepts is also a problem; sometimes teacher educators do not want to talk about gender because they are afraid of doing it 'wrong', and because the theme provokes emotions.[41]

Even if feminist scholars have collaborated in equality projects, perspectives have not always met. Neo-liberal tendencies in market-oriented and project-based gender equality work have been criticised by feminist activists, and queer, anti-racist and postcolonial scholars have argued that gender-equality policies are concerned more with equality between men and women than with multiple dimensions of gender and sexual diversity.[42] However, intersectional analysis that has developed in feminist gender studies has gradually had its impact in equality work. Diversity, non-discrimination and social justice have been paired with gender equality as a goal in

legislation, guiding documents and projects. Whilst this is a most welcome reform, it also means a challenge for gender researchers in education and other activists to keep gender in the agenda[43]: throughout the history of equality work internationally, there is evidence about the tendency to forget gender and focus on other dimensions.

In the following section, emergence of feminist studies in education will be described. Because of sustainable collaboration of gender research and equality work, this section also acts as a bridge to the 'boy discourse' that has constantly troubled gender equality work.

Feminist Research in Education, an Ally of Gender Equality Work

Feminist gender research in education can be defined as research that draws on feminist theorisations and focuses on gendered structures, processes, practices or identities in education, predominantly in intersection with other dimensions of difference and inequalities. It encompasses a myriad of methods and methodologies, but projects share a commitment to feminist ethics and theories. Simply using gender as a category of analyses does not mean that it is feminist, even if it can be a starting point for researchers who are interested in the complex ways gender is constructed and the ways it operates in education.[44] Gender is both an empirical category and a theoretical conceptualisation, and the goal is to achieve greater understandings of social, cultural and educational relations and divisions, while also laying them bare through description.[45] Gender has in early research been analysed as socially constructed,[46] as performative,[47] and as something that we do, challenge, emphasise, ridicule, but cannot escape.[48]

The background is in women's studies that started in the USA and some European countries along with the second wave of the feminist and civil rights movement of the 1960s, affecting both politics and attitudes towards social structures and fields of knowledge. An aim was to criticise the tendencies in human sciences for conclusions drawing on research that is limited to men and boys. Gender and education research flourished in the UK from the 1970s, and had 'a flying start' in Sweden, Norway and Denmark as well.[49] It reached Finland in the late 1980s predominantly through two routes. First, contact with strong Nordic research was influential after one of the tasks given to the CEOE was to write a review on gender and education research in the other Nordic countries.[50] Second, Tuula Gordon, a Finnish scholar who had conducted her PhD and worked with feminist researchers in the sociology of education in London, returned to Finland.

In 1987 we established with Tuula Gordon and other colleagues a national Gender and Education research network related to, and with the resources of, the CEOE. This kind of start gives an example of alliance between the feminist movement, state feminist equality officers and gender researchers which was distinctive to Nordic feminist research. Regular national workshops and seminars were organised, in the

beginning mostly outside the mainstream educational fora. Because of the twofold origins in Nordic and UK research, the network had strong international links from the beginning. Feminist ethnography in education in Finland started in this network. By the early 2000s, Finnish gender and education research had achieved a stable, internationally recognised position in the fields of education, sociology of education and youth research.[51]

In the early gender studies internationally, the focus was typically on girls, often issues of voice (or lack thereof) and of 'quiet' girls.[52] Rather than research on girls, Nordic researchers explored the role that schools and other institutions play in social inequalities, focusing on school structures, practices and processes, including gender bias in textbooks, gender differentiation in the curriculum, and gendered practices in the classroom.[53] Whilst starting from gender, feminist researchers in Finland also paid attention to other dimensions of difference. In PhD studies informed by this networking, there are several with focus on gender, but in several others age, ethnicity, class, sexuality or disability[54] have been analysed in intersection with gender. This was when we were not yet familiar with the concept of intersectionality: understanding that oppression operates via multiple categories and lead to different lived experiences.[55]

Post-structuralism was already in the 1990s addressed by Finnish feminist researchers also in the field of education,[56] but during the 2000s neo-material and post-human perspectives achieved a more central position.[57] Theoretical analyses were developed that trouble the position of the researcher, widen the idea of the ethnographic field and problematise the early feminist stance of 'giving the voice' to the powerless.[58] Gender is not any more the main concern of feminist researchers. However, the alliance with equality politics has remained and researchers keep on participating in equality projects and act as experts in administration and media. One of the constant joint tasks is in troubling the dichotomic understanding of gender in the 'boy discourse'.

The 'Boy Discourse' in Education

Boy discourse is fed by concerns about boys' school achievement, attainment and behaviour. It has its background in statistics and achievement tests instituted by restructuring policies, with a neo-liberal focus on standards and competition and a neo-conservative focus on basic skills. Measurable results are regarded as school outcomes, and categories on which comparisons are made are regarded as the essential ones. The discourse overwhelms statistics about more substantial variation within each gender than between genders, as well as findings that boys who have problems are typically working-class boys. It also surpasses statistics concerning the impact of school achievement to further routes and possibilities of men and women.[59]

The fact that girls' educational achievement is, on average, better than that of boys, has been known for a long time. It has not always been regarded as a problem but as a self-evident gender pattern that does not destabilise the power position of

men in any society.[60] However, since the 1980s, a 'travelling discourse'[61] because of boys' poor achievement has run in time and space without a clear view what 'underachievement' means in specific contexts. Behind the concern are structural changes in many Western countries, in which direct routes from school to manual work are limited, and the futures of working-class boys have been challenged. Boys from higher socio-economic backgrounds have also experienced difficulties, because more and more girls are applying for the same fields of education with better grades.[62]

In Finland, the first round of discussion on boys' underachievement started after the first cohort finished comprehensive school in 1982 and the new application system to upper secondary schools provided nationwide statistics. As a planner in the National Board of Education, I did an investigation into the routes to upper secondary education. I was astonished by the finding that girls were accepted into their fields of choice in upper secondary education less often than boys, even if they achieved more highly on average. Yet the media picked the finding concerning boys' weaker marks. "School oppresses boys!" shouted a title in a professional journal. An equality officer answered: "School betrays girls!" This was a step towards the juxtaposition of girls and boys which has continued during the following decades.[63]

PISA results have given new openings to the boy discourse every three years. Girls' better results in reading tests are rather universal in European countries, whilst the situation has varied in mathematics and sciences.[64] In almost all tests, gender differences have been larger in Finland than in other OECD countries, even if the results of Finnish boys have been excellent in relation to results in other countries. Social and cultural differences, measured with variables based on socio-economic background, and between students of Finnish and immigrant origin, have been larger than gender differences. After being minor in the first tests, by the 2018 test social differences have been reaching the average of the OECD.[65]

With colleagues, I have analysed how gender difference in reading is presented in Finland's PISA reports 2000–18, focusing on the first official report of each test.[66] We noticed that statistical tables and comments in texts about gender differences in achievement were presented more often than those that measure social and cultural differences. Moreover, words like 'worry', 'threat' and 'need of action' were used in relation to gender differences, but rarely in relation to other differences. In the reports of the latest tests, the text included some information about variation on gender difference in relation to area and school, but the statistical tables depicted comparisons of gender differences between countries rather than intersections of social or cultural background and gender. We argued that gender is presented as a "super-variable",[67] that distracts attention from economical and racialised inequalities to boys' school achievement, thus strengthening and maintaining the gendered discourse of worry.

PISA researchers have presented warnings concerning simplified interpretations from averages,[68] but some media and politicians tend to read the results their own ways. For example, the 2015 PISA report expressed concerns about growing socio-economic and regional inequalities, but the Minister of Education invited researchers to find solutions to the achievement of boys, "this pain point of our educational structure",[69] resulting to a research review and a report on challenges and solutions to boys' learning.[70] Interestingly, better practices and processes in education for all

students were suggested in these publications, instead of solutions with a focus only on boys. This is also my general finding concerning several national or international projects that have started with worries about boys' achievements but ended up without any specific ideas of 'pedagogy for boys'.[71] Solutions are not easily found if the starting point is a normative understanding of gender and the belief that all boys (but not girls) have problems in school. Every now and then, however, pedagogic projects with stereotypically male contents and with more men in schools are promoted.[72]

Why is the 'boy discourse' so powerful? Fundamental in this discourse are taken-for-granted assumptions about differences between boys and girls. Arguments of gender differences, for example slower development of boys, are regularly presented in media, also as opinions of some well-known psychiatrists. For example, gender differences in development of brains have lately been suggested as a cause of achievement gaps.[73] Even some important policy documents include understanding of essential gender differences.[74]

'Gender difference' research has a long history. It flourished, especially in psychology, in the USA after the Second World War. A meta-analysis[75] showed that researchers, and especially media, tend to emphasise gender differences that are found in some studies and pay less attention to much stronger evidence from studies in which differences are not found. It was argued that this tendency was motivated by political aims to prove profound gender differences and female inferiority during the era when the Women's movement took its first steps. R.W. Connell[76] suggested back in the 1980s, that without the cultural bias of both writers and readers, we might actually talk about 'sex similarity' research. More recently, some brain researchers have used similar arguments as the critical research in the 1970s: studies where gender differences in brains are found get more easily publicised than studies in which no difference is found. This has been coined 'neurosexism'.[77] Interestingly, whilst the early gender difference researchers argued, for example, that girls need not get equal teaching in Mathematics because their limited capacities, the alleged slower development of boys' brains is used for arguments about changes in schools and pedagogy.

Another reason for the popularity of the boy discourse is that it is based on quantitative research. Numbers are acts of governance through which power and policy can be executed, and politics can be obscured by the policy of numbers.[78] Statistics do not easily grasp complicated societal phenomena. In PISA, gender is easily presented as a dichotomy in a statistical table, unlike social and cultural background. Gender-responsible qualitative researchers have constantly presented intersectional analysis, showing varying positions and representations of boys and masculinities and suggested solutions for the problems of some of the boys, including gender sensitiveness, for example through artistic work, and problematising the prevailing masculine cultures of competitiveness and aggression.[79] But this research has never been as easy to access as the quantitative analyses that respond to the stereotypical understanding of gender and the desire to maintain gendered hierarchies.

Conclusion: Looking to the Future of Interlinked Gender Discourses

In this chapter, I have described and analysed the long history of interlinked gender discourses in education: the troubling discourses of gender equality and boy discourse, and feminist research on gender in education. In this conclusion I reflect on continuities, progress and challenges.

There are lots of continuities in these discourses, as I have shown. Gender equality work in education started almost 40 years ago, but many of the propositions of the early declarations are still relevant. For example, gender segregation in post-compulsory education is still acute, and it has considerable impact on labour markets, gendered wages and the whole of society. Both recent and older studies suggest gendered and heteronormative processes, contents and materials, and teachers lacking gender awareness. Sexual and gender-based harassment are not necessarily addressed in schools.[80] In teacher education, courses on gender are still rare and are often based on extra work by active teacher educators.[81] Individual commitment is too often a means for organisations not to distribute commitment.[82]

I have also described in this chapter valued changes and positive signs, such as the growth and widening perspectives of feminist research in education in Finnish universities. I have suggested that there is increasing gender awareness in the policy level, such as the requirement to write equality plans in all educational institutions and the discursive change in the curriculum frameworks. There are active working groups on equality and social justice in teacher education units and more and more students who require teaching on the theme, as well as committed teacher educators who keep on including themes related to gender and equality in their teaching. There are new materials for schools and teacher education, provided by administration, NGOs and projects such as SETSTOP. Understanding of diversities of gender and intersectionality challenge dichotomic understanding of gender that contributes to the 'boy discourse'. The objective of the current government's Action Plan for Gender Equality 2020–2023 is to make Finland a leading country in gender equality.[83]

There are also challenges. I am afraid that still today, as after the TASUKO project, feminist teacher educators still have to renegotiate small steps forward every academic year and gender courses are not necessarily accepted as part of their teaching responsibilities.[84] Moreover, small steps taken in the administration do not easily have impact in the field. A review of schools' equality plans[85] shows that gender equality is often regarded as a widespread value but concrete measures are missing. Equality planning may turn equality work into managerialist practices, which produce a quantified, statistically controllable and instrumentalised understanding of equality.[86] Equality as a self-evident, achieved or narrative of advancement tends to bypass equality as deeds and action.[87] There is evidence of steps towards more social justice and gender awareness, but the process can stop or be reversed.

I have lived almost four decades as a feminist researcher, participating in gender equality work and trying to analyse the boy discourse. This work would never have

been possible without the networks of feminist gender researchers in education that started in the late 1980s. As Sandra Acker and Anne Wagner pointed out in 2019, senior feminist scholars in the neoliberal Academia in various national contexts use a range of strategies that enable them to maintain their critical focus despite increasing pressures to conform. This is very much the experience of myself and colleagues in Finland too, as shown in interviews with teacher educators.[88]

The history of equality work in education suggests that there always have been possibilities. As explicated in the mission of the SETSTOP project, new and old actors hope for the dream of equal and socially just education to become true but understand that only small steps will ever be taken.

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Elina Lahelma is Professor Emerita at the University of Helsinki. She has conducted research and published extensively in the fields of sociology of education, feminist studies in education and educational ethnography. She has been the leader of several research projects funded by the Academy of Finland in the areas of gender, citizenship, differences and inequalities in primary and secondary schools and has also led a national project, funded by the Ministry of Education, on gender awareness in teacher education. Lahelma has also been a partner in various Nordic research projects and networks and has been conferred Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Lapland.

Chapter 17
Rainbow Paradise? Sexualities and Gender Diversity in Finnish Schools

Jukka Lehtonen

Abstract The Finnish education system, welfare state and Finland's position in respect to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) human rights have been praised. In this chapter, the utopian image of Finnish education system as a 'rainbow paradise' is questioned. Legislation, curricula, teachers, school textbooks, experiences of non-heterosexual, trans and intersex youth as well as LGBTI human rights organisations' work are discussed, as well as the influence of COVID-19. All are looked at from the viewpoint of heteronormativity. Even if there have been several advancements in acknowledging sexual and gender diversity within Finnish education, particularly in the area of legislation and educational policies, there are serious everyday problems in making schools safe for LGBTI students and teachers, as well as with treating everyone equally despite their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Teacher training, teaching and textbooks used in schools are often still heteronormative, and teachers lack tools and motivation in resisting heteronormative starting points in their work. Youth culture has changed in recent years, it has become more diverse and less judgemental towards LGBTI youth but non-heterosexual, trans and intersex students are still clearly experiencing more violence in schools than cisgender heterosexual students. The mainly heteronormative Finnish education system creates stress and mental health problems for LGBTI youth. Counselling and health care services are still not fully able to respond to their needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has only made the situation worse. In short, it will require a sustained effort to make the Finnish education system anything close to a 'rainbow paradise'.

Nordic countries, Finland including, have often been portrayed as a haven for gender equality and a model example of perfect sex education. In the ILGA-Europe survey, Finland ranks highly when comparing lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) rights in Europe.[1] It has also had same-sex registered partnership legislation since 2002 and an equal marriage law since 2017. According to the results of

J. Lehtonen (✉)
Gender Studies, University of Helsinki, PL 59, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: jukka.p.lehtonen@helsinki.fi

the European Social Survey data the majority of people in Finland take the view that lesbians and gays should be free to live their lives as they wish, and the proportion sharing this view has increased over the last two decades from over 60% to about 80%.[2] The results indicate that women, younger people, those who are religiously non-active and those with higher education have more accepting attitudes towards lesbians and gays than others. Similar patterns are common in attitudes towards gender diversity, even if trans and intersex issues are less well known. All of this, added to the generally favourable evaluation of the Finnish education system and Finnish teacher training, might lead people to think that schools in Finland are a safe haven for LGBTI students and teachers. Unfortunately, this is not the case in most schools. More often, equality and non-discrimination are true only in official documents and legislation, but rarely in the everyday levels of schooling.

In this chapter, I question the utopian image of Finnish education system as a 'rainbow paradise'. I look at the Finnish school from the perspective of sexual and gender diversity and heteronormativity. Heteronormativity refers to a way of thinking or reacting that refuses to see diversity in sexual orientation and gender, and that considers a particular way of expressing or experiencing gender and sexuality to be better than another. This includes normative heterosexuality and gender normativity, according to which only women and men are considered to exist in the world. Men are supposed to be masculine in the "right" way and women feminine in the "right" way. According to heteronormative thinking, gender groups are internally homogeneous and each other's opposites, and they are hierarchical in that men and maleness are considered more valuable than women and femaleness. The heterosexual maleness of men and the heterosexual femaleness of women are emphasised and are understood to have biological origins (cisnormativity).

This chapter draws on queer theory, particularly the work of Judith Butler, Kevin Kumashiro and Deborah Britzman, who emphasise the importance of challenging and transgressing heteronormativity; the binary construction of gender and sexuality; and opposition towards hegemonic regimes of gender and sexuality.[3] Queer theory provides important analytic tools for making sense of gender and sexual justice in an educational context, particularly with respect to the impact and effects of institutionalised heteronormativity.[4] Another viewpoint that is vital for this chapter is an understanding of intersectionality.[5]

I will focus here on legislation and core curricula documents, teachers and teacher training, teaching and textbooks, but also on the experiences of non-heterosexual, trans and intersex[6] youth with respect to their schooling and to the educational outreach work of non-governmental organisations on LGBTI issues. With this analysis of the school system and its practices I will argue that there is still a long way to go before Finland could be called any kind of rainbow paradise.

The work builds on my long research experience and data collected from the last 30 years, including interviews, ethnographic data, documents, textbooks, and surveys. I draw also on a recent diversity and equality related research project WeAll.[7] My focus is non-heterosexual and trans youth at work and in education. WeAll got additional funding to analyse the COVID-19 crises from the perspective of working

life. I have been studying LGBTI people over this time, and at the end of the chapter I discuss the influence of COVID-19 on schooling from an LGBTI perspective.

In this chapter, I focus first on legislation and policy documents, and on how they are enforced in educational institutions and practices. Then I analyse the topics from the youth perspective and ask how young people experience their schooling and peer group pressure. Third, I describe the educational outreach work of LGBTI organisations with schools and analyse the challenges in that work. Finally, I focus on COVID-19 and make some concluding remarks.

Recent Advancements in Finnish Legislation and Educational Policy Documents

Finland has legislation to criminalise discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in the workplace, including educational institutions. Teachers or students are not allowed to be discriminated against based on sexuality or gender. Anti-discrimination law concerning working life was enacted as early as 1995 but has covered discrimination more broadly since 2004. The Equality and Non-Discrimination Act was renewed in 2014 and came into force in 2016 to strengthen equality and non-discrimination in education, workplaces and elsewhere. The framework of this renewed legislation covers trans and intersex people as well as sexual minorities.

Accordingly, all schools and educational institutions must have a plan to address gender equality and advance anti-discrimination measures. Equality and non-discriminatory measures, based on either gender or sexuality, should therefore be advanced at basic, upper secondary and tertiary educational levels. The current legislation does not yet cover early childhood education, but the current government has plans to include this level of education in the similar framework of demands. There are also plans to renew trans legislation, which would make it easier for people to undergo a gender-reassignment process, and prohibit unnecessary surgery for intersex children to make them fit into gender-binary system. The pandemic has postponed these changes.

For the first time in 2014, sexual orientation was included in the Finnish national core curriculum for basic education (children aged 7–16). This was an important step towards increasing LGBTI visibility in educational settings. The introduction to the core curricula document only mentions the word 'sexual orientation' once, as part of a listing of the prohibited reasons to discriminate against people on various grounds in the Finnish Constitution or anti-discrimination law.[8] Adequate information on how to deal with issues of sexual orientation in education is not provided. The core curricula document does raise the anti-discrimination law as something that should be considered when planning education in schools.

Gender diversity is considered more, as the curriculum document states "basic education adds knowledge and understanding on gender diversity",[9] which is understood to mean that there should be some education on gender diversity issues in basic education. The document also mentions that during compulsory education "students' understanding of their gender identity and sexuality develops, and along with its values and practices, the learning community advances gender equality, and supports students in constructing their identities".[10]

The National Board of Education published a guidebook[11] in 2015 on how schools can advance gender equality and include gender diversity in compulsory education. The guidebook covers gender diversity issues progressively and mentions LGBT youth as a group vulnerable to bullying and harassment. No guidebook has yet been published by the Finnish Government specifically on sexual orientation issues.

Heteronormative Institutional Practices and Teaching

The rather progressive legislative and policy document changes around sexual and gender minority issues in Finland have not yet led to far-reaching or systematic changes in schools. Both primary and secondary education often lack coherent protection of LGBTI students. Despite the clearly stated law on equality and anti-discrimination planning having been in place for over 15 years, many upper secondary or higher educational institutions do not comply with the law and have not changed the relevant policies. In basic education, equality and anti-discrimination planning has been demanded since 2016, but a recent evaluation survey found serious problems with planning and with some schools not doing what was required.[12] Furthermore, schools are neither monitored nor held accountable by the government. Institutions with a plan do not necessarily formulate it satisfactorily, that is, by having all partners (teachers, staff members and students) involved in the formation of the policy.[13] Often specific tasks and concrete changes related to sexual orientation or gender diversity are not included in planning, or the tasks planned are not carried out or followed up.

A key problem lies in the teacher education institutions in the universities. Only a few have compulsory courses or lectures on how to handle sexual and gender diversity issues within teaching and teachers' work.[14] A more common approach is to have optional or voluntary courses and lectures which are typically organised by feminist teacher educators and followed by students who are already interested in gender and sexuality issues and rights (see Lahelma's chapter in this book). The risk is that the teacher educators and students who most urgently need more knowledge and tools to tackle heteronormativity are not part of this teaching. There is also a risk that when activist-oriented teacher educators who have organised these courses leave the university, the topic will not be handled or the courses organised by anybody else.

Although teacher training in Finland is famously high-quality, the universities are not able to train teachers to prevent heteronormativity, give knowledge on gender diversity and make schooling safe for LGBTI children and youth. The equality

projects I have been involved with have found that it is also difficult for the state to order universities to change this situation, so long as universities have autonomy to decide on how they organise their teaching. The universities themselves have often rather progressive general equality and anti-discrimination planning documents, and sexual and gender diversity issues are often addressed within them. The typical problem though is that universities are focusing on general level issues and values, but at the faculty or department level there is not enough thought given to what the advancement of gender equality and anti-discrimination—including sexual orientation and gender identity or expression—means at the practical level of teaching and teacher-student interaction.

When it comes to teachers, there is evidence that they do not have particularly negative attitudes towards LGBTI rights but, perhaps based on their training, they are not very motivated to learn how to prevent heteronormativy. In a 2010 survey published in the teacher trade union magazine 'Opettaja', the attitudes of teachers towards sexual minorities and their rights appear support of LGBTI rights legislation at first.[15] Of more than a thousand respondents, about 70% indicated they approve of marriage for same-sex couples and of granting them adoption rights. Even more teachers said they would accept a teacher going through a gender-reassignment process. In their responses, most teachers indicated they would not consider schools a safe place for LGBTI youth if their non-heterosexual sexuality was common knowledge. Teacher respondents belonging to sexual minorities were notably more sensitive to the range of sexuality existing in educational institutions. In that sense, teachers belonging to sexual minorities could be considered a resource in schools.[16] They are, though, often expected to hide their sexuality which makes it difficult for them to reach out to non-heterosexual colleagues and students. Of all the teacher respondents, 84% indicated they did not require more information about matters related to sexual orientation. Of non-heterosexual teachers, significantly fewer (64%), gave the same response. Non-heterosexual teachers were more eager to get more knowledge on how to tackle heteronormativy than heterosexual teachers, seemingly even if they were already more sensitive to sexual and gender diversity. Such high numbers of teachers unwilling to learn more are concerning considering that most thought their schools to be unsafe places for non-heterosexual youth to disclose their sexuality.

In school practices including teaching, heteronormativity is still widespread. LGBTI issues are dealt to some extent within Health Education and some other subjects.[17] Textbooks often cover sexual and gender diversity issues only marginally, typically reinforcing heteronormativity and gender normalisation. Topics are inadequately dealt with in most books; mostly they are covered in Health Education books in the sections on Sex Education. This strategy marginalises the topics, relating them only to sexual behaviour and health or sickness. It does not question heteronormativity in Languages, History, Science and other subjects. Sex education is also criticised for being too clinical and technical, and not focusing on pleasure and cultural and social perspectives, and for reproducing heterosexuality, whiteness and able-bodiedness as norms.[18] Textbooks still guide teachers in their teaching choices; transforming instruction material to question heteronormativity and to include more

relevant material from the perspective of sexual and gender diversity would be an important change.

Experiences of Non-heterosexual, Trans and Intersex Youth

In a survey of nearly 2000 young LGBTI people, one non-heterosexual[19] respondent said that "school teaching is mostly really heteronormative".[20] Heteronormativity, the concept many young people use themselves, is still a persistent part of Finnish culture and young people themselves are reporting in various research projects that they are surrounded by heteronormative practices.[21] There are some transformations happening, and more young people are aware of sexual and gender diversity. This diversity is also more visible for young people in the media as well as in their own surroundings, such as hobbies, friendship networks, social media and families. Non-heterosexual and trans youth are becoming more open about their identities at an early age and in schools. More than previously, young trans[22] persons are seeking advice and support for their transitioning from medical and LGBTI rights organisations.

Young people generally have fairly accepting attitudes towards sexual and gender diversity even if there still are many problems and prejudices. This could be linked to the fact that Finland is fairly secularised, and there are only small conservative religious groups that fight against LGBTI rights. Young people are constructing their sexuality and gender within their peer groups and under the influence of media and culture. Heteronormative pressure is constant but there are more and more groups of young people for whom sexual and gender diversity is fairly normal and an everyday aspect of their lives.[23] This makes it easier for LGBTI youth to find their way within youth culture. Non-heterosexual, trans and intersex youth can find more information, both negative and positive, from the internet and social media.[24]

At the same time the role of education in Finland in advancing gender equality and understanding of diverse sexualities and genders is lagging behind the general changes in young people's attitudes. Often, the students themselves, whether heterosexual or non-heterosexual, whether cisgender or trans, criticise the gender binary thinking or lack of information on LGBTI issues in schools. Many non-heterosexual, trans and intersex youth experience their education as problematic and feel that they do not find themselves in the curricula. Typically, the teaching and representations of people in the textbooks include only heterosexual and cisgender images, and the underlying assumption is that people are or are becoming heterosexual and cisgender. This influences young people's understanding of themselves: they learn that sexual and gender diversity issues are not seen as relevant and some LGBTI young people might learn that they are not relevant. In a 2013 survey, a young respondent described her experience of the basic education teaching as problematic: "I think school teaching on sexual minorities is poor—it does not help students to find and accept themselves—but it feels narrow-minded and heteronormative. It is behind its time, and it should be transformed. Descriptions of bisexuality and trans

people were miserable, bad and wrong. Heterosexuality was emphasised, and books highlight [heterosexuality], as the only right way".[25]

Still, the majority of young non-heterosexual and trans youth hide their sexual or gender identity.[26] Such hiding of identity is more common in rural than urban areas, and more likely in basic than upper secondary education. This secrecy around LGBTI identities increases the invisibility of sexual and gender diversity within Finnish educational institutions.

Heteronormative pressure and minority stress attached to the vulnerable position of being LGBTI youth in schools lead to risks of mental and other health problems as well as problems in everyday practices related to sleeping, eating and hygiene.[27] In a national and large school health survey, it was found out that non-heterosexual students (about 10% of the respondents) and trans students (about 4% of the respondents) were suffering from mental health issues and loneliness more often than heterosexual and cisgender students.[28]

Heteronormative Violence in Schools

LGBTI youth in Finland can face various kinds of violence (physical, psychological or mental, verbal, sexual or religion-related) or threats of violence in their lives. Mental violence is most typical, then physical. The most typical forms of negative behaviour faced by non-heterosexual and trans youth during a 2013 survey were insulting name-calling and teasing and exclusion from groups, which are practices typical in schools and other educational settings.[29] These practices can limit students' abilities to be themselves and express their gender and sexuality in the way they want, in schools and elsewhere.[30]

It was found in a 2017 national school health survey that non-heterosexual youth experienced violence significantly more often than heterosexual youth and trans youth clearly more often than cisgender youth.[31] Trans respondents had been bullied on a weekly basis in basic education (23%) more often than in vocational (15%), or in general (6%) upper secondary education.[32] In a similar 2019 survey, non-heterosexual respondents experienced bullying on a weekly basis more often in basic education (15%) than in vocational (9%) or general (3%) upper secondary education.[33] Non-heterosexual boys experienced violence more frequently than girls. Trans respondents experienced this kind of violence clearly more often than non-heterosexual youth.

When violence towards LGBTI people is analysed, the focus is often on homo- or transphobic violence, and the rest of the violence they face is not considered so much. In a LGBTI youth survey in 2013, it was found that much of the violence these young people experience in their lives is neither homophobic nor transphobic.[34] They experience more violence than their heterosexual cisgender peers, but it is not typically based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. There were however gendered differences. One important difference, for example, lies in physical violence: while 40% of non-heterosexual men felt that it was linked to their sexual orientation or

gender expression, only 15% out of non-heterosexual women felt so. The majority of non-heterosexual women saw no connection with these factors in all other forms of violence except religiously-motivated violence. Trans respondents felt more often than non-heterosexual respondents that phobia-related factors were meaningful in explaining the violence or negative behaviour that they had faced.

Gender is a meaningful aspect when analysing violence towards LGBTI youth in schools, and heteronormativity as a conceptual tool.[35] In a 2013 survey, one young non-heterosexual boy said: "In basic education, I experienced bullying because most of my friends were girls, and this was after other boys got interested in girls and I felt the same for boys".[36] Gender non-confirming youth seem to be at greater risk of facing violence, which might explain the higher levels of violence experienced among the trans respondents and non-heterosexual boys who are perceived not to be masculine enough. I also argue that it is more difficult for presumed boys and men to bend the gender norms than for presumed girls and women, and that explains the result of transfeminine respondents' higher experience of violence compared to trans-masculine respondents. Sexual violence was also more common in the school context for non-heterosexual women (than men) and for transmasculine respondents (than transfeminine). Presumed women face sexual violence more often than presumed men. It is easier to threaten a victim with violence, or attack them with physical and mental violence, if they do not have friends to support them, do not fit into a group, or may not like or value the same things as wanted by the perpetrator of the violence. LGBTI youth belonging to other minority groups also face racist or other types of violence and intersecting differences are important to keep in mind when analysing gendered differences.[37]

I define heteronormative violence as violence that is argued with or influenced by a heteronormative understanding of gender and sexuality or that aims to maintain heteronormativity. Homo- and transphobic violence are specific aspects of heteronor-mative violence. By focusing only on homo- and transphobic violence, a major part of violence towards LGBTI youth is made invisible. This is particularly problematic when thinking about the experiences of violence of non-heterosexual women and transmasculine respondents who often seem to experience heteronormative but not always homo- and transphobic violence, such as the majority of sexual violence.

Non-violence policies and programmes exist in schools, but LGBTI youth are often not taken into account at all, or only marginally, and the heteronormative culture of schools is not challenged by these policies. In the future, educational institutions should focus more on heteronormative violence, and make concrete plans on how to tackle it as part of their equality and non-discrimination planning and violence prevention. Schools and teachers should also ponder how they, along with their students, could create understanding as well as a student culture that would not re-enforce heteronormativity but question and prevent it. This would demolish the arguments and motivation behind heteronormative violence.

LGBTI Organisations' Educational Work

LGBTI organisations are doing educational outreach work in schools and other educational settings in Finland in order to break the silence around non-heterosexuality and gender diversity.[38] Seta, a Finnish national LGBTI umbrella organisation for 28 member organisations, is doing this work in order to advance knowledge on sexuality and gender diversity in both basic (7–16 years) and upper secondary (16–20 years) schools, as well as in tertiary education. In fact, this outreach work is often the only slightly more in-depth information students receive about LGBTI issues as schools and teachers lack the knowledge and training to offer such an education.

Seta trains voluntary educational activists of local member organisations, which are mainly responsible for organising the educational outreach work in schools and other educational institutions in their area. There are around 200 more or less active voluntary educational activists in Seta and its member organisations, and 150–250 visits in Finnish schools and other educational settings are made yearly. This means that thousands of people have a chance every year to hear an activist or an employee from Seta to talk about LGBTI issues. In every age cohort in Finland, there are about 60,000 young people, which means that the Seta training impacts around 5–10% of each age cohort. There are bigger figures in larger towns in which Seta has an active member organisation, and smaller ones in countryside and small towns. The recipients of the training are mostly young people. Also, there is so-called 'professional' training organised mostly for university students, this sometimes includes teacher trainees.[39]

Along with telling their personal LGBTI 'story', outreach workers from Seta are mostly engaged with educating about LGBTI issues. The storytelling approach can be defined as experience-based or narrative-based education or learning which is still being used in Finland.[40] This approach is emphasised in order to increase the visibility of LGBTI people in schools. Seta tries to also address the issue of transforming or changing society. In a sense, Seta tries to incorporate some aspects of the anti-oppressive education framework, developed by Kevin Kumashiro, consisting of education for the other (role model approach), education about the other (disseminating information about LGBTI lives in Finnish society), and education that is critical of privileging and othering (norm critical pedagogy).[41] Diversity understanding and LGBTI-based identity descriptions are still very much in focus during the outreach visits in schools, but recently there has been more of an aim to bring norm-critical perspectives to these visits.

Despite these efforts to transform Finnish schools and society through outreach work and activism, schools' everyday teaching practices have rarely changed. The educational outreach visits have often been done year after year in the same schools without much impact in terms of teaching practices or dominant ideology. Given the limited time and resources of the educational outreach work, questions are raised about whether efforts would be better targeted towards changing the structures of education or helping students to get models for being LGBTI. Does the norm-critical

approach mean the erasure of LGBTI visibility, and does the focus on identities mean that the queering of schools fails to get done? LGBTI organisations are only reaching a small proportion of schools and students with their educational outreach work. It is great that they can provide expertise on sexuality and gender diversity issues in developing new methods and practices, but often in practice they just fill the gaps of official education by adding extra information on LGBTI issues in heteronormative schools.[42] LGBTI organisations might better use their knowledge to criticise the heteronormative practices of schools, or to help teachers develop their own abilities to include sexual and gender diversity in their curricula and pedagogical interactions.

Seta is funded mainly by state-owned gaming company Veikkaus which funds many non-governmental organisations, especially in the area of social and health care work. To some extent, limited funding constrains the scope and variety of Seta's educational outreach work. There is concern these gaming funds may decrease and the funding for Seta and other organisations dramatically reduce in the future, which might further constrain LGBTI educational outreach activities in Finland.

The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Challenge for LGBTI Youth

In Finland, like everywhere else, the COVID-19 crisis has affected a lot of people, including LGBTI students and teachers. My research[43] found that over 90% of LGBTI student respondents said that COVID-19 had had an influence on their studies. The most common influence was remote learning, when schools were closed and students studied at home with computers. For LGBTI students this sometimes created difficulties but for others it provided safety. One fifth of the respondents said that remote learning had decreased discrimination, bullying and unjust behaviour towards them. A third said that the COVID-19 pandemic had made it less likely that they were treated badly based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The difficulties some faced included problems in concentrating on their studies (65%), increased loneliness (59%) and fear of getting infected by COVID (33%). For some the crisis had motivated them to drop out of education and had strained relationships with people at home. Non-heterosexual women were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic more often than men, and transmasculine respondents more often than transfeminine.

The Save the Children organisation surveyed the influence of the COVID-19 crisis on young people in Finland and included questions about respondent's sexual orientation and gender identity.[44] Compared to cisgender heterosexual respondents, LGBTI youth respondents were more likely to feel themselves stressed (66%, all 54%), anxious (63%, all 49%) and depressed (49%, all 33%) because of the COVID-19 crisis.[45] In my study, it was found that LGBTI youth were influenced more than adults by the pandemic, with 45% more depressed, 64% more anxious, 40% more fearful and 17% more suicidal. Of all LGBTI youth, 43% felt their wellbeing was worse than prior to the crisis. These responses were more common for trans respondents than non-heterosexual respondents, and more common for non-heterosexual

women than men. At the same time 48% of the youth respondents had avoided health services and 19% avoided mental health services. These were more typical for trans respondents than for non-heterosexual respondents, even if there were more mental health problems among trans respondents. A gender-reassignment process had been postponed or put off indefinitely by 7%.

In my interviews with LGBTI human rights organisation activists and employees (N = 23), I found that much of the educational outreach work done with schools, peer-group work with young people and client meetings with young people had been cancelled, stopped or changed into some type of remote work. This caused problems, when remote contacts were not always easily organised from home, remote client working or peer-group activities did not fit well for all youth and children, and cancelling of educational outreach visits to schools has caused reduced information on LGBTI issues in education. At the same time, remote work had created new possibilities to reach some new audiences and made internet communication easier with new clients and youth groups, such as people living outside bigger towns.

In the interviews it was also reported that there were serious problems with young people in receiving health and mental health services. There were particular concerns about the situation of trans youth (including problems getting into a gender-reassignment process), youth with mental health issues, and young people living in conservative homes or in poverty. Organisations were also worried about delays with legal changes concerning trans legislation and the continued funding of their work.

Even if the COVID-19 pandemic had eased some discrimination and bullying in Finland because of distance learning, there had been several serious and long-lasting problems amongst LGBTI youth related to mental health, dropping out of education and loneliness. At the same time both LGBTI organisations and the wider Finnish social and health care system had difficulties responding to the needs of LGBTI youth.

Conclusion: Actions Needed to Interrupt Heteronormativy in Schools

Even if there have been many progressive changes with legislation concerning LGBTI people in Finland and even if special attention has been given to diversity and equality within education policy development, these changes often affected school practices marginally and partially. There is still clearly more violence towards LGBTI children and youth compared to heterosexual and cisgender youth in schools, and Finnish schools are not safe places to study for many LGBTI youth. Teacher training institutes as well as teaching cultures in schools are typically heteronormative, or at best only discuss sexualities and gender diversity on the margins. The same is true with sex education which otherwise is seen as progressive and meaningful. There is also

resistance among teachers to tackle the issue of diversity, especially when their training does not provide suitable conceptual and practical tools.

LGBTI teachers are typically expected to hide their sexualities and non-normative gender identity, when at the same time this is not expected from heterosexual and cisgender teachers. School health services are also not adequate to handle issues of LGBTI students in an equal manner, and often the students are left to tackle discriminatory practices and self-acceptance by themselves. There are positive examples within Finnish schools on how to better take care of LGBTI issues and resist heteronormativity, but they remain single efforts by some active teachers, students or other actors. Finnish society and its schools are not yet taking enough responsibility to challenge heteronormativity and make studying safe and equal for all.

Deborah Britzman has argued that schools and educational workers need to develop a deeper understanding and knowledge of queer theory to interrupt heteronormativity in education.[46] When it comes to the inclusion of sexual diversity or equality however, education policies lack both scope and content. The Finnish education system generally seems to maintain silence around non-heterosexuality and non-normative gender, mentioning them only vaguely in policy documents, such as in the core curriculum. Moreover, policy changes, aiming to include LGBTI themes and subjectivities, have only recently been stipulated. This indicates the gulf between a progressive society concerning LGBTI visibility and rights, and what is essentially still a quite conservative school system.

Mollie Blackburn argues it is not enough to include discussion or themes about LGBTI realities in the curriculum, without going into the underlying power structures that sustain and legitimate heterosexuality as good behaviour in a hierarchical moral ranking of sexualities.[47] Currently, the curriculum often depicts LGBTI subjectivities as the Other. To interrupt heteronormativity, teachers need to engage their students in critical thinking and make them aware of how the processes of Othering and privileging are legitimised and maintained by social structures and dominant ideologies.[48] Most education on LGBTI realities and subjectivities in Finland is therefore often carried out by the educational outreach work of LGBTI organisations. Their educational outreach work continues as the main window of opportunity to include LGBTI themes in teaching.[49] At the same time the responsibility still lies with Finnish educational institutions and their teachers and leaders to change school culture regarding inclusivity of non-heterosexual, trans and intersex students and teachers. This responsibility must be understood to bridge the gap between a 'utopic' society and the present situation in schools, if Finland's education system is to ever become close to a rainbow paradise.

Notes

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Jukka Lehtonen is Senior Researcher in the Faculty of Education in the University of Oulu and in Gender Studies at the University of Helsinki where he is also Docent in Sociology of Education. His research focus is on gender and sexuality diversity and their intersections with various differences in education and in work environments. His current research focuses on the gender and sexuality diversity with the primary education (Mapping, Making & Mattering: Arts and research-activism for addressing sexual harassment in pre-teen peer cultures, Oulu University) and the experiences of COVID-19 crises of LGBTI care workers (En Route to Recovery: Diversity and vulnerability in care work during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, Helsinki University). These research projects are funded by the Academy of Finland.

Chapter 18
Racism in Finnish School Textbooks: Developments and Discussions

Pia Mikander [ID]

Abstract While the Finnish education system has been celebrated for promoting equality, recent reports point to problems concerning racism within Finnish schools. Kristín Loftsdóttir suggests looking at racism from three angles: everyday racism, prior immobility, and structural racism. This chapter draws on this idea, showing how racism is present in Finnish school textbooks in history, social science and geography. Many textbooks seem to deviate from the curricular core values of equality by portraying the West as superior to the rest of the world. This is visible in different ways. While old racist or colonial words are removed from textbooks, the perspective may still only promote a Western worldview. Changes in textbooks might stay on a superficial level, rather than reaching the epistemological perspective. History textbook passages about colonial times might include images of racist caricatures to express the explicit racism of this era. Similar caricatures are being removed from consumer products, and we might ask whether they belong to history teaching, particularly if they do not encourage a discussion about continued racism. Using textbooks with racist content requires that teachers are aware of racism. The teacher needs to know how to lead critical reflection, while keeping the classroom safe from racist remarks. During a pandemic, when students are alone with textbooks, there is a particular concern about the democratic task of educating for anti-racism. This is especially important in a world largely influenced by a media discourse that makes certain racist opinions unremarked or seen as a matter of common sense.

Racism, particularly as a phenomenon that is part of society's structures, has not been debated very much in Finland. The education system has been considered part of a Finnish success story of equality.[1] Nevertheless, recent reports and studies, for instance, focussed on student experiences, teacher education and school textbooks, have shown that there is much to do with regards to addressing racism within Finnish schools. In a recent piece, Kristín Loftsdóttir[2] stresses the need for the Nordic countries to recognise the role of racism in social and cultural contexts, showing how the

P. Mikander (✉)
Department of Education, University of Helsinki, PL 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: pia.mikander@helsinki.fi

mainstreaming of populist claims works to give legitimacy to racism within Nordic societies. Loftsdóttir considers how racist rhetoric becomes meaningful, even considered common sense, in the Nordic countries through three intersecting points of emphasis: everyday racism and racist exceptionalism, the idea of prior immobility, and the continued existence of structural racism in multiple forms. These three are interlinked, strengthening each other in a discursive as well as material way. As an example, there are simultaneous political calls for tightened immigration policies including increased deportations and a strong discourse about Europe as essentially democratic and a bearer of human rights.

This chapter begins from the points of emphasis about racism put forward by Loftsdóttir and applies them to Finnish education. The main focus, though, is on Finnish school textbooks, asking how they reflect Loftsdóttir's points of emphasis. Textbooks uphold a privileged position; portraying knowledge legitimised by society and, concretely found in backpacks of entire generations within a nation. Values found in them reflect dominant ideologies of any society. In this chapter, the focus is on racism, school textbooks, and the use of these. What does the latest research say about Finnish school textbooks and racism? How are everyday racism, the idea of prior immobility and structural racism visible in textbooks? And finally, how have recent developments pushed for a change of old colonial imagery as historical documents in textbooks?

Since the teacher's way of using the textbook makes a difference to how students approach the text, there is a particular focus on research relevant to Finnish teachers' readiness to reflect critically on racist content. What we know about how prepared teachers are to deal with racist expressions in school textbooks is therefore also considered here. Finally, there is a need for a short discussion about the impact of the pandemic and school closures on textbook use and what challenges more remote education might pose to anti-racist education in the future.

Exceptionalism, Immobility and Structural Aspects—Racism in Finnish Education

By everyday racism, Kristín Loftsdóttir draws attention to a persistent tendency to explain away racism in the Nordics. Across the Nordic countries there is evidence of how people who do not pass as white experience exclusion and discrimination. Children with no other homeland than their Nordic country of birth may still have to prove themselves as Nordic because they are not white. They might have parents and even grandparents born in the country, but are still considered foreign. Loftsdóttir sees this as an effect of a persistent idea of the nation as a family, connecting particular bodies (white) to specific places (Nordic countries).

After a 2018 EU-wide survey,[3] *Being Black in the EU*, showed Finland to be one of the most racist countries in the union, the Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman did a further study[4] that concurred with the EU results. Together, the reports made it

clear that black people in particular in Finland witness harassment, threats and even physical violence more than is reported in other European countries. The Finnish report specified that two thirds of the respondents had experienced discrimination in education, on all levels and from both other students and teaching staff. Still, the discussion about the role of education in tackling racism as a societal challenge has barely begun. During 2020, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which originated in the US, spreading awareness about racist structures and calling for systemic change, brought people to the streets in Finland, too. In Finland, there were calls to challenge anti-black racism[5] and to raise awareness about ethnic profiling that targets racialised minorities.[6] Meanwhile, researchers have pointed to the phenomenon of Nordic exceptionalism[7] to describe the imagination of Nordic societies as innocent and even incapable of racism due to their presumed lack of involvement in colonialist ventures. Claiming that the Nordics have a past free from colonialism has been proven invalid since the Nordic countries benefited from colonial trade, but also because they shared a colonial culture. The treatment of Sámi people can also be considered as acts of colonialism.[8]

The persistent idea of racist exceptionalism makes awareness about racism in education challenging. Racism tends to be more easily seen the further away it appears, geographically as well as historically. Teaching about Rosa Parks and the civil rights movement in US history is uncontroversial, but the topic of Finland's historical and ongoing racism towards Roma people[9] has only recently, and marginally, been introduced as part of Finnish history. This phenomenon is obviously not restricted to education. Just like our fellow Europeans, we collectively shake our heads at Central American 'kids in cages' being held at the US border, but close our eyes to children and adults being washed up on Europe's southern beaches.

Connected to the idea of racist exceptionalism, Loftsdóttir raises the notion of prior immobility where the history of Europe is envisioned as having a pure and static past. Nation states are understood as natural, not historically constructed entities. The narrative is that everyone was in their own place until flows of migrants entered the area, abusing the original inhabitants of Europe through their demands of benefits. This makes it sensible to talk about the need for migrants to adjust or integrate into the (static) Nordic countries. In practice, it might not matter how hard migrants try, since they might never be considered Nordic. In this narrative, certain parts have been cut out of the fabric of history, such as colonisation but also past mobility throughout history. Importantly, Loftsdóttir remarks, this is not only the story told by right-wing populists, it is a well-circulated chronicle that is embraced even by those who do not see themselves as nationalists and who are in favour of allowing migrants to enter. A consequence of this idea is that it makes sense to request that these non-white migrants 'integrate' or 'adjust' into the society where they live (and perhaps have lived for generations).

Thirdly, Loftsdóttir points to EU immigration policies as seemingly neutral, structural aspects that facilitate populist rhetoric. The Dublin regulations have meant that people can be deported to inhuman conditions, denying them the right to apply for asylum. The regulations are not considered politicised, even though they divide people into those who deserve a good life and those who do not. The only way to

make sense of discriminatory policies is by arguing that the targeted people must have done something wrong. It is important to note how these policies, characterising certain people as less worthy, affect the Nordic populations watching the process from the side. Overall, Loftsdóttir's third point is a call for a widening of the debate about what is 'racist'. The concept of racism benefits from conceptual clarity. The Finnish discussion about racism during the 2010s circled around the entrance of the populist-nationalist Finns party as a large political player, media debate around the increase of refugees in 2015 and the integration of social or digital media into public debates.[10]

Importantly, racism is still often understood as everyday racist experiences and racist acts committed by extremist groups, thereby ignoring structural racism.[11] Structural racism refers to a system that produces and upholds a hierarchy of racialisation. Importantly, as Loftsdóttir suggests, structural aspects of racism facilitate populist rhetoric. In Finland, part of structural racism has been the hardening of immigration policies in the 2010s.[12] Regarding the relationship between education and racism, it is crucial to see the school system as an institution, which means that acts of racism within schools are more than just single events. According to *Being Black in the EU*, parents in Finland reported the highest levels of racist harassment and racial discrimination experienced by their children at school.[13] School is where young people spend most of their days. They are required to learn and cannot opt out of classes even if they might experience racial harassment from other students or teachers. School materials, even features such as decorations on the walls might strengthen whiteness.[14] Structural racism is thereby not referring to single acts of racism by teachers or other students, but ranging widely from curriculum to the non-interference in racism by teachers.[15]

Meanwhile, the Finnish basic education curriculum has been considered fairly progressive, emphasising core values such as democracy and equality. Harriet Zilliacus and colleagues[16] portray the latest curriculum as a step towards a more social justice focus in education, emphasising the need for students to become ethical and respectful. They worry that the endorsement of multicultural education will turn out to be limited to the integration of immigrant students, not as an intrinsic part of the school as a whole, which clearly is the curricular aim. Another concern is that textbooks might not be particularly loyal to the core values in the curriculum. A review even suggests that a majority of studies about educational materials show a discrepancy between values and norms visible in educational materials and curricular aims such as gender equality, respecting human rights and multiculturalism.[17]

Research About Finnish School Textbooks: Strengthening the Hegemony of the West

School textbooks that explain the world, such as books used to teach history, social science and geography, can either confirm or challenge ruling conceptions of the

world and global power relations. Most of the examples and discussions in this chapter relate to my 2016 discourse analysis of Finnish basic education school textbooks in history, geography and social science focusing on the concept of West and its Other.[18] This research showed how Finnish textbooks deviated from the curricular core values, by portraying the West as superior to the rest of the world. The hegemony of a superior West was established in different ways, including descriptions of historical events as well as current global relations. While Finnish school textbooks in history, social science and geography have started to leave explicit racist words behind, the hegemony of a superior West remains.[19] This is visible in textbook descriptions about different phenomena, ranging from wars, to population increase and trade. In descriptions of conflicts, past as well as current, Western violence is systematically hidden.[20] There is also a tendency to portray the West as superior, essentially democratic, and egalitarian.[21] The strengthening of the hegemony of the West is particularly visible in relation to Islam or Muslims.

Finnish school textbooks have tended to portray questions of mobility differently depending on whether the movers represent Westerners or others.[22] Racist rhetoric made meaningful in a textbook is for instance when it suggests that there "has been a need to restrict the number of" immigrants to a certain country. This is an example of how the political choice of limiting people's movement is described as rational or neutral. Simultaneously, the movement of Westerners is not talked about as something that should be restricted. Students can be urged to circle places on a map, representing where they would like to live, work or avoid visiting. These assignments confirm the privilege of movement that students have, rather than evoking a discussion about equality. Finnish students' right to move, and the idea that others' need to be controlled are thus made into neutral, commonsensical statements, instead of highly politicised, racist proclamations. There are also differences in the descriptions of urban centres. Uncontrolled urbanisation is described as dangerous in non-Western areas, implying that there are too many people. Metaphors such as natural disasters or floods are used to describe the moving population.

Other studies published more recently largely concur with these results. Heinikoski's[23] study of representations of free movement and mobility in Finnish upper secondary level EU textbooks shows that movement within Europe is considered more agreeable than movement from outside the EU. There are also stereotypical characteristics used to describe migrants and minority groups such as the Roma. Heinikoski notes a passive voice when depicting strategies and decisions, hiding the agent behind policies, as well as a portrayal of migration as uncontrollable and fear-inciting.[24] A recent study focusing on knowledge about Sámi people, languages and cultures in over 500 Swedish and Finnish language textbooks in Finland shows that the quality of knowledge varies, and that it is often poor. The descriptions focus on the past, not the present. There are portrayals and illustrations that enforce stereotypes and reduce diversity within the Sámi.[25]

Eeva Rinne's thesis[26] mixes the study of textbooks with research among young people who use these books. The students who took part in her research drew their own maps, wrote essays and took part in discussions about their own world views. Rinne suggests that national belonging as well as a Western-oriented world view is

valued and common among the students. They perceive the world as "roughly divided into the glorified West, suspicious or detestable East and unknown South". The strength of this division surprised the researcher herself, even though she could find plenty of evidence in the textbook that would push the students to this conclusion. One way that the textbooks work to strengthen the division and the Western-orientation is by describing historical events through a European lens: distant places such as Japan or China are brought up mainly in reference to their meeting with Europeans. Another way is by stereotypical portrayals, such as of indigenous people. The students in Rinne's study were asked to colour their own world maps to show which areas they considered in positive, neutral and negative terms. Western countries were considered positive, while the most negative areas were Russia, the Middle East (particularly Syria, Iraq and Iran) as well as North Korea. In interviews, the students linked Middle Eastern countries almost exclusively to war, terrorism, ISIS, poverty and religion. Africa and South America were often ignored completely or considered neutral. Students admitted that they knew little about the continents. Altogether the latest research on textbooks suggests that there is a gap in the curricular aim of promoting equality in school textbooks in Finland.

Rinne's results are an important reminder of the fact that school textbooks do not exist in a vacuum. They are hardly alone to blame for stereotypical attitudes that students reading the book might have. It is also near impossible to try to verify a causal relationship between textbook texts and attitudes. Nonetheless, Rinne's study is an interesting one since it shows the division that so many students use to make sense of the world. This confirms Loftsdóttir's thesis of the persistent Nordic idea of the nations as a family, connecting particular (white) bodies to a particular place (the Nordic homeland), while simultaneously denying the existence of racist exclusion and discrimination.

From Colonial Advice to Cancelling Caricatures

When school textbooks are republished, the texts go through revisions. Sometimes the revision of texts are revealing of the debate about racism in the surrounding society. The following example taken from my work with Harriet Zilliacus of how textbook text changes from one edition to another is an example of how racist language and racist structures can appear.[27] A geography textbook printed in 2005 describes Uluru in Australia as mainly a tourist attraction, calling it by the colonialist name Ayers Rock. The textbook goes on to explain what the rock looks like, and continues by stating that "Hundreds of thousands of travellers come every year to admire Ayers Rock. The first rays of the morning sun colour the rock a glowing red. The rock should be climbed directly after sunrise, since the temperature during midday often rises to more than 40 degrees".[28] In a new edition of the book, published 2010, the description of the place is the same, but the name of the rock has changed from "Ayers Rock" to "Uluru".[29] The last sentence with the advice to climb early in the morning has been removed. The revisions thereby means that the text changed the

old, colonialist name and removed the practical advice, or even command, to visitors
("should be climbed") to climb Uluru.

It can be assumed that the editors have learnt about the sacred nature of Uluru
to the Anungu people of Australia and their long quest to prohibit people from
climbing it during the time between the editions. These changes make the textbook
more educationally relevant to its readers. If the earlier version was not racist, it
was at least highly ignorant towards other versions of knowledge than old colonialist
alternatives. Would it, however, be safe to say that the changes erased any traces
of a structurally racist worldview? One could argue that the structural part of the
racist description of the text remains, since it is still considered from a tourist's point
of view. In the improved version of the text, Uluru is still primarily described as
something that draws tourists. From an educational point of view, it is hard to justify
this. The visitors are placed in focus, not what historical meanings are given to the
rock by the people who find it sacred. The changes made would thereby be superficial
rather than on any deeper epistemological level.

At the same time, seemingly superficial changes can be meaningful. As a wider
example that can be related to school textbooks, changing racist names and images
on consumer products have been one part of antiracist struggles in Finland during the
past years. When such demands have been made public, they have usually become
the kind of news that have gathered plenty of activity in the comment sections, much
of which has consisted of ridicule and resistance. Nonetheless, packaging has often
changed either quickly or after some time.[30] Chocolate and liquorice wrappings
have for instance scrapped their blackface images during the last decades, while
some racist product names are still in use. The Finnish debate reveals clear resem-
blances to similar discussions in other Nordic countries. Referring to the Danish
debate about a racist liquorice package, Mathias Danbolt[31] connects people's fight
for their right to consume racialised products with questions of history, memory
and nationhood. The product packages might have long histories that connects to
majority people's upbringing, and these people might not want to face the fact that
their upbringing has been in racist settings. This would be yet another example of
how Nordic exceptionalism works. The idea of national self-identity as pure and
innocent is a topic that Tobias Hübinette[32] has theorised extensively in relation to
Sweden. He has also linked resistance towards changing racist packaging to a crisis
of Swedish antiracism. It is an inability or lack of will to see the images as signs of a
racist past or present, as a reluctance towards recognising one's own role as upholder
of a racial hierarchy. Hübinette concludes that there is a need for majority Swedes
to let go of their presumed monopoly over what is racist and what is not.

Studying school textbooks in history sometimes gives a reason to return to this
debate and ask whether or not it should concern images and texts in textbooks, too,
particularly those that are used to describe colonial times. Many history textbooks
include images that, if they were printed on a box of chocolates, would call for
boycott or replacement. In the textbooks, they are used for educational purposes.
To illustrate how Europeans historically have viewed people on other continents as
less intelligent, the books tend to include pictures that mock these people, such as
racist pictures used for advertising or branding in those days. Rinne[33] describes an

example of a blackface on an old liquorice box that is pictured in a history book, accompanied by a text that asks how it differs from today's liquorice bags. The answer to the question is assumed to be that these kinds of images are racist and no longer (widely) acceptable, however, Rinne points out that this is left for the reader to decide. These kinds of assignments make assumptions about today's world as if it were free of racism. In order to teach students to be aware of racism in its many forms, an assignment like this does not help to see persistent structures, instead, it nurtures the idea of exceptionalism. There have been several accounts of Finnish history textbook assignments that do similar things. Another example is from an analysis of a history textbook passage about relations between Europeans and China.[34] The students are asked to analyse what a ridiculing image of a Chinese person with the face of a monkey tells about the attitudes Europeans used to have towards the Chinese. Ironically, this assignment is followed up by another question that urges the students to construct a program to improve the lives of Chinese women, presented in present tense. The idea that Chinese people need advice from 'us' is not considered problematic, even after a question that attempt to reveal European racist attitudes towards the Chinese. Some textbooks include racist quotes from old textbooks, such as passages about different biological races. The meaning of these is to show how explicit racism used to be, for instance in the 1930s. To challenge these quotes would be for instance to ask what implications it might have had on generations of Finnish people to have been taught to divide the world into racial hierarchies.

It is relevant to ask whether any colonial, ridiculing images in general should be part of history textbooks, if they would not be suitable on consumer goods. Can we justify them? A brief look at recent history textbooks shows that they are getting scarcer. Would getting rid of them be considered some kind of cancel culture, or attempt to erase history? After all, history education is often defended as a means to make sure that past atrocities never happen again. Is it, however, possible to tell the history of racism without any risk of spreading racist ideas? What would be lost if the caricatures were left out? A first answer could be that we should not ban racist images that teach students about a racist past, but as so often, context matters. If the pictures risk spreading ridicule and laughter, making the classroom a place that strengthens racism rather than challenging it, or if they endorse the idea that racism of colonial times is long outdated, they might not be very relevant in the educational setting. Images that all students learn from, accompanied with assignments that call for critical thinking would be all the more important in order to learn about a colonial past.

With the right teacher, the quality of textbook texts might not be decisive for students' learning. However, one study shows a particularly challenging history text-book text about Muslims in Europe.[35] The chapter is about Islam being considered a new politics and includes the following passage.[36]

> Migration and refugee flows have brought Islam to the heart of Europe. In among others France, Belgium and Germany, Muslims have showed that their faith shall be seen in everyday life—through clothing and ways of life. And they want Islam to have an impact on the governing of the states.

I have argued that passages such as these are problematic, even dangerous, since they leave little room for a reader to question the dominant message of Muslims as essentially different and threatening. The idea that Muslims have a collective will, for instance, strengthens a racist discourse, dimming the fact that people with Islam as their religion are people with a range of different opinions, experiences and ways of life. Additionally, it blurs the historical roots that different Muslim groups have had in Europe for centuries. The text feeds the idea of prior immobility, suggesting that European populations have been static and governed by a given set of values until the latest arrival of migrants and refugees.

Conclusion: The Need for Anti-racist Teaching and Texts

Apart from the factual misrepresentations in the textbook passage above, it is an example of a discourse that delivers quite an educational challenge. The tone of the text calls for alarm—the Muslims are here, in the heart of Europe, what are you going to do about it? For a teacher to turn the classroom debate from the alarming tone towards a more democratic and antiracist perspective after reading the passage out loud might be demanding, since much of the Islamophobia in the text is also echoed in the surrounding society. What kind of discussion does the text spark? This question is also relevant to the racist caricatures in history textbooks. What about if they cause racist remarks in the classroom? Will it still feel safe for all students? A teacher would need to be prepared to handle a situation where the assignment calls for students to understand that the use of racist stereotypes was a sign of historical times, while critically assessing how the image might spur more racism rather than challenge it. Reading the text about Muslims in Europe would require a follow-up, analysing the text and the hegemonic perspective presented, dismantling the threat and alarm together with the students, but this kind of antiracist pedagogical act is not necessarily easy to carry out without enough training, experience and self-assurance. The task is none less than challenging the persistent idea of racist exceptionalism: racism is usually found only in other times and places, not here, not now. Dismantling texts such as the one above requires teachers to be aware of power relations, hierarchies and the impact of Islamophobia in everyday discourses. Teachers would also need to feel confident to discuss the topic, while keeping the classroom safe from racist remarks.

Emmanuel Acquah shows in his research[37] that there is plenty to be done in what he calls the field of culturally responsive teacher education in Finland. More multicultural education courses can help, but these would need to include critical reflection. Critical reflection should be seen not merely as an inward process, but as directed towards an active societal responsibility.[38] Ida Hummelstedt-Djedou and colleagues[39] point out how multicultural education courses for preservice teachers do not always contribute to social justice in education—some rather reproduce inequality through conservative discourses about multiculturalism. These include the

image of the multicultural student as the Other. As Sandra Fylkesnes[40] has demonstrated, there is a great deal of conceptual imprecision within teacher education around concepts such as multicultural education and cultural diversity. Conceptual questions such as this need to be clarified. Perhaps changing the focus from multicultural to antiracist pedagogy[41] would contribute to a teacher education that would equip teachers with the tools needed to handle racist discourse in school textbooks as well as in society. Teachers entering schools after their training need to be prepared for this work and have knowledge about textbooks, including that they do not always reflect curricular values. The above-mentioned textbook passage about Muslims in Europe is an example of a text that not only includes false premises but also contradicts the values of the curriculum. At the same time, it could probably even pass without much discussion since it is part of a discourse that is common in other media.[42]

Since the COVID-19 pandemic school closures and lockdowns all around the world have led to remote education and more students learning independently. As earlier research shows, independent learning increases the role of materials such as school textbooks.[43] Even during normal circumstances, teachers tend to underestimate the role of textbooks in their subjects.[44] As has been showed here, there are textbook texts in Finland that promote racist structures, and dismantling these requires knowledge about racism as a phenomenon as well as a critical mindset. This is a particular concern in history, social studies and geography. While many textbooks provide different perspectives to these kinds of topics, others do not, or present only a dominant perspective that does not encourage critical thinking. A competent teacher can elevate topics and texts to a larger discussion, inviting students to challenge hegemonic ideas and to teach the students to use their own voices and, importantly, listen to each other's opinions and perspectives.[45] In a remote education situation, these important parts of learning are, however, difficult to achieve. Without classmates or the teacher present, the angle presented by a textbook risk becoming the only authority or a single voice for a remote education student.[46] Learning to understand complicated educational topics, such as in mathematics or science, with only the help of a book and limited online time with the teacher can be hard. From a democratic and antiracist point, studying with the help of only a textbook might not be good enough. Learning to live together in a world of diversities and hierarchies does not take place through reading but through the democratic process of discussing, listening and thinking critically. While we are right to worry about students left alone with difficult chemistry or physics texts, we should be equally concerned about the democratic task of educating for antiracism. This is particularly important in a world largely influenced by a media discourse that makes certain racist opinions appear neutral or common sense.

In the best of worlds, school textbooks make up an alternative to information 'bubbles', actively engaging students to question media discourses that build on racist narratives, inviting everyone to the discussion. However, democratic education needs to be deliberative, allowing students to voice their own opinions and most of all, to listen to each other. On a global scale, UNESCO has been calling for more textbooks in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education) for years.

These calls are now complemented by demands for textbooks to be better suited for self-study.[47] So far, reports and research about the enormous educational impact of the covid-19 pandemic has mainly covered access to education and students at risk.[48] It will be important for future research to focus on the impact of remote learning on democratic and antiracist education as well.

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Pia Mikander is University Lecturer in history and social studies didactics at the University of Helsinki. Since completing her Ph.D. in 2016 on the topic 'Westerners and others in Finnish school textbooks', Mikander's research interests have focussed on questions of democracy, norms and inclusion in teaching, particularly within the subject of social studies.

Chapter 19
Saami Language Online Education Outside the Saami Homeland—New Pathways to Social Justice

Hanna Helander, Pigga Keskitalo, and Tuija Turunen

Abstract Saami languages are spoken across wide areas, from Mid-Scandinavia to Kola Peninsula, Russia, but they are all threatened Indigenous languages. Altogether, there are 10 Saami languages, of which three are represented in Finland: Northern, Inari and Skolt Saami. After centuries of assimilation policies, through broader inclusive thinking from the 1980s and the 1990s onwards, the teaching of Saami languages has begun to receive governmental support. In Finland, until the 1970s, the Finnish language was the main medium of instruction for Saami children. This has led to a language shift and assimilation over many generations. Currently, the main education task is to avoid continuing the loss of language. This chapter showcases how Saami languages are retaking their status via maintenance and revitalisation measures and displays Saami online language education as a solution for those children and young people living outside the Saami homeland. This solution is especially important because most Saami people now live outside this area. We therefore urge a swift decision on Saami education, as stipulated in the Basic Education Act about the availability of Saami language classes and support for pedagogical development in the endangered language situation. Starting to recognise Saami language education as an opportunity and a resource rather than a problem would be a key shift in language attitudes to build a path for comprehensive education based on social justice for Saami children and young people in Finland.

The Saami are Indigenous peoples living in the central and the northern regions of both Sweden and Norway, North Finland and the Kola Peninsula in northwestern Russia.[1] The ten Saami languages spoken in these four countries belong to the Finno-Ugric languages. Their status is endangered because native speakers are few and

H. Helander · P. Keskitalo (✉) · T. Turunen
Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, PL 122, 96100 Rovaniemi, Finland
e-mail: pigga.keskitalo@ulapland.fi

H. Helander
e-mail: hanna.helander@ulapland.fi

T. Turunen
e-mail: tuija.turunen@ulapland.fi

often elderly, and it is apparent that the languages are not easily passed on to the next generations.[2] In Finland, according to the national legislation and international human rights,[3] the Saami are Indigenous people who enjoy constitutional protection and the right to linguistic and cultural self-governance. Three Saami languages are spoken in Finland: Northern, Inari and Skolt Saami. The *definitely endangered* Northern Saami is spoken in three countries: Finland, Norway and Sweden. It has less than 30,000 speakers. The *seriously endangered* Inari Saami, with 400–500 speakers, is spoken only in Finland. Skolt Saami is spoken in Finland and Russia, with about 300 speakers in Finland. Northern Saami has some official support and a reasonably stable position, at least in its core areas. Inari Saami is moving in a positive direction in the continuum of endangered Indigenous languages. The language community has managed, with active measures, to change the future prospects of the language from assimilation to revitalisation and survival.[4]

Before the current national states, the Saami lived and moved smoothly across the four countries mentioned above. Now, the Saami in these countries have different histories related to state borders, forms of states, rules, and educational policies and practices. In history, different phases of educational measures have been taken towards the Saami. From the 1600s to the 1970s, Saami people faced different forms of civilisation and nationalism ideologies, these had a range of impacts.[5] During the period of missionaries in the 1600s and the 1700s, through the medium of Christianity, the church aimed to start the colonisation of the Saami according to the European ideologies of the reformation and the enlightenment.[6] The second period was that of nationalism from the 1800s to 1960, which varied from country to country. In Norway, there was a separate written policy towards assimilation. In Sweden, a policy of segregation was put into place, as Saami-speaking reindeer herders attended nomad schools, while the other Saami attended municipality schools. In Russia, Stalinism caused totalitarianism, and many Saami-speaking teachers were sent to the camps and never returned to their villages and families. In Finland, the Finnish language and culture were emphasised, and minorities were not paid any special attention.[7] From the late 1970s onwards, Saami was used in schools as an auxiliary language and in some cases, as the language of mediation. From 1990 onwards, the era of acceptance has made an impact on legislation and made the current revitalisation of Saami languages possible.[8] It is evident that the ideological circumstances and assimilation measures that have continued until recent decades have gravely endangered the Saami languages and linguistic diversity.[9]

At present, about 100,000 Saami live in the four countries, of which approximately 10,000 live in Finland. Some of those in Finland reside in the most northern part of Finland, in areas legally defined as the Saami homeland: Utsjoki, Inari, Enontekiö and the northern parts of Sodankylä municipalities (Fig. 19.1).

According to the Basic Education Act 1988/1288, Saami-speaking students living in these areas have the right to receive most of their basic education in the Saami languages. However, 75% of Saami attending basic education schools already live outside the Saami homeland and are not covered by this act. Elsewhere in Finland, the municipalities can deliver two-hour supplementary Saami classes per week, with
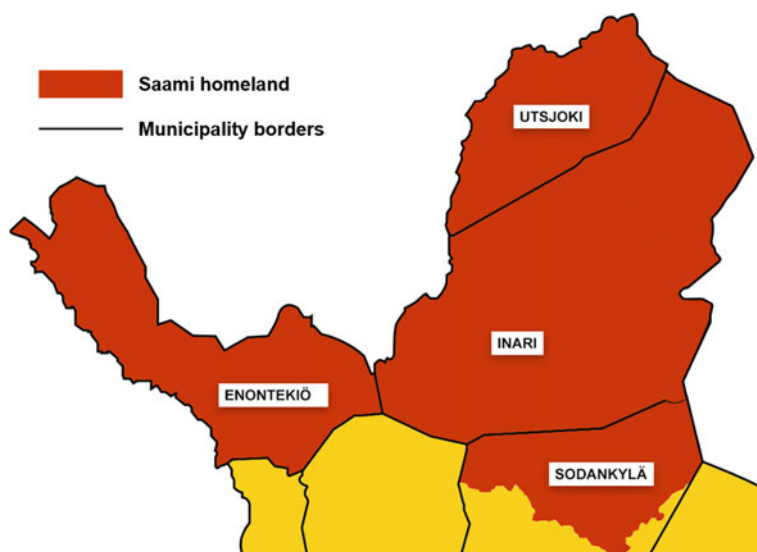
Fig. 19.1 Map of the Saami Homeland in Northern Finland

separate funding provided by the Ministry of Education.[10] Only 10% of Saami children and young people living outside the Saami homeland attend these classes.[11] This situation sets up specific demands on Saami language education.

The Saami Parliament, established in 1996, plays an important role in language revitalisation. It receives funding from the Finnish Government to support Saami culture, languages and education, and also prepares and delivers free learning materials. The Saami language revitalisation programme was launched in 2012. It emphasises the need for resources, the availability of Saami language education outside the Saami homeland and the development of pedagogical practices for endangered language teaching.[12] In 2019, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, nominated by the Council of Europe, stated that despite considerable allocation of resources for the promotion of the Saami culture and the revitalisation of the Saami languages, the development of language policy programmes was needed. The committee noted the limited impact of the measures because of the way they were enacted through short-term project funding (e.g., Saami language nests and distance education).[13]

The Ministry of Education and Culture established the *Working Group for Developing the Teaching of and in Sámi Languages* in 2020, with a special focus on early childhood education, language nests and Saami primary education.[14] To provide background information for the task force, the Ministry published three reports, which underline the lack of learning materials or the need to update existing ones,[15] the severe shortage of qualified Saami-speaking teachers and the urgent need for Saami teacher education.[16] Additionally, there is limited information about the Saami

in mainstream study materials, which creates an image of the Saami people as a group belonging to the past without their own history.[17]

One solution to help address Saami language education outside the Saami homeland is the Pilot Project on Distance Education in the Sámi Languages started in 2018, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.[18] The project is managed by the municipality of Utsjoki and coordinated by the Sámi Parliament. It offers online supplementary Saami language classes for those children and young people living outside the Saami homeland. The long-term goal is to establish a permanent distance education system.

This chapter continues by describing the Finnish education system's challenges in maintaining the Saami languages during the post-assimilationist era. Drawing on recent studies, it then turns to the discussion of parents', teachers' and local educational authorities' views on and experiences in the Saami online language classes, how they are organised and what the future needs are. The chapter argues that while online language classes can be informed by studies of language learning and teaching in general,[19] they need to be adapted to fit in the Saami context. The online language classes can be regarded as new pathways in Finland to provide social justice-based educational opportunities for all and make learning the heritage language that belongs to them possible for Saami children and young people outside the Saami homeland as well.

Maintaining and Revitalising Saami Languages During the Post-assimilationist Era

A native language is usually defined as the first language learned in childhood in a family that shares the same cultural and linguistic background.[20] However, this definition is based on past colonial practices that aimed to destroy ethnolinguistic identity. Since the loss of language has been involuntary, it can be argued that the native languages are still the first languages of the Saami people, even though they may not be fluent in these languages or have only passive language skills.[21] Common to multilingualism and human rights, this notion positions Saami language teaching and learning in a situation that differs from learning other languages. Despite the call for a more inclusive educational approach, the current practices do not always explain the curriculum-based and act-based understanding of Saami as native languages. The models from other Indigenous peoples worldwide should be searched. For example, after two centuries of colonisation and assimilation in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Māori language is being revitalised through a range of measures including Māori forms of schooling, Māori-medium units within regular state (public) schools and working towards a greater emphasis on Māori language and culture in those schools in general.[22]

Understanding heritage languages as resources and possibilities provides a basis for profitable strategies in the context of threatened languages.[23] This means that all

Saami children and young people have the right to be identified as native language speakers. It also means that specific language programmes and pedagogies are needed to address their diverse linguistic competencies. This demands resources and active language policies, with the aim of increasing the number of speakers and preventing language loss.

Learning Saami languages and, more broadly, building up culturally relevant school systems, are both societal and individual processes. At the societal level, schools need to be reformed by critically considering existing values, knowledge and ways of knowing.[24] The curriculum and educational practices should be informed by culturally and linguistically diverse needs of students. For individuals, there should be low threshold systems to learn and take the languages back, as well as easy access to nationwide education programmes.

The Saami people often identify with Saami languages, but their first-language learning has been compromised for generations because of the assimilation processes related to the period of romantic nationalism and the construction of the idea of Finland.[25] Communities recovering from historical trauma navigate in a world that still sometimes favours colonialism.[26] This makes educational efforts important, as education deals with people, their attitudes and the measures to build a better world for future generations. Despite this, the skewed power relations and the lack of knowledge make the quality of education for the Saami people increasingly complicated. Marginalised people need to reconstruct their identities from oppressed and less valuable ones to those that think critically and observe the colonial practices from a counterforce perspective. Cultural continuity is one of the most prevailing motives for learning Saami languages.[27] Community membership and one's sense of identity also impact on motivation. Teachers creating Saami language learning environments therefore need to integrate general pedagogical knowledge of learning languages into complex and sensitive situations, often reflecting their own upbringing, traditional practices, language exposure and language learning experiences.[28]

Saami Language Online Classes Outside the Saami Homeland: Practices and Experiences

This chapter explores diverse perspectives of principals, parents and teachers on Saami online language classes for children living outside the Saami homeland. The data consist of two datasets. First, the *Pilot Project on Distance Education in the Sámi Languages* administered an online questionnaire in May 2019, mapping the views of 23 local educational authorities on Saami language online classes as extracurricular activities in their respective municipalities. Subsequently, in April–May 2020, the Academy of Finland-funded research project, *Socially innovative interventions to foster young children's inclusion and agency in society through voice and story*, conducted online interviews with 6–7-year-old children's parents (N = 9) and teachers (N = 5). The parents were interviewed individually using a

thematic approach. The teachers' interviews followed the stimulated recall method, where each teacher recorded an online class, and shortly after, the researcher and the teacher watched the recording together, recalling the ideas, feelings and pedagogical choices made during the class.[29] The teachers had different educational backgrounds; some had several teaching qualifications, while others lacked any formal qualifications. This reflects recent information about the state of Saami language education in Finland.[30] All data were collected and transcribed in Finnish, and the data extracts in this chapter have been translated into English by the authors.

The data from the principals formed a baseline audit of current practices. The interview data were analysed by using the theoretical guiding principles for facilitating and enhancing young children's voices. This framework consists of eight principles: defining, inclusion, empowerment, listening, structure, process, approach and purposeful.[31] They can be considered action points—provisional, open to change and phrased in the form of reflective questions that arose from the data collection. This eight-perspective frame fitted well with describing and explaining the complex conditions of the Saami online language classes. In this chapter, the frame is used to hear the voices of educational authorities, parents and teachers, explored from the points of structure, process and inclusion. The 'structure' and 'process' indicate how the classes were organised and identifies needs for further development. The 'inclusion' describes participation from inclusion and exclusion perspectives.

An ethical review was conducted before any data-gathering through interviews. This followed the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity and the European Union General Data Protection Regulation. Additionally, ethical guidelines for Indigenous research were directed to safeguard the identity of the informants and to justify the study in the Saami community.[32] Prerequisites were that the participants should feel that they were greeted with respect, reciprocity and a relational manner and that the data were handled securely.[33] To safeguard the anonymity of the informants, the data extracts have no identifying information.

Structure and Process: Current Practices and Future Prospects

Practical Arrangements

In basic education, the role of Saami language classes outside the Saami homeland is defined as an extracurricular activity. This brings forth many issues; for instance, the classes are organised in a variety of ways depending on the local authorities, who are responsible for the practicalities in schools. The Saami language distance education project organises and coordinates the teaching. Parents were generally pleased that the project had solved many problems that they had previously had to sort out by themselves. According to one parent, a child's participation in online classes had been effortless:

> I thought it was great that we received a notice from the school that the child would have the opportunity to participate in Saami language online classes. The project took care of the practicalities with the school, and the parents didn't have to interfere with it in any way, nicely organised from our site.

Students from all over Finland participate in the online classes, and teaching is occasionally organised at homes because of timetabling and other practicalities. According to the legislation, the classes should be part of regular school days, but there are exceptions. Sometimes, children participated in the classes at home under the supervision of a parent or parents:

> Supervision of the classes at home was decided because the Saami lesson was held late in the afternoon, and no activity or supervision could be arranged [in school] for the child while waiting. So, we decided that our child would participate at home. (Parent)

Saami language classes do not always fit in with other schoolwork, which is one of the key constraints. Schools often prefer that children participate in classes at home under parental supervision, as it is easier and more cost-effective. In those cases, the school does not have to provide facilities or a supervisor. Sometimes, the children themselves wished to participate in the classes at home: "… it was immediately clear to [the children] that they did not want to stay there after school" (parent). However, one parent stated that it was easier for the child to concentrate in school. Some parents said that at home, it was sometimes hard to find a place to study without distraction.

School assistants played an important role, especially in the learning context of small children. Assistants were supposed to help children with technology and study-related matters but were not always available, as required:

> In the beginning, the children were in school a few times, left alone in the classroom. And I don't think it was a good idea to leave the children alone, but yes, the adult assistant should be there all the time. (Parent)

Moreover, the assistants' role differed from school to school, as noted by a parent with many children attending the online classes:

> Although the assistant might have knowledge of the lesson in advance and could take an active role, it varies how this role is fulfilled. Some of the assistants think it's only about control and security, and then others have taken for granted [that their role is] to really help and guide the child during the lesson. (Parent)

In some cases, the assistants understood that they could support the children in many ways, not only with technology, but also by encouraging them. "You are okay; you can say those words" (parent). However, one of the teachers had a grade one student who did not want to speak into the microphone; this is a usual part of the process of learning a new or passive language.[34] The school assistant's surprising reaction was that the child did not benefit from the classes and should therefore not participate. To overcome this challenge, the teacher explained how she came up with many alternative ways to communicate with the child who also could not write yet. For example, while learning colours, the teacher asked the child to show an object of a certain colour. The situation illustrated the importance of cooperation between school assistants and distance learning teachers.

Schools can support the voice and agency of Saami speakers in many ways.[35] The online classes are held in settings where the mainstream language dominates.[36] Sometimes, Saami is not spoken at home, so the online classes remain the only venue where the language is used. It is natural that it will take some time before children start using Saami, which had been in a subordinate position in the past. Furthermore, the society's attitudes do not support the identity of the young learners, and Saami is not heard in the community. To one parent, the school assistant played a highly significant role: "I thought that you certainly wouldn't get better in the beginning of that [without] a certain adult who's really interested in it".

In the cases where the children attended the online classes at home, their parents took the role of assistant, but this required each parent's timetable to be adjusted according to the class schedule. According to one parent, acting as an assistant would not have been possible had she not been working from home.

Pedagogical Practices

Regarding pedagogical practices, parents typically expressed satisfaction with Saami classes:

> I have at least noticed the playfulness and the fact that it somehow utilises the methods and practices that children are used to in everyday life. The teacher uses a lot of different games and videos on the Internet. Kids don't feel lessons to be so "paper based".

The teachers tried to create ways in which the teaching was based on the children's motivation. "That's probably correct that participation possibly comes true through child-centeredness" (teacher). In the beginning of their studies, the children acted as passive Saami language learners. Therefore, the classes started with the children exploring familiar things and building up their motivation:

> In my opinion, it is good that there are, for example, familiar words, like if you know some berries and trees and seedlings already, so we talk about those in Saami. [Starting from the] self-evident words, taken from their daily life. It is good to learn some basic words first; this is a pedagogical principle.

This kind of approach demanded that the teachers knew the children's living conditions and surroundings. One teacher stated the importance of group work during the classes. "I had been advised that one should practise group work during the online classes". This is important because children participate in the classes are all over Finland and do not know one another in advance. The teachers were aware that the students in cooperative learning groups benefitted more than those in groups without cooperative aspect.[37] One teacher also mentioned that the joy of learning was an important value:

> All these kinds of arrangements that bring a sense of safety may help children to use the Saami language. I asked the children to bring a toy to school. We discussed their toys in Saami so they could use the language in a situation that was joyful and familiar to them.

Another teacher asked the children to bring their teddy bears to school, with the aim of practising language in a relaxing way:

> Teddy bears that they love may help create a trusting environment, and maybe, they start to trust me as well. But through these kinds of practices, we can learn new things. For example, once we got to talking about whether these teddy bears would travel to the North of Finland, and the children became really eager to contribute.

The teachers also used a variety of ways to make the classes meaningful and culturally and linguistically responsive.[38] For example, they used elders as language masters to motivate and support the children:

> The language master has brought many nice, culturally appropriate words and the sense of communality and participation, which is so nice. And then, that certainly makes children participate. (Teacher)

Future Prospects

The teachers stated that the available learning materials did not always meet the online language classes' needs. Sometimes, it was challenging to organise the classes without any materials and to cope pedagogically in such a situation. "It is not easy work when you sometimes have to create learning materials from scratch" (teacher). The production of teaching materials in the Saami language had been systematically developed and updated, and a lot of new materials had been produced, also in digital forms.[39] The availability of learning materials had progressed in recent decades, but there were still some shortfalls. The teachers tried to find solutions and were aware of the rich traditional knowledge and storytelling tradition, which they used in their classes. Through the stories, the Saami values and cultural traditions were mediated to children in diverse ways.

The teachers also wished for pedagogical models to cater to children's diverse skills and needs in Saami languages. They were uncertain about how much Saami language should be included. They needed information about the challenges posed by multilingualism and the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the children. One teacher expressed the hope that the amount of Saami language used online could be increased. "Perhaps Saami could then be used even more in the beginning of the lesson." For others, having the competency to evaluate the children's language proficiency was a concern. If their proficiency was not clear, it made it difficult to set suitable homework between classes. "I don't know the level of [proficiency of] those kids" (teacher).

Inclusion: Participating in Saami Language Distance Education

Inclusion is a leading principle in Finland's current school system, including Saami as Indigenous people. Quality Indigenous education is well-resourced, culturally

sensitive and aligned with students' learning needs, languages, priorities and aspirations. It should also be delivered through culturally appropriate pedagogy.[40] Inclusion concerning Saami children has two faces. On one hand, they attend the schools under the Finnish basic education system on an equal basis with other children. On the other hand, they also have the right to attend their heritage language classes to increase their sense of belonging to the Saami culture and reach their full potential in both Saami and Finnish communities.[41]

To frame the Saami language teaching context, it is meaningful to provide insights about the inclusion perspective, the motivation for participating in online classes as an extracurricular activity and how inclusion or exclusion is expressed from the different actors' viewpoints.

Many Saami children live in a reality where they start actively learning their heritage languages in the online classes. For many children, language learning was a new and interesting thing, and they had high motivation:

> It is the child's own interest, and it is then very important that the cousins are talking completely in Saami, and I have realised that my child wants to communicate with them more and more in Saami. Sure, the cousins can speak Finnish, but my child has the strong will to learn [Saami] and be connected. (Parent)

This kind of learning motivation strongly connected language learning with the cultural heritage and provided a good starting point to learn. This notion is in line with previous research showing that children express integrative and continuity motivations and the desire to belong by learning the Saami language.[42] One parent pointed out that studying the Saami language was important, and the children were very interested in the Saami language and culture and other northern matters:

> However, the Saami culture has always been present in our family. The child has been so terribly interested in Saami since childhood. When our child gets there, in Northern Finland, it is as if she has been there since she was little, and she would never leave. "A child of northern nature", so to speak. (Parent)

Outmigration and urbanisation have broadened the diasporic context of Saami, and currently, a large number of Saami people live in urban areas throughout all Scandinavian countries. The online classes also provide a link to the Saami community for parents, not only for children. This was evident in the motives that were related to the assimilation and colonisation of the Saami in the past, which still had an impact on families.

> Unfortunately, my mother belonged to the generation that was supposed to become Finnish, so she did not speak Saami, and she was then placed in these Finnish-language schools. Unfortunately, the Saami language did not continue for us then. (Parent)

The history had made speaking the Saami language a scarce phenomenon and led to the loss of the language. Before the 1980s, education in the Saami language or Saami language education was rare in Finland. As a result, there had been an extensive, involuntary language exchange.[43] Many parents wished that their children would learn Saami, even if they or their parents did not have that opportunity. Some

had studied Saami as adults, and this had been followed by the children's participation in Saami language teaching:

> In fact, now, I have studied the Saami language at the university for a couple of years. When I heard about this pilot project, that children could study Saami, we took the opportunity. We experience our family background as a richness, so we would like to maintain it in every way, so that the children in a way learn also about their own roots. (Parent)

Changes in society have produced positive consequences and language attitudes. Language revitalisation is ongoing as a result of developments in the language community, enabling the Saami languages to have fresh growth.[44]

Saami language teaching is supplementary education for children, who receive a separate certificate for participating in it. According to some parents, the fact that Saami classes are held either early in the morning or late in the afternoon as an extension of the school day, threatens motivation and calls for a commitment:

> Children are very positive about this language learning. They like it and don't feel forced to participate. But it decreases their motivation when there are practically more lessons [for them] than for those classmates who don't have to stay after school. (Parent)

> Yes, it requires commitment. For example, children can't leave school with a friend at the same time, but they must go to a Saami language class, which is often a bit boring. (Parent)

Questionnaire feedback from educational authorities showed that Saami language education was regarded as important but not really touching their localities. Responses such as "Our municipality is Finnish language" and "Nice thing, but not really touching us" placed Saami children in the margins and justified the exclusion of Saami language education. The educational authorities may have often not had any previous experiences related to Saami education, and this produced diverse attitudes towards organising the online classes just for a few children. It challenged the right of Saami children to learn their heritage languages. This happened even though, based on the spirit of the constitution and international rights,[45] children should have had the right to it. The feedback revealed a lack of act-based and economic support for Saami language education outside the Saami homeland.

The online classes received the most criticism for having a complex funding model, being weighed down by bureaucracy and incurring substantial costs. According to one authority, arranging teaching for just one or two students was too expensive:

> This is laborious and expensive for the school, although the idea is great and worthwhile. The cost comes from arranging the teaching (we also had to get equipment for this), and in practice, when it concerns one student, it is quite disproportionately resource intensive. I am sorry to say this, but it is a reality because the school's budget is tight.

In this example, the attitude was inclusive, but the practices were not in line with it. This highlights the importance of continuous discussion on Saami education at the national level. The funding should not be a problem because municipalities have purchased the Saami language distance education programme from Utsjoki municipality, a leader of the distance education project, at a cost of €1000 per

student. The Saami Parliament supplies the learning materials for free. Additionally, the municipalities can apply for state funding to partially cover costs.[46] From 2021, the schools' share of the cost of offering online classes is about €100 per student because the Ministry of Education and Culture provides funding for online teachers' monthly salaries.

The prevailing attitudes from schools affected parents, as they faced these attitudes when asking for Saami language teaching for their children. One parent indicated that finally, the family decided to organise teaching at home because their child's school had announced that teaching was too expensive since it needed to hire a school assistant for the lessons. At home, a parent could act as an assistant during the lessons. It became easier and less distressing to just give up on school provision:

> We received a message from the school that they weren't terribly happy with this Saami language online classes, and we were told how much this would cost the school. So then, I clearly stated that I may not want to listen to such messages the whole semester. I decided to organise teaching at home, so there is no need to get this kind of communication from the school.

The root cause of these kinds of challenges might be that the educational authorities in Finland outside the Sami homeland do not always recognise the specific status of Saami languages as heritage languages and the importance of stopping the colonial processes.

Conclusion: The Need for Future Measures for Saami Language Education in Finland

This chapter has discussed Saami language challenges and future prospects based on the Pilot project in distance education in the Sámi languages and ADVOST reseach project, highlighting many unresolved issues. Based on the analysis frame applied,[47] this chapter provides a window to current practices and how they might offer more inclusive experiences for children, families and also for educational authorities.

The Basic Education Act supports teaching the Saami languages in the Saami homeland, but Saami teaching outside the homeland varies because of the lack of any legal obligations. The situation is threatening for Saami languages, and there is a significant risk of further assimilation. This present research indicates that school personnel sometimes lack a positive attitude towards Saami language teaching. Saami language online classes demand facilities from the schools, such as computers, and someone to help the children during the lessons. Language teachers need more information about teaching endangered languages to children coming from diverse linguistic backgrounds. However, teachers are often able to engage the children in demanding learning without additional learning materials. This chapter concludes that Saami language online classes must be made permanent; otherwise, it will be difficult to offer Saami teaching throughout Finland due to the small number of pupils and limited teacher resources.

The global pandemic COVID-19 has not improved the situation. The pandemic has meant that most students have participated in the online classes at home. After the 2020 spring school closures, it seems that principals have increasingly hoped that students would participate from home. There has been a concern that the pandemic has ruined face-to-face classes already established in schools.

The overall picture is that despite many challenges and practical hindrances, children have a high motivation to attend Saami language classes. This is a benefit that should be taken advantage of in the further development of practices. For example, support for the language learning could be taken to the next level by putting more effort into pedagogy and content. Saami families and teachers need active support and an encouraging policy culture to help them maintain and develop their heritage languages.

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Hanna Helander MA, is Researcher at the University of Lapland and a Project Manager in the pilot project on distance education in the Sámi languages of the municipality of Utsjoki, Finland. She is currently finalising her dissertation on Sámi storytelling and upbringing at the University of Oulu. Helander has a teacher education degree of mother tongue and literature subject. She is a Sámi PhD student living in Inari, Northern Finland.

Pigga Keskitalo is Professor in Education, specifically in Arctic perspectives in education, at the University of Lapland and Adjunct Professor at the University of Helsinki. She is also a network researcher at the Migration Institute in Turku. Keskitalo is a Sámi scholar who comes from Utsjoki, Nuorgam village and now lives in Peltovuoma village in Eastern Enontekiö. She worked for two decades as a teacher educator in Norway at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences. Keskitalo has published a number of books and articles about Sámi educational issues. The Academy of Finland-funded research project she is currently working on is called 'Socially Innovative Interventions to Foster and to Advance Young Children's Inclusion and Agency in Society through Voice and Story' (ADVOST).

Tuija Turunen is Professor and Dean at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland. She holds the UArctic Chair in Education for Social Justice and Diversity and leads the UArctic and the UNESCO/UNITWIN networks on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity. Turunen's current research interests focus on teacher education, indigenous education, professional development in higher education, educational transitions (especially starting school), multi-professional work in schools, and preventative school welfare work.

Chapter 20
Education of Pupils with Migrant Backgrounds: A Systemic Failure in the Finnish System?

Jenni Helakorpi, Gunilla Holm, and Xiaoxu Liu

Abstract This chapter discusses the structural issues and mechanisms behind the lower academic performance and poorer health of the pupils categorised as "pupils with migrant background" compared to other pupils in Finnish schools. In PISA 2018 migrant pupils were almost three years behind other pupils in literacy and pupils with a migrant background about two years behind. Finland has the largest gap in the OECD between migrant and migrant background students and non-migrant students in literacy. Not only do migrant students and students with migrant background perform more poorly, but they are also bullied more in school. We base our analysis on critical race and whiteness theories and also lean on theoretical constructs from intersectionality research. We have treated the findings of inequalities between pupils with and without a migrant background as symptoms of a systemic failure not of failing students, families or teachers. In order to understand the failure of educating pupils with migrant background well, an analysis of structural racism and an intersectional analysis of race, racialisation, whiteness, gender and social class in Finnish school and society are needed.

The Finnish education system is often regarded as a highly egalitarian system where all pupils can educate themselves as far as their potential and motivation carries them. Basic education is built on equity and equality and Finnish education is free of charge right up to doctoral level.[1] However, within Finnish education there is a diverse group of pupils, those categorised as pupils with a migrant background, who, according to national and international reports, have a higher risk of not reaching their educational potential.[2] Multiple studies have found that pupils with migrant background have more positive attitudes to schooling and and higher aspirations than

J. Helakorpi (✉) · G. Holm · X. Liu
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: jenni.helakorpi@helsinki.fi

G. Holm
e-mail: gunilla.holm@helsinki.fi

X. Liu
e-mail: xiaoxu.liu@helsinki.fi

pupils without migrant background.[3] Yet there is something in the Finnish education system that places pupils with migrant backgrounds in vulnerable positions and imposes vulnerable learner identities.

Indeed, this 'something' is so strong that according to PISA[4] Finland has one of the biggest discrepancies between migrant and non-migrant background pupil performance as well as more segregation and feelings of exclusion among migrant background pupils when compared to other countries. Nevertheless, this possible failure in the Finnish system, is rarely analysed in depth. The emphasis of research has been descriptive and sociological analysis of the processes that structure the education of pupils with migrant backgrounds is still rare. In this chapter, we first discuss the category of pupils with migrant background in Finnish schools. Then we show, with the help of previous research, the many ways the Finnish education system renders pupils with migrant backgrounds more vulnerable. The chapter then discusses how to understand and describe this systemic failure. We end with reflections on our analysis and suggestions for the future.

Pupils with Migrant Background

There is a strong narrative of Finland having been culturally and linguistically homogenous. Yet Finland has for a long time been a culturally diverse country including, for example, indigenous Sámi, Swedish-speaking Finns, Roma, two national churches and two national languages. Historically Finland has targeted its minoritised ethnic groups such as Roma, Sámi, Tatars, Jews, and Russians with measures of exclusion, assimilation, and deportation.[5] The myth of the homogeneity of Finland is often used as a backdrop when discussing education of pupils with migrant background.

It is good to bear in mind that the Sámi are the only indigenous people within Finland's borders and Finland has colonised the Sápmi region so that parts of it are within the borders of the Finnish nation-state. All other people have a migration history of some kind.[6] Finland became an independent country in 1917 and thereafter suffered both a civil war and two wars during World War II. Before the Second World War over 300,000 Finns emigrated to North America and after the war over 500,000 Finns migrated to Sweden. Finland also had forced internal migration at this time, namely Karelians who had to resettle from ceded territories. Finland was, in fact, mostly a country of emigration, not a destination country until the 1990s.[7] Furthermore, until the end of the Cold War, Finland had strict immigration policies and turned back asylum seekers and refugees despite being criticised by other Nordic countries.[8] After the 1990s, migration to Finland increased with mostly refugees from the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia and Somalia. Still in 2020 the largest numbers of people with foreign background in Finland were from Europe (including the former Soviet Union).[9]

Today, 'migrant background' is a term used quite vaguely and has evoked criticism. Migrant background can include persons born abroad, whose parent or parents

are born abroad and in practice in schools it often includes pupils racialised as non-white whose grandparents are born abroad or who speak another home language than Finnish or Swedish. Consequently, it is often difficult to know in academic and non-academic publications who is included in the category 'pupils with a migrant background'. There are no statistics based on ethnicity or race gathered in Finland. Unlike many other countries, Finland does not have a census, but it gathers register-based data about its population. However, since 2012, Statistics Finland has categorised the Finnish population according to their 'origin' (Finnish/foreign background) and 'background country' (which does not indicate ethnic background). The terms 'person with foreign background' (ulkomaalaistaustainen) and 'person with Finnish background' (suomalaistaustainen) are used where the first refers to those with both parents or the only known parent born abroad and the second to everyone with at least one parent born in Finland. Background country is determined by the birth-country of the parents.[10] Finland also has statistics based on first language. PISA uses the term "immigrant background" which, like Statistics Finland, refers to a person who has both parents born abroad and in PISA the term "pupil without immigrant background" refers to people with at least one parent born in the country of assessment.[11] People with migrant background are also often divided into the categories of those born abroad and those born in Finland. Often these categories are named as first and second generation.

The number of Finns with 'foreign background' has increased over the last three decades. In 1990 only 1%[12] of Finns had a migrant background according to the definitions above. According to official statistics, 444,031 people had a foreign background in Finland in 2020, 8% of the national population. The proportion of people with another first language than Finnish, Swedish or Sami was likewise about 8%. The number of people with foreign backgrounds born in Finland was 76,614 (17% of all people with foreign background). In 2020, there were 497,510 children aged 7–14 in Finland of which 44,471 (about 9%) were children with foreign backgrounds. About half of this 9% were born in Finland, and half born abroad.[13]

In this chapter, with the term 'pupils with a migrant background' we refer both to young people born abroad themselves, and pupils whose parents were born abroad. This is following the definition used in public administration and reports about the Finnish population and pupil groups but we use it with caution here and examine the concept critically later in this chapter.

Symptoms of a Failing System: Educational Outcomes, Bullying and Wellbeing in Lower Secondary School

Previous studies have shown that pupils with migrant backgrounds and their parents have positive attitudes and high aspirations when it comes to schooling—higher than their non-migrant background peers.[14] Despite this, the risk for youths with migrant backgrounds to be positioned outside the education and workforce is higher

than for youth with non-migration backgrounds.[15] According to a 2015 report by Statistics Finland, 11% of youth in Finland at the age of 15–29 were not in education, employment or training (NEET), whereas among youth with foreign background it was 15%.[16]

The latest PISA reports show clear discrepancies in the school performance of pupils with migrant backgrounds and non-migrant backgrounds. Pupils with migrant background participating in PISA 2018 scored significantly lower in reading than pupils with non-migrant background, this gap being the biggest in OECD even when socio-economic background was controlled for.[17] Likewise, in mathematics in 2015 pupils with migrant background scored significantly less than their non-migrant background peers. Almost half of the 15-year-old pupils who were born abroad did not reach the level "basic proficiency in mathematics". Likewise, migrant background pupils born in Finland scored 70 points less in mathematics than their non-migrant peers, which is equivalent to two years of school.[18] The PISA mathematics gap was bigger only in Mexico.

Pupils with migrant background are also at risk of poorer well-being than their non-migrant background peers. In PISA 2018, pupils with migrant background were less satisfied with their lives and felt more as outsiders in schools than their non-migrant background peers.[19] In the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare's (THL) School Health Promotion Study, pupils in lower secondary school with migrant background were more likely to be bullied than their peers and every fifth pupil born abroad was bullied weekly in schools.[20] These findings were also gendered with those identifying as boys with migrant background reporting more bullying than those identifying as girls. In the School Health Promotion Study 2017, 21% of 8th and 9th grade pupils born abroad did not feel they were an important part of the school or the class community, compared with 12% of pupils born in Finland with a migrant background and 9% among pupils with a non-migrant background. The numbers of pupils feeling lonely were almost the same.[21] Tuomas Zacheus and colleagues researched young urban ninth-grade pupils in ethnically diverse schools and found that approximately 25% of them been bullied or discriminated against in school and 10% had experienced discrimination in their free time. Their 2019 study did not find any statistical difference in experienced discrimination and bullying between pupils with migrant and non-migrant backgrounds but in interviews pupils with migrant background reported experiences of racism.[22]

The differences between migrant and non-migrant background pupils continue after comprehensive school. Using longitudinal register data until 2012 with youths completing comprehensive school in years 2000–2004 Elina Kilpi-Jakonen found that whereas over 86% of non-migrant background pupils had completed upper secondary education, the number of pupils with migration background was lower, around 70% (including pupils for whom one parent was born in Finland). The relevant figure was 76% for pupils with Russia or Estonia as the background country, and 67% for pupils with a background country in the Middle East. However, among pupils whose background country was on the African continent, only 50% completed upper secondary education[23] (See also Mäkelä and Kalalahti in this book).

Where Is the Failure?

The conspicuous discrepancies in the academic outcomes and well-being between pupils with migrant backgrounds and non-migrant backgrounds clearly indicate that something is not working as intended in Finnish schools. The number of studies about the education of students with migrant backgrounds is increasing and often researchers conclude that more research is needed to understand how Finnish comprehensive education exposes the students with migrant backgrounds to vulnerable positions. At the same time research has a tendency to seek the cause for problems in the students and their families themselves, a typical framework when analysing the school outcomes of pupils with minoritised backgrounds.[24] In this chapter, we want to emphasise the importance of turning the analytical gaze on school structures and cultures, asking how and why the school fails.

A typical research conclusion about the discrepancies in educational outcomes of students with migrant backgrounds is that there is a need for better support of migrant pupils. Although we do not contest the advantage of support for any student, the discussion of support keeps the focus on the pupils instead of on the school system.[25] *Special education* is well developed in Finland and has three levels of support. Pupils with a migrant background can get general level (Tier 1) support for language learning but also in other areas of learning.[26] However, the first author and colleagues have also pointed out that pupils with migrant backgrounds are over-represented in special education classes and schools, and are therefore in segregated educational arrangements which often lead to segregated educational paths.[27] In Finnish schools, special education arrangements can also expose pupils to stigmatisation and bullying[28] (see also Niemi and Mietola in this book).

When it comes to support, the intersection between special education and language learning requires more attention. The *first language* or home language has a particular influence on pupils' academic performance in that pupils who speak the school language as their first language perform better in academic tests. For instance, speaking languages other than Finnish and Swedish at home has been associated with a poorer performance in PISA on reading and mathematics tests, compared to pupils with Finnish or Swedish as their first language.[29] A crucial question is why pupils who are born in Finland to parents who have migrated to Finland and those who arrived as young children and who, subsequently attended daycare, preschool, and nine years of the comprehensive school still do not have strong enough Finnish language skills for doing well in school. What are the processes that make it difficult for the pupils with a migrant background to gain comprehensive skills in the school language even if special education support is available in all schools?

Although Finland has a developed special education system, Finnish language support might need a closer look. In 2015, about half of pupils who had migrated to Finland reported receiving *Finnish language support* during the primary school years. However, the National Audit Office's (NAOF) report indicates that there might be problems guaranteeing equal access and support for Finnish learning to all migrant pupils since pupils from Russia, Estonia, and Iraq reported receiving more support

than those from Somalia, former Yugoslavia, and Turkey.[30] It is unclear what the cause is for these differences in receiving support in Finnish language learning. The intersection of special education and language learning in Finland's special education system is important and needs to be further researched. It seems that sometimes students with migrant background do not get the right kind of support for learning difficulties since the lack of school language skills are blamed for difficulties such as dyslexia and vice versa[31] (see also the chapter by Enser-Kaananen and colleagues in this book).

In trying to understand the way Finnish schools fail pupils with migrant backgrounds, *the categorisation of "pupil with migrant background"* itself is problematic since all pupils with a migrant background are lumped together independently of their country of origin, ethnicity as well as sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, researchers such as Tuuli Kurki, Ameera Masoud, Gunilla Holm and Kristiina Brunila have criticised the category of "immigrant" functioning in educational context in a manner that is othering and disregards all individuality.[32] The category "pupil with migrant background" includes pupils who have just arrived from warzones as refugees as well as youths who were born and raised in Finland. Furthermore, the category does not make a difference between racialised and non-racialised identities or between pupils from different social class backgrounds. Thus, there is a huge diversity of pupils in the category 'pupils with migrant background' (or 'immigrant background' or 'foreign background'). In order to understand what is happening in Finnish education, we need a nuanced intersectional analysis of "pupils with migrant background". Intersectionality refers to how multiple dimensions of difference and power-axes, such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class or dis/ability, position persons simultaneously in an interconnected manner.[33]

One indicator of the need for intersectional analysis is the finding from the Statistics Finland's large-scale survey among persons with migrant background that education among people with migrant background is polarised.[34] The proportion of people with a migrant background that have a higher education degree is approximately the same as for the rest of the population, but the number of people with a migrant background who do not have an education after the comprehensive school is much larger than the average in Finland. The survey also finds that those with migrant background who have migrated to Finland after school-age are more likely to have a higher education than those who have completed their school in Finland.[35] This result in itself challenges the notion of "migrant background" as a shared experience or factor within education. Furthermore, reports have shown differences related to the background countries.[36] For instance, research indicates that Somali-Finns have a higher likelihood for difficulties in education and working life than (many) other migrant background groups.[37] Somali-Finns are the 4th biggest student group with migrant background comprising nearly 1% of the Finnish age group of 7–14-year-olds.[38] In a 2019 study, Abdirashid A. Ismail found that discrimination in Finnish society may hinder Finnish-Somali pupils from using the educational opportunities. He also found that if a pupil's parents do not have formal education in Somalia or Finland, it makes it more difficult for the parents to navigate effectively within the Finnish school system although they are interested and involved in their children's

education.[39] This makes us ask how to best view the connection between background country and educational outcomes. Different intersections such as migration background and social class as well as questions of racism and whiteness within the Finnish school need to be analysed.

By social class we mean both socio-economic realities and resources such as educational level and level of income, but also social class as a lived relation.[40] In Finland, parents' education and employment are connected to educational paths for all pupils and navigating within education is becoming more and more tied to family background.[41] Liisa Larja and colleagues found that education level is passed on among pupils with migrant backgrounds as well as among those with a non-migrant background in a manner similar for all.[42] At a grass-root level, Abdirashid A. Ismail suggested it may be more difficult for Finnish-Somali parents without formal education to navigate the school system effectively due to lacking the cultural capital that one gains through formal education.[43] Furthermore, differences in family income have an impact on pupils' schooling. For instance, THL's report based on register data of the 1997 birth cohort shows that pupils whose parents were born abroad had a lower graduation average grade in compulsory school than pupils with parents born in Finland. However, after families' basic social assistance was controlled for, pupils with migrant background outperformed students who did not have a migration background.[44] It is noteworthy that income support for families was connected to lower graduation average grades of all pupils regardless of migration or non-migration background, meaning that family income is connected to school performance[45] (see also the chapter by Järvinen, Tikkanen and af Ursin in this book).

We could argue that part of the way schools fail pupils with migrant background is due to reasons, such as social class, that put all pupils in unequal positions within Finnish schools. However, a 2015 analysis provided by the National Audit Office of Finland found that even when they controlled for the factors which are known to impact educational achievement such as socio-economic background and differences between schools, discrepancies between pupils with migrant background and non-migrant background were evident.[46] Nevertheless, other studies have found that when controlling for other factors that are known to affect educational outcomes, the differences become much smaller.[47] Thus, it is questionable to what extent we can directly connect "migration background", meaning that a pupil or pupil's parents have migrated to Finland, to the discrepancies described in this chapter. However, some researchers have argued that migrant background as such, positions the pupils as "other" in relation to Finns without a recent migrant background and this position is shared by the pupils regardless of which type of migration background they have.[48]

We suggest that one reason for the difficulties of grasping the failure in the Finnish system is that there is not enough analysis of *racism and whiteness* in Finnish schools. For instance, as Abdirashid A. Ismail shows in the case of Finnish-Somali pupils, a generally negative stance towards Somalis in Finland has an effect on the ways pupils see themselves as learners and experience school as well as possibilities for parents to be involved in their children's schooling.[49] In the Nordic countries, there has been a reluctance to analyse racism and whiteness although it seems evident that without it, we cannot understand our schools. For several decades education scholars

from, for example, the UK and the US have pointed out that race, racialisation and whiteness organise and structure education systems, and that racism is built into the education systems.[50] With *race* we refer to a political, social and cultural construct and *racism* "a system of socio-economic power, exploitation and exclusion" which is organised around the category of race. Race as a category is made, reproduced and established through the process of *racialisation*, and *whiteness* works as a norm against which "others" are racialised.[51] Whiteness is a system "of beliefs, practices, and assumptions that constantly centre the interests of White people, especially White elites" and racialisation maintains whiteness by "assigning race to others".[52] Research has shown that the Finnish school renews whiteness as a norm and privilege through racialisation of minorities.[53] The workings of race/whiteness intersect with multiple social divisions such as gender, social class and religion.[54]

In 2018, a report by the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) revealed that 45% of Afro-Finnish parents reported that their children had experienced racist bullying, harassment or violence in the past 12 months.[55] In the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman's survey of Afro-Finns 45% (N = 241) reported that they had been discriminated in education due to their skin colour.[56] Simultaneously, anti-Muslim resentment has become more and more visible and public in Finnish society.[57] When it comes to the question of different "background countries" and the connection to educational outcomes, acknowledging racism and whiteness helps us understand how a person becomes positioned depending on whether one is racialised as non-white or not. Thus, we can further the understanding of Abdirashid A. Ismail's findings about discrimination against Somali-Finns with the concepts of racism and whiteness intersected with questions of religion, and with social class. Both racism and religious hatred affect the position of Somali-Finnish pupils and parents. Souto (2011) has showed in her ethnographic study that racism in Finnish schools organises group relations, friendships and the ways pupils encounter each other.[58] Racism is also evident in youth cultures.[59] Pupils have been observed to use the term refugees for all pupils with a migrant background as a category for dividing pupils into groups without the teacher noticing the explicit othering going on.[60] Pupils have reported that being labelled as "immigrant" is common and degrading.[61] It could be argued that name-calling is structural racism given that it is common and tolerated by teachers and schools as part of pupils' everyday school experience.[62]

Conclusion: Turning the Gaze from Individuals to School and Society

In this chapter, our aim has been to highlight the aspects of the education of pupils with migrant education that still need further research. The focus has been on school and societal structures and processes instead of individuals. We have treated the findings of discrepancies as symptoms of a school system that is failing students, not of individual students, families or teachers failing. Likewise, even though it

is interesting that, for instance, the education level of parents has an impact, this is just another symptom of unjust mechanisms within education, not of incapable parents. Within Finnish education racism, whiteness, social class and gender intersect as power relations in a complex manner that needs further research. In order to understand the failure of educating pupils with migrant background well, an analysis of structural racism and an intersectional analysis of race, racialisation and whiteness in Finnish school and society are needed.

Research indicates that an example of a structural problem is the school staff not taking most forms of racism seriously enough, leading to racism in schools generally being unquestioned or denied.[63] Since refugees and migrants started coming to Finland in substantial numbers in the 1990s, there has been research showing that teachers have ambivalent views on migrant and migrant background pupils. Various studies by Mirja-Tytti Talib have pointed to teachers thinking of such pupils as enriching the classroom but also being tiring and difficult to teach. At the same time the studies pointed to teachers becoming aware of diversity issues and seeing themselves as tolerant.[64] Likewise, Jan-Erik Mansikka and Gunilla Holm (2011) interviewed teachers who saw themselves as colour blind, tolerant and welcoming of pupils with a migrant background, but only if they spoke the language of instruction.[65] Recent research suggests that teachers tend to connect migrant pupils with marginalisation in schools.[66] Migrant students are described as problematic and migrant cultures and languages are regarded as obstacles to integration. Pupils with a migrant background are described as different from white, middle class, 'normal' pupils.[67] Teachers prefer not to acknowledge everyday racism and choose to interpret racism as cultural differences. In this way addressing racism in schools can be avoided.[68]

Research has also pointed to teachers saying that they welcome pupils with migrant backgrounds but do not intend to change the way they teach.[69] In the early 2000s few teacher education programs had courses focusing on diversity issues, but there was some awareness that teachers needed education and in-service training in order to be able to teach all pupils well and also care for their well-being.[70] There are now compulsory or elective courses on diversity and multicultural education in all teacher education programmes, which is an indication that teacher educators realise that pre-service teachers need to be able to teach all pupils well including those with a migrant background. In a recent analysis of discourses about multicultural education amongst teacher educators in Finland, Ida Hummelstedt-Djedou, Harriet Zilliacus and Gunilla Holm found that a 'conservative discourse' on multicultural education was still the most common one. This meant teacher educators still think of multicultural education as mostly for teaching pupils with a migrant background as opposed to teaching all pupils.[71] The 'other' was seen as a problem and diversity was seen as coming from abroad, which is how diversity and multicultural education was talked about in older versions of the national curriculum.

The current national curriculum[72] has been changed so that ethnicity is only one of many aspects of diversity, other aspects are, for example, language, gender, social class, and religion.[73] Hence, the 2016 national curriculum defined all classrooms and schools as diverse. Teacher educators who have engaged in a more critical

discourse have argued for an intersectional social justice education. Along with researchers, they argue that a conservative or traditional multicultural education approach does not work well for supporting pupils with a migrant background to reach their full educational potential. A critical multicultural education or a social justice approach serves all students by being anti-racist, inclusive, and by working on eliminating power differences and preventing marginalisation.[74] An inclusive curriculum would, for example, require a revision of textbooks (see Mikander's chapter in this book). As Gorski has argued, "schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice".[75]

It is important to turn the gaze from individuals to the question of how education systems maintain current power relations, starting with teacher education and throughout the system as whole. At the education policy level, the basic education law (21.8.1998/628, 2§) states that basic education should support the pupils in becoming ethically responsible members of society and should provide everyone with relevant knowledge and skills. However, as we have claimed in this chapter, the racism and whiteness embedded in education prevents pupils from gaining a world-view that enables this. As the focus of this chapter has been on re-framing questions about educating 'pupils with migrant background' we want to emphasise that racism and whiteness embedded in education position pupils unequally and likely hinders learning and wellbeing. All schools in Finland are now obliged by law to have equality and equity plans as a way to change unfair and discriminatory practices, processes and structures. Furthermore, racism as a societal problem has been acknowledged and Finland has a new national action programme against racism.[76] It remains to be seen whether these policy changes reach into the structures of Finnish education and promote transformation.

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Jenni Helakorpi is Postdoctoral Researcher in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. Her research interests focus on justice in education, racism and whiteness, antiracism, intersectionality, gender, marginalisation and minoritised groups in education. Her current research is on racism, antiracism and whiteness in lower secondary education in Finland.

Gunilla Holm is Professor of Education in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. Her main field is sociology of education. Her research interests include diversity and social justice issues in education with special focus on racialisation, social class and gender. She conducts mostly ethnographic research and her research interests also include the development of participatory photography as a research method. Her current research is focussed on racialisation in early childhood education as well as in lower secondary education.

Xiaoxu Liu is Doctoral Researcher in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. Her research interests include multicultural education, comparative education, and Chinese ethnic minority education.

Chapter 21
Negotiated, Given and Self-Made Paths: Immigrant Origin Girls and Post-compulsory Educational Transition in Finland

Marja-Liisa Mäkelä and Mira Kalalahti

Abstract Although Finland still has a relatively low proportion of students with a migrant background, it has not been able to ensure that immigrants and their descendants have equal educational opportunities. Education could enhance integration but migrant backgrounds have a persistent impact. In this chapter, our focus is on post-comprehensive educational decision-making processes of immigrant origin adolescent girls, with the viewpoint of the multifaceted intertwinement of gender and ethnicity. We conceptualise the educational decisions as negotiations that adolescents have to have with their families, teachers, counsellors and peers. Within these negotiations, the negotiating parties try to push the adolescent to choose those educational paths they see valued and preferred, and away from the choices they see as unfitting or less valued. As the girls 'negotiate their identities according to situational contexts', their agency is constructed with ongoing and reflective negotiations with other people. In this chapter, we show how adolescent girls with an immigrant background in Finland face quite similar difficulties as ethnic minorities in other European and Nordic countries when continuing their education from compulsory education. We also illustrate with three 'transitional stories' the key challenges that girls with immigrant backgrounds encounter when making their educational decisions and integrating to education: structural boundaries, social boundaries and acculturation.

Today, approximately 8% of the Finnish population have a recent migrant background.[1] Although Finland still has a relatively low proportion of students with a migrant background, the academic adaptation of migrants is not encouraging.[2] Despite targeted practices and support, Finland has one of the widest gaps between

M.-L. Mäkelä (✉)
Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: makela.marjaliisa@gmail.com

M. Kalalahti
Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: mira.m.kalalahti@jyu.fi

native and non-native speakers in learning outcomes amongst OECD countries.[3] Migrant backgrounds also have an impact on the selection and completion of upper secondary education.[4]

The developments leading to the educational underperformance of Finnish migrants and their children are multiple and derive already from the comprehensive education. Unequal educational opportunities are bounded by below-average school performance and complex decision-making processes during and after the compulsory education. Career guidance has not been able to meet the diversity of the pupils at the comprehensive education level and the post-comprehensive transitions of pupils with immigrant background are often multi-phase and delayed due to rejections and additional teaching.[5] Migrants and their children also discontinue their upper secondary studies more often than average, especially in academically oriented general upper secondary education.[6] Furthermore, students with immigrant backgrounds are underrepresented in higher education despite the fact that the Finnish education system should produce few inequalities given the low stratification of the primary and lower secondary school system and numerous alternative ways to access higher education.[7]

It is clear that young people with immigrant backgrounds are not a generic group and there is considerable variation in the educational achievements of migrants compared with young people with migrant background ('second generation migrants'), as well as between the different countries they migrated from.[8] Researchers have raised concerns about counsellors lacking the competence to recognise and acknowledge the socio-cultural contexts of those they are working with, leading to prejudice and segregation and many negotiations between occupational opportunities, hopes and expectations.[9] In this chapter instead of examining specific migrant groups or migrant young people as one group, we aim to enrich the comprehension of the negotiations of which young people face by portraying three 'transitional stories' of immigrant adolescent girls.[10] Their narratives illustrate three key area in which equality of educational opportunities is challenged.

Our Stories of Three Adolescent Girls

Our data consists of the follow-up stories of three adolescent girls with an immigrant background. They were interviewed twice. The first time was during their last year of comprehensive school (approximately 15 years-of-age) while they were making upper secondary education choices. The second interview was during the last year of their upper secondary studies (approximately 17–18 years-of-age). The girls were selected from the longitudinal study 'Transitions and Educational Trajectories of Immigrant Youth'.[11] In this project, 445 young people were surveyed over three years from the comprehensive school to the end of the upper secondary education, with 35 of them interviewed twice. The sampling was targeted to schools that represented socio-economically different urban neighbourhood schools with an above-average number of immigrant-origin students.

In order to illustrate the relationship between the migrant background and educational transitions in Finland, we discuss three cases. We focus on 'second generation' immigrant girls who were born in Finland but had at least one parent born abroad. (See discussion about the concept of *immigrant* in Helakorpi, Holm and Liu in this book, also Mikander in this book). These girls had completed Finnish basic education and formally met the same opportunities as other Finnish-born pupils. Yet their cases illustrate the diversity of opportunity structures of the 'next generation immigrants'.[12] Based on earlier analysis we selected three viewpoints on educational opportunities: (a) structural boundaries, (b) social boundaries and (c) acculturation.[13]

In discussing these cases, we use the girls' educational biographies to underline the endless movement and flow of the agencies these girls have and aim for. Their stories and memories are like snapshot moments of historical events, actions and places, and when analysing the snapshots, we can "crack open" some routinised social, embodied and affected processes.[14] The stories were constructed from the girls' interviews by using a simple question: What can her story tell us about educational transition from the viewpoint of structural/social/acculturation boundaries? Since the girls talked about many topics in their interviews, we made decisions about what the narratives would look like, keeping a focus on our key concerns.

Jenifer: The Tug-of-War of Opportunities and Challenges

Structural boundaries refer here to the practical opportunities available for pupils in Finland. For young people with immigrant backgrounds, it reflects *structural integration*, referring to institutional integration, for instance equal access to education and work.[15] Since the comprehensive education in Finland does not have tracking, the first focal education choice is the application for upper secondary education at age of 15, either at an (academic) general upper secondary school, at vocational upper secondary institutions or preparatory studies for further education. Although all tracks can lead to tertiary education, those graduating from general upper secondary school have much higher probability of higher education enrolment.[16] Generally, the upper secondary education drop-out rates for immigrant-origin young people are higher than Finnish-origin youth. Dropping out rates are high especially at the general upper secondary school, where pupils with immigrant backgrounds seem to enrol with lower grades than Finnish-origin young.[17]

With the story of Jenifer (born in Finland, has ethnic roots both in Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa), we illustrate how narrow options for non-Finnish education, tough competition for places, and inflexible transitions often turn educational choices to constant negotiations between options, opportunities and support.[18]

Jenifer lived in Finland with her mother and sister. Her father lived in another country for work, but they visited each other and talk on the phone. Both parents have higher education, yet her mother worked as a cashier in a shop. Jenifer's father worked in a university. Jenifer self-identified as European rather than African, but was not able to say if she feels Finnish. She told us she had not encountered racism

in Finland although noted she has been the only "foreigner" in her chosen hobby, Scouting.

At the end of comprehensive education (Grade 9) she based her choices for upper secondary education on her school grades, to ensure overall access to general upper secondary schools. Jenifer told us that her family lacked knowledge of the application process and the Finnish education system, since she was the oldest child. Consequently, they sought help from a close family friend who had older children. Jenifer didn't visit any schools, but used the Internet to find relevant information:

> We talked with my godmother, who has four children of which three are in high school, who said to me that I should have at least two high schools [in the application], that I'm sure to get in. She helped with those, because she knows a bit more than my mom does, because I'm the first born and all that.

During her comprehensive education, Jenifer had been studying in classes where the teaching takes place in English, and she would have liked to continue her studies in English at the upper secondary education. The Finnish education system nevertheless offers limited options for post-comprehensive studies for students who have arrived in Finland recently and/or have been studying in English-speaking classes. Vocational education is offered only in Finnish or Swedish (the two official languages in Finland) and besides a few International Baccalaureate (IB) classes there are few general upper secondary schools offering teaching in English ('English streams'). Although the IB Diploma is completed in English, in the English streams students still need to complete the Finnish matriculation exams, in Finnish. All the international classes and especially the IB classes are highly regarded and entry to them is very competitive. Since Jenifer thought that only top-performing pupils ("10-oppilaat") got into IB, she did not feel confident enough to apply. She applied to upper secondary school which had an English-stream class, but was accepted in a general class, where all the teaching took place in Finnish.

Lack of means to support immigrant students' language proficiency creates multiple structural barriers to pupils with immigrant backgrounds, both in their mother tongue and in the language of instruction at school.[19] According to Jenifer, studying in Finnish in upper secondary school affected her studies in multiple ways. She used English as her main 'social' language with friends and family and felt that studying in Finnish was difficult since all her familiar concepts and academic thinking took place in English. She emphasised how hard it was to study in Finnish and how she lacked the study motivation, even in her favourite subject, natural science. Her grades dropped. Nevertheless, she thought that studying in Finnish would be beneficial for the Finnish matriculation examination. Studying in English would be harder, if not even impossible:

> Well, I did somewhat manage, or I mean, there were some difficulties, like … I still have some difficulties, like because I overall, my whole life is in English and I think everything in English and now I need to translate it all in Finnish. […] But now if I think of it that if I were now in an English-speaking class in school, I don't think that I would do any good in the matriculation exam […], I wouldn't know anything because I don't use Finnish language.

Besides the teaching language, the decision to study "Finnish as a second language" instead of "Finnish as a mother tongue" is consequential in the upper secondary education. 'Finnish as a second language' teaching is not always realised as intended and the young people are not able to optimise their development of academic language skills.[20] Jenifer studied in the 'F2' group and planned to take that exam in the matriculation examination. Her reasoning was that she did not feel creative in Finnish and had difficulties writing essays in Finnish. Nevertheless, it was not evident whether her Finnish skills would enable her to study in Finnish at the tertiary level.

Jenifer's case also exemplifies lack of support for study planning. A recent evaluation of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre on students with an immigrant background in higher education acknowledges that higher education institutions lack special support for immigrant-background students.[21] For instance, communication about various application methods and studying opportunities do not reach these young people, and they do not receive adequate support for their studies. Jenifer was also confused about how her studies could prepare her for further education. Overall, the reality of her studies had been unexpected to Jenifer. She was surprised to learn that a student was expected to already know what they want to study at university by the beginning of upper secondary school in order to choose the subjects that are needed to get the points to get in to university.

Jenifer's narrative revealed disappointment in multiple ways. Her view of studying was not very favourable and she questioned her choice to go to general upper secondary school instead of vocational school. Yet she admitted that vocational school was not her choice, since she did not know what to study there. She felt that she was not the perfect 'high school' student, and contrasted herself to some image she held of that perfect student:

> The high school hasn't been for me … like I don't get excited about it. I don't like hate it or anything, it just something neutral to me, I just go there and that's it. I've thought about it [changing school] many times, like … sometimes I do think that I should have gone to vocational school. […] but I don't know what I would study there. But many times, I have thought why I'm in high school, like I'm not the world's best student or anything.

Her main subject choices had been natural science subjects, but she had some regrets about choosing them and claimed that it would have been easier if she had chosen religion or history instead. She had also noticed that she was good in language studies, and showed interest in different languages and multilingualism. One of her biggest disappointments about her studies seemed to be that even though English was her second strongest language, she did not achieve the level she aimed for in the matriculation examination.

At the end of comprehensive education, Jenifer's post-secondary aspiration was to continue to university to study medicine. At the end of the secondary education, she expressed a wish to take a year off and maybe do some voluntary work abroad, but her parents were pushing her to go to university. She felt it was not good to apply to university without a clear study plan. Nevertheless, she planned to apply to study English at university and hoped that her future profession would have something to

do with languages and cultures. She also said that it would probably be good if she had some 'Plan B' but at the time of the interview, she did not yet have one. Her parents had told her that she should "just apply at least somewhere [university]" and she feared they thought she had "given up", which annoyed her. If Jenifer could not get in the university on the first try, she would continue to work at the petrol station and maybe participate in some online courses. She did not see her future in Finland, but did not yet know where she would like to live as an adult.

Sahra: Expectations, Demands and Support

Structural boundaries intertwine with *social boundaries*. Gender and ethnicity affected the negotiations the girls faced when choosing their educational paths. For instance, families' overall high-aiming educational expectations might prevent young people from applying to vocational education. The occupational gender divisions in Finland are some of the highest in the EU. Young female students tend still to choose occupations that are traditionally seen as suitable for women, mostly in the fields of social work or healthcare. Career decisions are often made according to the idea of occupations appropriate for her/him.[22]

Different social arenas and connections affect the multiple conscious and unconscious choices we make in our everyday lives. Families, friends, peers and teachers in schools are the main people that young people negotiate with to construct their realities. Young people move every day from homes to classrooms, from schools to shopping malls and from hobbies to friends' houses, and they have to adapt their behaviour, ways of speaking and choices they make, from one setting to another. These movements and adaptations are mostly taken for granted, even though these transitions acquire active effort and multiple skills, especially if the social contexts young people find themselves in have values and norms that differ significantly from one another.[23]

Here we concentrate on the narrative told us by Sahra, who was born in Finland, but her parents came from Sub-Saharan Africa. Both parents had higher education. Sahra applied as her first choice to a general upper secondary school that had specific emphasis on natural sciences. All of her choices were general upper secondary schools, she had not even considered vocational studies. Sahra believed that she would get in to her first choice and planned to continue to university to study medicine.

Sahra told us that at the end of comprehensive school she had hesitated to apply to the general upper secondary school specialising in natural sciences, since she thought it was too high achieving for her. Her parents encouraged Sahra to visit the school and went along with her. It made Sahra realise that the school really offered the best courses and was the best choice for her. She also found out that the extra courses would benefit her when she would later apply to university to study medicine:

> In the autumn, I was like, I'll choose for my first choice a different school. I thought that natural sciences, it'll be too hard for me. I'm not going to make it. But then my parents were like, it's your own decision, but wait until we visit the school first. […] Then we went there to visit the school and I noticed, ok, this school is better, that I should try to get in there.

Research has shown how agency in the decision-making processes concerning education is influenced by different ethnic-related factors, for instance, familiarity with the education system.[24] In Sahra's case, her parents seem to be able to guide their daughter to choose the best route to tertiary level education. As we saw earlier, it was more evident that Jenifer's parents did not have the knowledge to help with her choices.

Previous research has also shown that in immigrant families, parents have often strong belief in education and tend to push their children towards academic education, with a preference to become a doctor or a lawyer.[25] Yet families have different positionings from which to advance these aspirations. Sahra's parents encouraged her to apply to a school with a high academic reputation as they believed that school would be beneficial to Sahra's future aspirations. In the interviews, Sahra herself mentioned that she would like to become a doctor, so her parents' hopes and her own plans seem to be similar. In Sahra's case, it was important that her parents got involved with her application process, since it seems she might not have otherwise had the courage to apply to the school.

Sahra was accepted in the school specialising in natural sciences and her mother helped her to choose the courses she would take for the first year. That first year was fun and exciting, but during the second year, Sahra became bored and more stressed as the matriculation examination got closer. She had heard from friends that studying in the upper secondary level would be harder than in comprehensive school, but it was still somewhat of a surprise how much work it required from her. She still enjoyed the natural science subjects and had performed well in her studies.

Unlike Jenifer, Sahra did not study 'Finnish as a second language' but attended the 'Finnish as a mother tongue' classes at comprehensive school. She acknowledged that Finnish skills were important, because in general upper secondary schools you have to write essays in Finnish. Sahra used Finnish with her friends, so it was part of her social life as well as her "professional life" in school. However, at the upper secondary education, she started in the 'Finnish as a mother tongue' group, but changed to the 'Finnish as a second language' group. She expected this would provide more points for her higher education application.

Sahra also studied advanced mathematics and English courses. She would have preferred Basic English, but her guidance counsellor advised her to choose the extended level since that would give her more points. She also planned to take extra subjects in the matriculation examination to enable multiple options for the best grades when applying to the university, again following the guidance counsellor's advice. Sahra's guidance counsellor was actively encouraging her to choose courses that would help her to apply to university, sometimes contrary to Sahra's own account of her strengths and aspirations:

> I've got advanced math. And also advanced English. Like you can do either advanced or basic English in the matriculation exam. I was thinking to do the basic level, but my guidance

counsellor was like, you don't get enough points that way, you need to do the advanced one. I was like, ok. […] I did the basic level Swedish. Only the compulsory courses. I don't like language studies.

Sahra seemed to have a supportive and active guidance counsellor who has listened and tried to help her reach her dream of becoming a doctor. This is not the case in every school and with every guidance counsellor. Other studies have shown that girls with immigrant background are often pushed towards lower-level health and care industry professions and that their hopes to become a doctor or lawyer (or some other profession requiring advanced education) are not supported by their teachers or guidance counsellors.[26]

At the end of Sahra's upper secondary studies, she planned to continue to university to study medicine, but also had a 'Plan B' to study pharmacy or mathematics if she did not get in to medicine. With her mother, she planned to take a coaching course after finishing the matriculation examination to help get into university. She said her parents were very excited for her, as she was the oldest child of the family and the first one to go to university. She spent a lot of her free time with her family and her parents helped her with her homework. Her father was a mathematics lecturer, but her mother had not been able to find a job with her bio-technology degree, so she was studying a new profession in childcare. Sahra wanted to become a paediatrician or a dentist one day, but also perhaps a teacher. Her parents did not want her to be a teacher, because they feared it would be less secure as an occupation:

Interviewer	In the medical school, you can choose your field of medicine, so do you already know what you would wish to do?
Sahra	Maybe a paediatrician. Maybe, I'm not still sure if I'll go to study dentistry or medicine.
Interviewer	Has there been some other profession in addition to becoming a doctor?
Sahra	Teacher. […] I've always wanted to be a teacher.
Interviewer	For your parents, is it a good thing this doctor, like are they supporting your choice?
Sahra	Yeah, because they are, like, the employability is so good, like you can always get a job. But if you are a teacher, it's more touch and go.

The way Sahra's mother had struggled to get a job in the area of her first degree may have affected the parents' view of preferable professions for Sahra. Previous research has indicated that parental unemployment can lead to children to refuse to invest time and effort into studies that may not lead to success, even if they themselves would prefer those areas. At the same time, parental unemployment might mean that parents strongly encourage their children to study further, believing that a good education is the best protection against stratified labour markets.[27] This seemed to be happening in Sahra's case as well.

As her grades were good, Sahra had a strong belief that she would get in to university to study mathematics if she didn't get into medicine. She thought she could try again the following year and that mathematical studies would only be beneficial for medicine as well. She thought her future would be in Finland, and saw her background as an immigrant wearing a headscarf being useful in a doctor's profession, since Finland was becoming more multicultural over time. Her positive view of being an immigrant in Finland may be because she had not experienced racism

herself or witnessed it in her social surroundings. However, previous research has shown that wearing the headscarf makes Muslim women targets for gendered ethnic discrimination or blatant racism.[28] Instead of fearing this, Sahra saw her headscarf as a social cue of intercultural competence that she might be able to use in her future work as a doctor in multicultural Finland.

Khadra: (Not)Belonging?

Another problem sometimes faced by minority youth is an 'acculturation *dilemma'*.[29] Integration through education has become a major policy objective especially after the rapid increase in immigration in 2015.[30] The multiple fields of study underline the importance of successful integration to improve school achievements, educational attitudes and overall well-being beyond schooling.[31] Since it seems that pupils adjust to schools more easily if they favour assimilation, they are often expected to adjust to mainstream school cultures. This might lead to acculturative pressure and distance-taking to ethnic communities and heritage. Although assimilative orientation would enhance integration, the acculturative pressure can burden psychological adjustment.

Belonging somewhere and holding a (valued) social position is something we all more or less strive for. Positioning offers a specific way to understand the educational agency of immigrant background youth, highlighting how an individual's positioning as a learner is related to how they are positioned by others.[32] That is to say, depending on a student's positioning and the value it has in the classroom, the student can either take an active learner position, or alternatively step in to the margin. Not all effects of being on the margins are negative, students who become more aware of their ethnicity through being made to feel different by classmates or teachers can also be motivated to learn by thinking that they need to work extra hard.[33]

Here we look at Khadra's story. She was born in Finland and her parents' origins were in Sub-Saharan Africa. Her first choice was to apply to study a dual degree (general upper secondary and vocational studies combined), but she only got into the vocational school.

In comprehensive school, Khadra had some issues and quarrels with some of her teachers, mainly when she felt that the teachers were unfairly favouring some pupils. She also felt fundamentally different. She thought this was not because she was "not a Finn", but admitted that not being a Finn may have some bearing on it, because she viewed things from a different angle than the Finnish origin pupils and teachers:

> But it's the truth, I'll always be different. It's not because I'm not a Finn and all. But it's a bit of true that I'm not the same [as the others]. Like, there are some Finns, like I do get in contradictions [with them] because I see things in a different way that they see them.

She had encountered racism in the comprehensive school, even from her own classmates. She felt they may not have meant to be racist but were not thinking what they were saying. Khadra thought she was not in a position to say anything against them. Research indicates that for minority students exposed to long-lasting acts of

discrimination or racism, there may be negative impacts on their educational paths, often leading to countercultures further marginalising them.[34] In Khadra's story, feelings of belonging were important. When visiting her new school for the first time, Khadra mentioned that it had a good atmosphere and visible multiculturality. She felt accepted there. So, even though she did not get in to do the dual degree she had planned, her experiences of belonging seemed to be important to her, and she enjoyed her schooling.

Family was important to Khadra, who had five siblings. She strongly asserted that she was not a Finn, but still felt somewhat mixed emotions about her parents' home country. She acknowledged that having only once visited that country she had little knowledge of it and was not sure if she would like to "return" there:

Interviewer   What country do you see as your home country?
Khadra   I don't know if I can call it my own home country, like I've been there once, like me
              and my mom. My mom is kind of used to it and all, but me, when I went there, I
              wasn't. Was it that I hadn't been used to the weather, because I'm used to Finland,
              like I live here and all.

Such mixed feelings of belonging are quite common among immigrant origin children. These feelings can impact their future, if they do not know where they want to live when they are grown up and are left somewhat between two origins.

Khadra's parents were encouraging her in her studies, but did not ask after her grades or check up on her progress. They trusted her. She lived at home and helped her mother with the younger siblings, willingly, she said, and with know-how from her studies. Khadra seemed to spend a lot of her free time at home:

It is sometimes hard for me, since I have to help my mom more [now that her older sister has moved from home]. Sometimes I do feel that the boys [brothers], I'm the only girl there. They don't … when I live with five boys it gets hard sometimes, when all you hear is shouting for games. […] I have to go to libraries or somewhere if I have something important in my studies. Like I do have my own room. The walls don't … the noise gets in anyway.

However, when Khadra talked about home she was quick to mention that her mother did not ask her that much to help but that she herself was actively choosing to help: "*She [mom] doesn't want to bother me. Like, I usually say to her, like do you need some help?*" This may well be true, but can also indicate that Khadra knows that Finnish origin girls do not have that much obligation to help at home and was therefore more eager to emphasise that helping was her own active decision. Students with immigrant origins often face the need to adapt to the culture of the country they live, meaning that the youth need to find a way to hold on to their home culture and the same time learn how to apply the cultural values and norms of the host country.[35]

In the second interview, Khadra described her future in a positive light. She seemed to be happy in her school and in her relationship with teachers. She no longer experienced racism or discrimination, she felt accepted and her relationship with teachers had improved a lot. This all had a positive effect on her motivation to study. It is clear from her story that the school's multicultural student population and the intercultural competence of teachers had an effect on her feelings of belonging and acceptance, and this is also likely to be true for other minority students.

Conclusion: Paths to the Future?

The three stories we have illustrated here are important lessons to be learnt for the future development of both guidance counselling and teaching in (multicultural) schools. Despite the vivid discussion of individual experiences, starting points and abilities, which need to be carefully considered for every student, our stories indicate that the individual adolescent is sometimes lost in the reality. The structural, social and acculturation boundaries can have a negative impact on the student's school performance, educational motivation and self-image as a student, and hence hinder the student's possibilities to successfully continue his/her educational path. Schools as social environments should support the multifaceted educational agency that students have (and grow into), in order to enable the educational transition and paths to higher education in the future. Integration of the young people with migrant background into the Finnish society is a much-emphasised target of schooling, but the ways to improve integration have proven to be insufficient.[36] There seems to be lack of multicultural competence in education and communication.[37]

Mainstream schools and other educational institutions can maintain minority students' marginal status and social position by using the majority culture as the basis of national curriculum, upholding language hierarchies in classrooms, having segregated groups and classes for immigrant youths, or placing them in lower academic tracks.[38] School pedagogies are still mainly monolingual and languages have traditionally been kept separate from each other. Multilingual classrooms are considered mainly challenging instead of resource.[39] The constant feeling of an outsider impacts negatively on self-esteem, self-image, educational identity and agency.[40] In the case of Finland, the macro level (the national curriculums) supports the multilingual approach as a national educational policy (e.g., emphasis on additional language learning, and immigrant students' native language learning and native minority languages have official status and support). However, at the micro level (the teachers and classrooms) the reality is somewhat different: many of the teachers feel that they lack the required skills to maintain their students' multilingual abilities, and the curriculums are too abstract to offer much-needed tools to work in a multilingual and -cultural classroom reality.[41]

Finland has a long history of a welfare system that is built on an assumption of equality of all people, and the educational system is long seen one of the key elements to re-produce and maintain this equality for all. However, even here Finnish society is changing, the gap between the "well-to-doers" and the "low incomers" is growing, and at the same time the political pressure to maintain and even more importantly, to "fix" the welfare system, is getting more urgent. Our three cases illustrate different ways in which the inequalities are generated for immigrant youth. Structural boundaries affect the practical opportunities the students have to transit successfully to secondary level education; social boundaries have specific push and pull effects and many times force the immigrant origin youth to negotiate their educational paths more multidimensional than Finnish origin students, and finally the acculturation boundaries can cause the immigrant students to respond to the felt 'assimilation

pressure' either by distancing themselves from their own ethnic community/culture or being isolated and marginalised from the majority community/classroom culture. Nevertheless, as we see from the narratives of our three girls, the counselling, extra support and available resources they received do make a difference in the lives of the individual. We just need to make sure that the impact of such measures is going to be positive and make the educational path easy to access and easy to pass. We also need to ensure that at the end of that path there is a reward that follows: the career path.

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Marja-Liisa Mäkelä is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. She works as a Project Manager in a non-profit organisation Valo-Valmennusyhdistys ry which works primary with at-risk youth. Mäkelä's main research interests include the effects of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background, educational trajectories and manifested agencies.

Mira Kalalahti is Associate Professor of guidance (tenure-track) at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä. Her research and writing focuses on equality and agency in education and education politics. Kalalahti's recent research has been on the issues of justice within guidance counselling and she also has a continuing research interest in the relational expertise of guidance.

Chapter 22
Language Education for Everyone? Busting Access Myths

Johanna Ennser-Kananen, Erja Kilpeläinen, Taina Saarinen, and Heidi Vaarala

Abstract Finland has, rather successfully, promoted an image of itself as a model of educational excellence and linguistic equity. This chapter problematises this image by analysing Finnish language education policies at the comprehensive school level. For our analysis we use a three-fold understanding of access as; (a) having the opportunity to participate in language education (getting in); (b) participating in education that is meaningful and effective for the pupil (getting it); and (c) receiving credentials that are societally legitimate and valuable assets (getting out). We elaborate on each aspect of access by debunking three myths for the Finnish context that: (a) Multilingualism is politically valued; (b) the curriculum promotes multilingual education; and (c) the education system offers equal opportunities to all, regardless of language. We conclude with a mixed picture. While initiatives have been put in place to expand participation in language learning and develop multilingual pedagogies, the societal status of national languages and constitutional bilingualism have also, somewhat paradoxically, strengthened monolingual ideologies. Such ideologies have contributed to the erasure of Indigenous and autochthonous languages from education and minimise the position of allochthonous (migrant) languages in curriculum and education. We propose several reforms in teacher education and a more systematic, long term, national supervision of (language) education policy in the service of equitable multilingual education.

J. Ennser-Kananen (✉)
Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, PL 35, 40012 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: johanna.f.ennser-kananen@jyu.fi

E. Kilpeläinen
Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: erja.p.kyckling@jyu.fi

T. Saarinen
Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: taina.m.saarinen@jyu.fi

H. Vaarala
Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
e-mail: heidi.vaarala@jyu.fi

This chapter analyses Finnish language education policies at comprehensive schools through an access framework. Constitutionally bilingual, Finland is commonly perceived as a model of educational excellence, language equity, and language education policy.[1] While this image has been promoted and commodified,[2] it has also been criticised.[3] In this chapter, we focus on debunking myths of access to education from a language perspective.

All pupils must learn both Finnish and Swedish in Finnish comprehensive schools. This, combined with one so-called "foreign"[4] language makes Finland formally fulfil the recommendation of "mother tongue plus two" of the Barcelona European Council in 2002,[5] i.e., that students should know two languages in addition to their first one. However, both the recommendation itself and Finland's fulfilment of it are problematic. "Mother tongue plus two" normalises the notion of having one first language as well as an understanding of multilingualism as simply accumulating languages as distinct and separate units. Fulfilling the recommendation also perpetuates a view of the national languages as the only important languages, which, in turn, lowers political motivation to invest in multilingual education. Since the two additional ("plus two") languages are commonly identified as Finnish/Swedish and English, many pupils' heritage and other minoritised languages remain marginalised.[6] Relatedly, language education is unequally available across Finland (with fewer opportunities in rural areas) and participation in language education is stratified according to socio-economic background and gender.[7]

In this chapter, we analyse access to language education against larger education and language policy trends. We operationalise "access" as the opportunity to participate in language education (*getting in*), participating in education that is meaningful and effective (*getting it*), and receiving credentials that are societally legitimate and valuable assets (*getting out*).[8] This approach enables us to identify and understand inequities throughout the process of language education, rather than limiting our focus to the "getting in" phase.

We debunk three myths of Finnish (language) education, one related to each dimension of access:

1. Myth 1 (getting in): Multilingualism is valued in Finnish language education policy.
2. Myth 2 (getting it): The Finnish curriculum and schools promote multilingual education.
3. Myth 3 (getting out): The education system offers equal possibilities to all learners, regardless of their first languages.

We discuss the first myth in the context of foreign language and heritage language education. While the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education[9] has educational and social equity and equality as one of its core values and multilingualism is politically valued, access to less commonly taught languages and heritage languages varies greatly across municipalities and between demographic groups. We approach the second myth by problematising the fact that while the national core curriculum is quite forward-looking in promoting language awareness and multiple

language use in schools, it remains surprisingly vague about multilingual pedagogies.[10] Regarding the third myth, we argue that the Finnish education system does not offer the same opportunities to first and second language users of national languages. All these myths are discussed against the goal of educational equity.

Recycling Ideologies and discourses—A Historical Overview

Finland is commonly idealised as a bilingual country.[11] This bilingualism is, however, institutional rather than individual in nature, as it is based on the idea of separate parallel Finnish and Swedish language institutions rather than bilingual institutions or individuals.[12] In addition to the two national languages, Sámi languages, sign languages, and Romani are mentioned in the constitution, albeit in the context of Indigenous (Sámi), disability (sign languages) and cultural (Romani) rights and values, rather than linguistic ones. While the constitution does not recognise minority languages, they, together with Karelian, have received recognition as minority languages based on The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML).[13]

The comprehensive school reform that was debated in the 1960s and gradually implemented from 1972 on, brought all students together under one educational system in order to increase equal educational opportunities. In the reform, compulsory teaching of both national languages was extended to all students in the cohort. According to the Basic Education Act, teaching is organised in two separate strands based on the two national languages (Basic Education Act 628/1998), following the constitutional principle of parallel language institutions. The role of the second national language (Swedish for most pupils) has been controversial ever since, with Swedish occupying a complex role as hegemonic national language, compulsory school subject, and de facto minoritised language.[14]

The language education policies of the 2000s tend to focus on the availability of "foreign" languages (e.g., English, German, French, and Russian) on the one hand and the teaching of second language and heritage languages to migrant background students on the other. The position of autochthonous minority languages, particularly Sámi, Romani and Karelian, remains vulnerable, with little support and low status within mainstream education, apart from Sámi languages in the Sámi homeland, an administrative area in the very north of Finland with some autonomy in Sámi matters.[15] This is illustrative of the historical erasure of minoritised languages in education.[16]

According to the Basic Education Act from 1998, the language of instruction at school and the language of the "mother tongue and literature" subject is either Finnish, Swedish or a Sámi language, but, based on guardians' choice, also "Romani, sign language, or pupil's other mother tongue" may be taught "as mother tongue" (§12). Unfortunately, municipalities are not required to offer heritage language teaching, nor is studying heritage languages compulsory. Municipalities can, however, apply

for funding from the National Agency for Education to organise heritage language programs.[17]

Language education is thoroughly linked to the historically recycled language ideologies of the relative value of different languages. Societally, emergent new nationalist and populist politics manifest as concern for (a) national language(s), putting pressure particularly on the areas of language education that are associated with learners who are perceived as "foreign". These developments reproduce a hegemony of national languages and the marginalisation of minoritised (allochthonous and autochthonous) languages.[18]

Language Education in Finnish Comprehensive School

Finnish comprehensive school is divided into primary education (Grades 1–6) and secondary education (Grades 7–9). Finnish and Swedish speaking pupils take a subject called "mother tongue and literature" throughout their school careers. The second national language, Swedish for most pupils, starts in 6th Grade as a compulsory subject. However, Swedish-speaking students usually start learning the second national language, Finnish, earlier than this.[19] While there are no statistics of Finnish-Swedish bilingualism, there is some evidence that Swedish speakers as a minority (5.9% of population) tend to be more Swedish-Finnish bilingual than Finnish speakers and to choose Finnish as their first compulsory language. According to Statistics Finland,[20] in 2019, 5.7% of pupils in Grades 1–6 took Finnish as their first compulsory language whereas most pupils chose English.

The narrow spectrum of languages learned at school (mostly English and Swedish) has been cause for concern since the 1990s. According to the official statistics, in 2019, 83% of pupils in Grades 1–6 and 99.5% of pupils in Grade 7–9 studied English.[21] One effort to alleviate this problem was a 2020 policy change, which required pupils to begin to learn their first "foreign" language in Grade 1 (rather than Grade 3, as before). As the 309 municipalities are under no obligation to offer more than one language, and because resources are (perceived to be) scarce and demand for variety from parents and guardians is limited, municipalities offer mostly English as the first "foreign" language.[22] As a result, for an overwhelming majority, English remains the first "foreign" language, even though English itself is not a compulsory subject.[23]

In 2019, around 48,000 pupils spoke some language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi as their first language.[24] These pupils are taught Finnish or Swedish as a second language. Additionally, they can be offered heritage language teaching. In 2019, approximately 44% of the pupils entitled to heritage language teaching participated in it.[25] According to The Finnish National Agency for Education,[26] in autumn 2019 there were 89 education providers who organised heritage language teaching in 57 languages, and 21,215 pupils participating in it in comprehensive education and at senior high school level. The language groups with most learners were Russian (5745 pupils), Arabic (3095 pupils) and Somali (2261 pupils).[27] Because most speakers of

these "other" languages live in the urban centres, linguistic diversity in smaller rural municipalities receives less attention, meaning less language learning support and opportunities for pupils.[28]

Access is More Than "Getting in"

Traditionally, access to educational opportunities, more specifically language education, has been understood as the possibility to participate in educational programs. However, opportunities to develop useful and socially valued language skills not only hinge on the existence or availability of a language program, but on a complex multitude of factors, including socially just language education as a linguistic and educational (human) right,[29] education as participation,[30] and dis/investment in education,[31] all of which has influenced our three-fold approach to access.[32] In addition to continuous access to education—what we call *getting in*—our concept of access includes also the enabling of education and learning (*getting it*), and the value of education—what we call *getting out*. The following sample questions are associated with these three dimensions of access: (Table 22.1)

This frame challenges and expands a narrow view of access as "getting in" and enables us to examine potential obstacles and opportunities for language education in more thorough and nuanced ways.

Table 22.1 The three dimensions of access to educational opportunities

Getting in Access to education	Who is expected/allowed to participate? What prerequisites exist, infrastructural obstacles and opportunities exist?
Getting it Enabling of education and learning	How is quality of teaching ensured? What education, networks, support, opportunity for professional development do teachers have? What pedagogical principles or curricular incentives and guidelines guide them? What materials are available and used? How is the course/program organised?
Getting out Value of education	What credentials do learners receive at course completion? How likely are they to complete the program? What is assessed, how, and by whom? What doors do they open/close?

Debunking Myths of Language Education

Debunking Myth 1: Multilingualism is Valued in Language Education Policy

At the level of national politics, multilingualism and teaching of multiple languages is celebrated and promoted in Finland.[33] Nevertheless the steady decrease in language learning, both in terms of numbers of learners and the languages learned, has led to concerns about Finnish language education. As a counter-reaction, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education have funded national projects in the 1990s and early 2000s which focused particularly on world languages or "foreign languages",[34] and on early language learning, second language and heritage language learning in the 2010s.[35] Despite this national attention to multilingualism, important goals of linguistic equity have not been achieved. In analysing *getting in,* we give examples from access to optional languages on the one hand, and heritage languages on the other. We also recognise that this is only part of the picture: pupils from different areas and socioeconomic backgrounds still lack access to language education in several intersecting ways.

Laws, statutes and policies, such as the national core curriculum, steer language education policy and its implementation both nationally and locally. Decentralisation of education policy since the 1980s and 1990s means that municipalities have a lot of power in organising education, including the language programs they offer. However, while statistics exist on what languages pupils choose, there is no reliable data on what languages the municipalities offer.[36] It is also important to note that municipal decisions are heavily influenced by demographic changes (for example migration from rural to urban areas and consequent closings of schools, and different migration flows into municipalities) and their economic situations (e.g., changes in funding structures and austerity measures since economic recessions in the 1990s and 2000s). Additionally, differences between bigger and smaller municipalities are increasing. Whereas bigger cities and municipalities may be able to offer varied language programs, offerings in smaller municipalities may be restricted to Swedish and English.[37]

In all, pupils' choices and opportunities are not merely dependent on their individual wishes, but rather the result of a complex interplay of language ideologies, educational policies, municipal politics, and national regulations. Municipalities have not been required to offer optional foreign languages in secondary schools since 1994. Participation in optional language learning decreased drastically after this time, leading to counter-initiatives in the aftermath of Finland joining the European Union. Even if municipalities do offer optional language programs, they may set the required group size relatively high, which leads to the groups not being filled and formed[38] and, ultimately, programs being cancelled because of "low demand". While language education initiatives have brought up numbers temporarily, these efforts have not been sustained and participation tends to dip as projects end and funding is exhausted.[39]

Another factor impacting access to language education is families' social, cultural and economic background,[40] as language choice (either that of the compulsory first language or a later optional language) may operate as one distinguishing factor in school choice.[41] According to Kangasvieri and others,[42] the younger the language learner, the more their guardians' attitudes and wishes affect language choices. This has spill-over effects later, as parents' educational strategies affect school selection on a long-term basis at the secondary level as well. Consequently, whether intentional or not, language choices are mechanisms of social distinction, as particularly families from middle or upper classes exercise these options.[43]

Heritage language education is commonly linked to Finland's official immigration policies, which state, in line with the constitution, that migrants have a right to maintain their languages and cultures, which have "great value in their integration to the Finnish society as well as in enriching the Finnish culture".[44] However, heritage language teaching is defined as complementary education, when the goal and contents of heritage language teaching are described in the appendix of the national core curriculum. Interestingly, although in the Finnish constitution and other national and international regulation, autochthonous languages such as Sámi, Romani, Karelian, Tatar or Yiddisch have different status from migrants' heritage languages, in the national core curriculum their status is similar to "other" languages (with the exception of Sámi in the Sámi homeland), illustrating the relatively poor position of Indigenous and autochthonous languages in language education policy and reinscribing the difference between "national" languages (Finnish and Swedish) and "other" languages.

In the heritage language context, systematic support for teacher education is largely non-existent. The circumstances under which heritage language education operates, adds to its marginal status: formal criteria for heritage language teacher education does not exist, and lack of certification means that teachers do not receive permanent positions in the school system and receive lower pay. Instruction typically takes place for two hours per week after regular school hours and, for many pupils, outside their school campus. Groups are usually heterogeneous in terms of age and language level, which adds to the complexity of the teaching situation.

While multilingualism is presented as a valued goal in language education policy, existing practices paint a different picture. Historically, promoting access to language education has been operationalised as increasing participation in "foreign language" teaching, and, in recent years, support for second language learning. While heritage language learning has been celebrated as if it were valued,[45] this has not been followed-up with sustained political action. The overall impression that supports for multilingualism is, in effect, short-term promotion of world (i.e., white European) languages. When education policies are systematically decentralised, deregulated, and conducted based on individual choice and local decision making, they tend to benefit those who already have a head-start in the education system.

Debunking Myth 2: Finnish Curriculum and Schools Promote Multilingual Education

In the national core curriculum, the presence and use of multiple languages at school is explicitly encouraged in the name of appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity.[46] In the document, this is even defined as one of the main objectives of basic education:

> The objective is to guide the pupils to appreciate different languages and cultures and to promote bilingualism and plurilingualism, thus reinforcing the pupils' linguistic awareness and metalinguistic skills. (National core curriculum/NCC, Sect. 9.4)

The national core curriculum ties the importance of recognising linguistic and cultural diversity to language rights and identities:

> The pupil's cultural background and linguistic capabilities are taken into account in basic education. Each pupil's linguistic and cultural identity is supported in a versatile manner. The pupils are guided to know about, understand and respect each citizen's right to their own language and culture protected under the Constitution. (Sect. 9)

What is noteworthy is that this approach is not limited to pupils' use of multiple languages but extended to teachers:

> School work may include multilingual teaching situations where the teachers and pupils use all languages they know. (Sect. 9.4)

Although there is a general sense of promoting and valuing linguistic and cultural diversity, concrete multilingual approaches, such as translanguaging pedagogies, are not mentioned in the national core curriculum. In fact, when the use of multiple languages is discussed, the wording of the curriculum seems to reflect an understanding of languages as individual units that should be kept separate:

> The basic principle of language instruction at school is using the language in different situations. It strengthens the pupils' language awareness and parallel use of different languages as well as the development of multiliteracy. (Sect. 13.4.1)

The Finnish word used to describe multiple language use at school is *rinnakkain*, usually translated as *parallel*. This echoes the institutional bilingualism where national languages, constitutionally defined as Swedish and Finnish, but also other minoritised languages like Finnish Sign language (FSL), Finland-Swedish Sign Language (FSSL), Sámi languages, and Romani, have the right to co-exist, but are limited to a "parallel" life, where they do not interact (or interfere) with each other.[47] Seen against this backdrop, it is quite possible that the national linguistic parallelism permeates the level of school language policies to a degree that restricts recommendations of (and thus opportunities for) truly multilingual pedagogies, in the sense of dynamic multilingualism or translanguaging. In other words, while the national core curriculum is well-intentioned in its goal to promote cultural and linguistic diversity, exchange, and understanding, it fails to shed an ideology of parallel monolingualisms—or, as Cummins[48] has called it, a "two-solitude assumption". Ironically,

such an approach to multiple language use not only reinscribes a monolingual stance, it is also inept at creating and supporting multilingual and multicultural identities, or speakers who are competent and confident in using and understanding multiple linguistic and cultural resources in dynamic, meaningful, and respectful ways. It is particularly worrying if such a stance is (even inadvertently) promoted by the national curriculum.

Empirical studies offer some insights into the presence and status of multiple languages at Finnish schools, although it is important to remember that the greater part of school life is not captured by research. Prior work has shown that teachers' assumptions and ideologies, for instance their holding on to a target-language-only approach, can be detrimental to multilingual development.[49] Based on their recent survey of 2864 teachers in Finland, Suuriniemi and others[50] found teacher attitudes towards multilingualism to fall into three groups. While 44% of their participants were described as cautious and 37% as deliberating, only 19% were identified as having positive attitudes towards multilingualism. Given that multilingual student identities and interactions are not only a curricular goal but also a daily reality in a growing number of schools in Finland, this number is an alarming call to action for all of us who are teacher educators and applied linguists. In addition, teachers in Swedish-medium and CLIL contexts have reported feeling challenged on multiple levels (e.g., organisational, methodological) by linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms, which has triggered a very mixed bag of reactions. These have ranged from teacher resignation through to being motivated to learn.[51] Yet some teachers have been identified as experts in serving multilingual pupils,[52] and adequate professional development as well as experience supports the development of such pedagogical skills.[53]

Prior research has also shown that, unsurprisingly, translanguaging is present in Finnish schools,[54] including in immersion and Indigenous education[55] and not merely tolerated but also used as an intentional pedagogical approach.[56] Efforts such as teacher education programs that focus on language awareness (*Language Aware Multilingual Pedagogy* or LAMP at the University of Jyväskylä,[57] and the action research project *Itä-Helsingin uudet suomen kielet* (The new Finnish languages of Eastern Helsinki)[58] are a promising contribution. They are beginning to turn Finnish schools into spaces where multilingual resources are used consistently and developed continuously. However, since these projects are not part of mainstream (teacher) education, at present, the notion that "Finnish curriculum and schools promote multilingual education" can be described as a partial truth at best.

Debunking Myth 3: The Education System Offers Equal Possibilities to All Students, Regardless of Their First Language

With human rights, social equity and equality, and individual well-being among its main driving principles (NCC, Sect. 2.2), the Finnish school system is commonly believed, and should be expected to, offer the same opportunities to all pupils, including to those with migration backgrounds who are often (but not always) second language learners of the language of schooling. Some valuable support structures are in place. For instance, the Finnish National Agency for Education designed a syllabus of Finnish or Swedish for second language learners in lieu of the first language syllabus, resulting in a two-stranded system that offers different strands of Finnish/Swedish classes for first language and second language learners. In agreement with pupils' guardians and teachers, pupils can (but don't have to) move between those strands, and it is possible to graduate from both strands with the respective one (first or second language) listed in the school report. In addition, preparatory programs are available for pupils who need support in developing Finnish or Swedish language proficiency and/or other school-relevant skills before participating in preschool or basic education.[59]

Inequity in "getting out" practices and policies is evidenced by the fact that multilingual skills are not recognised appropriately for heritage language learners. The fact that the grade for their heritage language courses is not part of the official school report and thus remains largely invisible sends a clear message about the value the Finnish school system assigns to pupils' multilingual resources and the potential it sees in multilingual resources as being an asset in pupils' life post-graduation.[60]

Even rather early (2012) PISA studies suggested significant shortcomings in how the Finnish education system serves 15-year-old pupils with migration background, resulting, for instance, in a commonly cited "2-year-gap" in mathematics between pupils with migration background and those without. A particularly alarming finding was that a great proportion of the first-generation immigrant pupils did not reach the minimum level of mathematical proficiency. The results were also similar in science, reading literacy and problem solving.[61] In reality, of course, this is less a gap in pupils' abilities but one in offering appropriate and effective structural and individual support and opportunities, which points to systemic problems within education, teacher education, and policy making.

As shown by a large evaluation of pupil learning outcomes (N = 1530),[62] 87% of pupils in the Finnish as second language syllabus attained levels of B1.1–0.2, i.e., good proficiency or higher at the end of the comprehensive school. Although these levels seem reasonable, it is important to note that about 40% of the participants were born in Finland and completed the second language strand of the Finnish school system. In addition, prior research[63] has found that pupils need a level of B2 to follow content area instruction, read teaching materials and understand non-fiction (e.g., information) texts. The fact that most participants in the above study, all full-time pupils in the much-acclaimed Finnish education system, remained below this level,

raises important questions about what causes and perpetuates this systematic failure to serve an already vulnerable population.

Related to the myth of all students "getting out" with equal credentials is the myth of equal opportunities for transitioning to next stages of education. While the Finnish school system prides itself in claiming to have "no dead ends", referring to the possibility to move forward without complications, this seems to be far from true. A 2019 example from higher education illustrates this well. Finnish universities jointly decided that for 2020 student selections, second language speakers of Finnish or Swedish must pass the high school leaving exams (matriculation examination) with the fourth highest (on a seven-step scale) grade in second language, while the required grade for first language users remained the lowest accepted grade.

Although this decision ended up being overturned for the 2021 student selections, the case illustrates at least two important points. First, high-stakes decisions tend to reinforce familiar hierarchies along nationalistic, xenophobic, and racist lines. For Finnish universities, the exclusion of those who are perceived to be "less Finnish" seems to be the instinctive response to expected literacy skills of new students. Second, the case illustrates language as an allegedly "neutral" and common-sensical anchor point for such discriminatory policies throughout the educational trajectory of the students. This is a call to educators and applied linguists to remain vigilant about such policies and take a stance against the systemic discrimination that is happening in our very own institutions, sometimes with arguments from our very own areas of expertise. It is also important to keep in mind that while the myth of equity in "getting out" processes only becomes visible to us as members of a privileged majority at specific moments, this myth does not need much debunking to those who experience linguistic, cultural, racial, ethnic, or other kind of discrimination in their daily interaction with the Finnish education system: its members, gatekeepers, and authorities.

Conclusion: Towards Political Action in Language Education

The ostensibly positive political attitude towards multilingualism in Finnish society is reflected in the recent goals of widening participation in language learning and developing multilingual pedagogies and practices. However, Finnish constitutional bilingualism as institutional monolingualism has also worked towards strengthening monolingual ideologies in language learning, consolidating policies that are historically monolingual and national language centred, and that have in previous decades led to the erasure of Indigenous and autochthonous languages from education, now operating against allochthonous (migrant) languages.

Our focus on three aspects and three myths of language education leads us to ask how the situation can be changed. We conclude this chapter with some ideas for moving forward, believing the Finnish education system can and should be a place actively creating and promoting spaces for linguistic and social equity. These

measures imply shifting the focus from national language centrist thinking towards an ideology that fully acknowledges all languages and their speakers in the society.

On the policy level, we hope that the national core curriculum will articulate a clear stance towards multilingual pedagogies and abandon the ideology of separate languages that is likely seeping into schools. Given its orientation towards equity and human rights,[64] it would not be a big stretch to make a clear statement about the importance and necessity of critical multilingual and multicultural pedagogies. Such a policy change would have to be followed up by professional development, support, and resources for teachers and teacher educators.

Relatedly, a crucial step in overcoming existing monolingual ideologies and practices is the development of multilingual teacher identities and pedagogies. Rather than "teaching a language", teachers need to be supported in teaching multilinguality, which includes not only the development of students' proficiency in multiple languages and multilingual practices, but also their identities and legitimacy[65] as multilingual language users. Promising work exists to guide such an endeavour,[66] but it takes a concerted effort for us as teacher educators and educational researchers to unlearn our thinking of languages as individual units and dedicate our work to developing the budding efforts such as *Language Aware Multilingual Pedagogy* (see above) into strong and nation-wide foundations for truly multilingual education. Such an effort must go hand-in-hand with an understanding that, ultimately, the goal is not merely a multilingual but a more just society, as the national curriculum hints at.

In terms of making "getting out" processes more equitable, we have pointed to the fact that students who are second language learners encounter many barriers in the school system, although it is said to have "no dead-ends". Some of these are related to language choice in comprehensive education and certificate-based admission to higher education. We suggest that this area should be a priority for further research and action. Transitional spaces like this are prone to inequalities and often function (unintended, connived, or accidental) as tools for segregation, hierarchisation, and gatekeeping, which can only be avoided through proactive, research-based measures.

Considering language education in the schools, we propose that the two strands of Finnish/Swedish as second language and Finnish/Swedish as a first language should be brought closer to each other by increasing co-teaching and other types of teacher co-operation to avoid student segregation and disengagement. Considering the well-documented harm of grouping students by (perceived) ability,[67] the aim should be that second language students, with ample and appropriate support, move into the first language group relatively quickly, to study together with their peers, and that integrated second language teaching continues after this transfer. Again, this requires professional development opportunities and incentives for teachers as well as the development and dissemination of new teaching content, methods, and materials. One concrete step forward would be to mandate and integrate the collaboration of first language and second language teachers in their workload and, most importantly, in teacher education programs.

As for the recognition of multilingual language skills, we believe it would be important to make existing skills legitimate and visible. We urge local and national

policy makers to consider the possibilities for students to receive credentials and/or certificates by demonstrating proficiency in languages that are not well integrated in the traditional canon. Importantly, the recognition of language skills through a test and certificate cannot replace the right to receive instruction in these languages, and the main efforts should be on developing multilingual and multicultural identities. This implies a call to us language educators and researchers to refocus our attention from supporting language proficiency towards promoting linguistic and social equity in a linguistically and culturally diverse society.

To avoid a Matthew effect, where resources and opportunities are offered increasingly to those who already have those amply, we find it critical that educational reforms are put under national supervision with a long-term focus. Educational reforms cannot depend on the good will of individual teachers, schools, or municipalities, but need to be a non-partisan, systematic and common effort of all political parties and representatives of all groups that are affected by them.

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Johanna Ennser-Kananen is Associate Professor of English (tenure-track) and Academy Research Fellow at the Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä. Her work focusses on linguistically and culturally sustaining (teacher) education and linguistic and epistemic equity in educational contexts particularly as it pertains to the deconstruction of whiteness and the experience of students with refugee experience. Ennser-Kananen's current study in this area is funded by the Academy of Finland. She is co-editor of the Routledge Handbook of Educational Linguistics.

Erja Kilpeläinen, M.A. works as Project Researcher at the Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä, and coordinates the Finnish Network for Language Education Policies (Kieliverkosto). She has been involved in research about internationalisation and language in Finnish higher education, access to language education in comprehensive education, and language education policies and language reserves in Finland. Kilpeläinen's main research interests include learning and teaching Finnish as L1 and L2, social justice in language education, multilingualism in classrooms and language education policies.

Taina Saarinen is Research Professor of Higher Education at the University of Jyväskylä. She has published widely on assessment and evaluation of higher education, internationalisation and language in higher education, language education policies, and contemporary and historical language policies. Her recent book 'Higher Education, Language and New Nationalism in Finland: Recycled Histories' (2020, Palgrave) analyses historically recycled and new nationalist language policy discourses in Finnish higher education.

Heidi Vaarala is Senior Researcher at the Centre for Applied Language Studies and the Network for Language Education Policies, University of Jyväskylä. Her main research interests include the role of language use in second language learning, technology in language learning and teaching, translanguaging, languages in the practices of transnational visual artists, as well as language education policies. She has been involved in teacher in-service training as an educator and as a writer of the area. Vaarala previously worked as a lecturer and researcher in Finnish language and culture in Finland, Germany, Austria, Croatia, and Hungary.

Chapter 23
Rethinking Finland's Official Bilingualism in Education

Tuuli From

Abstract Finland is an officially bilingual country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Comprehensive education is organised along two separate, monolingual strands. The separation of Swedish- and Finnish-medium schools has been presented as a precondition for protecting Swedish language. However, while the present educational policies promote multilingualism, some critical questions concerning the system based on language separation arise. In both Finnish-medium and Swedish-medium schools, the linguistic backgrounds of pupils are increasingly diverse. In the past decade, an increasing demand for bilingual educational solutions has emerged among the families where both national languages are spoken but also among non-Swedish-speaking families. Using a theoretical framework influenced by the notion of linguistic governance, this chapter illuminates how some educational practices are considered as thinkable and others as threatening the status quo of Finland's societal bilingualism. Placing monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools in shared facilities has encountered resistance and revealed a monolingual spatial ideology. Instead, bilingual practices maintaining institutional separation, such as bilingual education for Finnish-speakers have been proposed as acceptable solutions. In the most recent of these debates, such as in the planning process of a bilingual public school in the capital, Helsinki, discourses of profit and commodification of language are starting to unfold. The chapter concludes that the question of state bilingualism in Finnish schooling might be heading towards increasing differentiation in relation to the national languages.

Finland is an officially bilingual country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. The state bilingualism in Finland was established along the first Language Act (1922) and dates back to the era when Finland was under the Swedish rule. From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Swedish inhabitants began settling into areas inside the current state borders of Finland. From 1809, Finland was incorporated

T. From (✉)
Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies, Åbo Akademi University, P.O. Box 311, 65101 Vaasa, Finland
e-mail: Tuuli.From@abo.fi

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into the Russian Empire until Finnish independence in 1917 but even during this time, the formal status of the Swedish language in Finland's political and cultural life remained strong.[1] At present, Finnish is the mother tongue for 88.7% of the population and Swedish for 5.3%.[2]

In international comparison to other bilingual countries such as Canada and Belgium, Finland's official bilingualism is often regarded as well functioning, since an equal status is provided to both national languages instead of mere formal recognition in society.[3] Yet regardless of the historically established status of state bilingualism in Finland, the relationship between the national languages has not always been without tension in different political and societal venues. Finland's educational system, which is based on the institutional separation of the national languages from early childhood education all the way to higher education, is at the centre of some of the most central debates.[4] According to the Basic Education Act (628/1998), education for the Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking pupils shall be provided separately. As a result, the educational system for comprehensive education is divided into two monolingual, Finnish- and Swedish-medium strands, which the families are expected to choose according to the language mostly spoken at home.[5] This excludes the possibility of bilingual schools, where pupils could receive instruction in both national languages independent of their linguistic backgrounds.

In the current critical approaches, language policies are typically understood and conceptualised as multi-sited processes that are negotiated across different scales of space and time, in policy discourses and everyday practices of education.[6] From the theoretical perspective of *language governance*, the aim of language policies is to manage the tension between language separation and linguistic diversity through direct or indirect attempts to influence linguistic environment and behaviour.[7] For a long time, debates of language governance were primarily anchored to the idea of nation-state and the linguistic hierarchies within. However, in the more recent debates of the role of language in society, language has begun to gain meanings other than cultural and political. As Monica Heller and Alexandre Duchêne note, processes of language-based social differentiation are increasingly tied to the discursive sphere of profit, emphasising individual linguistic skills and competences and their potential exchange value.[8]

Traditionally, language separation has been understood as a means for governing linguistic diversity in the name of language purity.[9] In minority contexts, language separation has been employed as a policy and practice for protecting the minority language from mixing with other languages.[10] Similar rhetoric has been present also in the debates of Swedish in Finland. Sari Pöyhönen and Taina Saarinen point out that even in the formal policy debates of Finland's societal bilingualism, Swedish in fact often occupies "the discursive space of minorities" due to its de facto minority status.[11] Due to the premise of separation, the somewhat paradoxical goal of linguistic governance in Finland has been a manifestation of state bilingualism, where individual bilingualism is highly desirable, whereas institutions should remain monolingual.[12] The paradox of Finnish state bilingualism can be characterised as *parallel monolingualisms*, which refers to the co-existence of two separate linguistic systems in society.[13]

So far, the requirement to study Swedish as a subject in the Finnish-medium schools and vice versa has been considered as the primary means for providing everyone with the necessary skills in both national languages.[14] The separation of the national languages in the educational system remained unquestioned for a long time, whereas the requirement to study Swedish has raised tensions particularly in the less Swedish-speaking areas of Finland.[15] At the same time, a different kind of development is in sight in terms of interest in Swedish-Finnish bilingualism. In the past ten years, an increasing demand for bilingual educational solutions has emerged particularly among the families where both national languages are spoken but also among non-Swedish-speaking families.[16] The interest in bilingualism has raised new kinds of critical questions in relation to educational equality and national languages in education: Is the systematic separation of Finnish and Swedish and the present regulation of bilingual education sustainable in the current situation? Moreover, if a broader variety of bilingual solutions were to be available, how would an equal access to bilingual resources be provided?

In this chapter, the framework of linguistic governance is utilised to illuminate the discursive and material conditions under which some bilingual educational practices are considered as thinkable and others as threatening the status quo of the national languages in education. The chapter also discusses access to bilingual education in Finnish and Swedish and the distribution of linguistic resources with this regard. Placing monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools in shared facilities in co-located campuses has encountered resistance and provoked debate, in which a mono-lingual spatial ideology has been reproduced but also questioned.[17] Plans for actual bilingual schools have been occasionally under nationwide debate since 2011 and in the political decision-making process in the capital, Helsinki, but without being fully resolved due to legislative and language policy controversy. Instead, bilingual practices maintaining institutional separation, such as bilingual or language immersion education for Finnish-speakers have been proposed as acceptable solutions.

Framing the Preconditions for Finnish-Swedish Bilingualism in Education

In the policy discourses of state bilingualism in Finnish education, the separation of the national languages is reproduced as an issue of protecting Swedish as a de facto minority language. In Finnish legislation, Finnish and Swedish share equal status as national languages. For instance, state authorities and bilingual municipal authorities shall provide their services in both national languages.[18] In comprehensive education, the linguistic rights in relation to the national languages are equally as extensive for both Finnish and Swedish. According to the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the national languages shall not be mixed in mainstream basic education either but "the language of instruction or the language used in extracurricular teaching shall be

either Finnish or Swedish" and basic education is to be arranged separately for both language groups.

> The local authority in a municipality which has both Finnish and Swedish-speaking residents shall be responsible for arranging basic and pre-primary education separately for both linguistic groups. (Basic Education Act, 628/1998, 4§, amendment 1288/1999)

The premise of separation of the national languages is further developed in the Local Government Act (410/2015) which holds that municipal educational authorities must organise comprehensive education in Finnish and Swedish separately for both language groups regardless of the local language conditions. Separate departments for both languages in public educational administration are required.

> Bilingual municipalities shall set up a separate decision-making body for the administration of education for each language group, or a joint decision-making body divided into subcommittees for the language groups. The members of the decision-making body or subcommittee must be elected from among persons who are part of the language group in question. (Local Government Act 410/2015, 30§)

In public and policy discourses, the separation of Swedish- and Finnish-medium schools is often presented as a precondition for protecting the smaller of the national languages. Particularly in the regions and municipalities, where the percentage of Swedish-speakers is relatively small, increasing bilingualism and the dominance of Finnish in and outside school is seen as imposing challenges to the support of the Swedish language.[19] The challenge is explicated in a report published by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre:

> A majority of the pupils daily present in Swedish-medium schools come from homes where the status of Swedish language is not as self-evident as in the school. Many pupils are accustomed to switch between languages and codes as they move around between the school, home and leisure time. In an increasingly heterogeneous language environment, the school's role as a bearer of language, identity and culture becomes more distinct. ... It is not as evident in distinctly Swedish-speaking environments, but in Finnish dominated environments the language of the school and the teachers, the language in all school subjects and for example in learning materials gains a special role.[20]

At the same time when the educational language rights concerning the de facto minority language Swedish can be considered as secured through the parallel educational system, some critical questions concerning the present system arise. Aligned with the present multilingual paradigm in education, the current National Core Curriculum for basic education in Finland applying to both Finnish-medium and Swedish-medium schools promotes language awareness and linguistic diversity as core values in institutional education.[21] However, as Ennser-Kananen and colleagues also point out in this book, it seems unlikely that these values actually connect to policies and practices that would promote multilingualism in basic education. Mostly, Finnish and Swedish are treated as equal parallels under the label of national languages throughout the curriculum but the relationship between Swedish and linguistic diversity is further elaborated for example in the parts dealing with the subject Swedish language and literature, taught in Swedish-medium schools.

Swedish is one of the two national languages of Finland, and the syllabus in Swedish language and literature is taught with the same scope, objectives, and content as the syllabus in Finnish language and literature, although with some minor differences due to certain linguistic and cultural characteristics. It is important to emphasise the core cultural tasks of the subject in Swedish-speaking schools in Finland. The pupils' skills in the school's language of instruction are continuously supported, along with their language awareness. Plurilingualism is utilised as a resource. The diverse linguistic backgrounds of the pupils are taken into consideration in the instruction of mother tongue and literature as well as in other subjects.[22]

Interestingly, the numerical power imbalance between the national languages or the de facto minority position of Swedish is not discussed but the status is implied in the phrasing "minor differences in linguistic and cultural characteristics". The central, culture-bearing, role of the subject Swedish and literature and the importance of supporting Swedish as the school's language is emphasised but presented as an equal goal with the promotion of language awareness and the recognition of pupils' diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The language ideology underlying the parallel school systems for Finnish and Swedish is also stated in other national policy documents that do not directly oblige providers of education but participate in the discursive construction of language separation in education. One of these documents is the Strategy for the National Languages of Finland from 2012, which frames the conditions according to which the increasing bilingualism of individuals can be taken into account in Swedish-medium schools:

The impact of increasing bilingualism at individual level must be taken into account in the future when planning and organising various services provided by society. This is the case, for instance, when evaluating future school arrangements. It may then be justified to seek ways of supporting the equal development of both languages among bilingual children. However, the objective must be that everyone gets equally good basic education regardless of the language. A Swedish-language school cannot act as a language school because its task is to be an institution that passes on and creates Swedish language in Finland. Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers are not in a fully equal situation in this respect. Since Swedish speakers constitute a de facto minority, they need more support from society for their language and its development than members of the Finnish-speaking population do.[23]

Even though the Strategy for National Languages of Finland does not take an explicit stand on other languages than Finnish and Swedish, it constructs a language ideological stance that supports language separation and the governance of bilingualism in schools. Primarily, this is done for the sake of acknowledging the special support a de facto minority language might need in a society dominated by Finnish and to guarantee the quality of education also in Swedish-medium schools. However, this kind of an ideology conflicts with the overall multilingual paradigm in educational policies and also with the educational realities in Swedish-medium schools. Similar to Finnish-medium schools, the linguistic backgrounds of the pupils in Swedish-medium primary education are increasingly diverse too: according to 2013 statistics, 51% of the pupils in Swedish-medium schools are monolingual Swedish, whereas 40% are bilingual with Swedish and Finnish. Four percent of the pupils speak only Finnish and 5% other languages at home.[24] This demographic change

is reflected in the recently revised Strategy for the National Languages of Finland, which does not include a similar phrasing of the role of Swedish-medium schools but, quite the opposite, emphasises that they should appear as an appealing choice for bilingual and multilingual pupils as well.[25] However, the scale and influence of this notable discursive shift remains to be seen.

Within the limits of the present regulations, the only existing model for bilingual instruction in Finnish and Swedish is language immersion education. Language immersion is a form of teaching a group of pupils with another language than their first language and organised mostly in selective classes of municipal schools.[26] Language immersion education conforms to the present legislation, since it does not conflict with the requirement of separating the speakers of Finnish and Swedish in education. Therefore, it does not challenge the ideology of separation and can be regarded as an acceptable solution within Finnish society even in the discursive space of minority language protection and a considerable alternative for those who desire an access to bilingual education.[27]

Overall, from the perspective of educational inequality, the present system of bilingual education entails certain problems. The availability of language immersion varies regionally and cannot be regarded as an equal choice of language education for everyone.[28] In general, the criteria for accessing bilingual education in Finland is not always transparent and language emphasised education has been connected to patterns of parental school choice of middle-class families.[29] Since the present bilingual solutions do not enable contact between Finnish- and Swedish-speakers in Finland's present school system, the most probable encounters between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking pupils take place in so-called co-located schools.

Governance of Bilingualism and Language Separation in Co-located Schools

Co-located schools are school campuses where monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools share the premises but function as separate administrative units and most often also as separate pedagogical institutions. Instruction is given separately in Finnish for the pupils in the Finnish-medium school and in Swedish for the pupils in the Swedish-medium school. Co-located campuses have become increasingly common in bilingual municipalities with a trend towards shared facilities and they currently number about 40–50.[30] So far, the reasoning for co-locations have primarily been economic, but the initiatives have provoked lively language politics debates and accusations of endangering the separate school spaces considered as crucial for the Swedish language and culture in Finland.[31] However, in the recent debates a shift towards a qualified acceptance towards co-location as a bilingual solution has been present. Nevertheless, from the perspective of language governance, the preconditions under which they can been considered as acceptable remain, as

described in the following media appearance of a local government representative, Dan Johansson, in a bilingual municipality in south-western Finland.

> He points out that the concept of school encloses much more than mere teaching. It has to do with culture and traditions, friendship and values.… Thus, to place two schools under the same roof should not be an economically rationalised question, Johansson says and adds that such a decision is much broader a question than one might think. Moreover, he points out that parents who have chosen a specific school language for their children also have the right to expect that the school fully functions in the chosen language.[32]

According to Johansson, a number of communal aspects have to be taken into consideration while planning co-locations. Moreover, a dimension of linguistic governance is outlined; as a bilingual space, a co-located school is presented as a potential threat to monolingual education in the language chosen by the parents.

Co-located Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools can be considered as sites where the language and education policies regulating the separation of the national languages become materialised and shape social practices. As spatial constellations, co-located schools challenge the idea of institutional separation of Finnish and Swedish in education, even if they are often established on practical and economical grounds rather than desires for bilingual pedagogical co-operation. When planning and building facilities for new co-locations, the policy of language separation has typically been taken into consideration by creating architectural solutions that enable the governing of language in space and time. In the following excerpt from a project plan created by the municipality's technical department for a co-located campus in a bilingual municipality in southern Finland, the principle of language governance in the campus unfolds:

> In the spatial solutions of the schools, flexible, easily extendable or reducible, adaptable solutions shall be used. The spaces will be planned as pedagogically modern and functional and put into practice so that the identity of both languages and schools is secured. … The independence and co-operation of the schools have been the point of departure for the planning. The territories perceived according to the linguistic zones have been clearly indicated in the plan. Mutual spaces, on the other hand, enable natural contact inside the building. The central and compact common spaces enable social encounters during the day. ... Securing the independence of the two languages in everyday teaching activities is connected to the pedagogical objective.[33]

In the plan, the premise of language separation and the governing practices that are required to meet the pedagogical objective are at the core of spatial planning. The measures lay out a paradox of sharing the building but keeping distance, maintaining natural contact only in designated areas. Interestingly, bilingualism and its potential benefits for the community are not mentioned in the plan but the premise is rather safeguarding the independence of the schools. However, it does not specify which of the languages needs protecting. In this particular municipality, Finnish is the majority language by 64%, whereas 30% of the inhabitants are Swedish-speaking. Even if the Swedish language is a de facto minority language in this bilingual municipality, the plan does not explicitly point out that the aim of linguistic governance in this particular campus would specifically be the protection of the minority language.

Instead, the plan reproduces the separation of Finnish and Swedish in education as an unquestioned policy and ideology.

Schools as institutional spaces entail ideals and objectives of management and control.[34] The notion of performative architecture has been proposed for conceptualising the connection between school design and the learning that is planned to take place there.[35] In co-located schools, a central dimension of this performative architecture is the policy of language separation. Ethnographic research carried out in co-located schools has been able to confirm that the spatial solutions described in the architectural plans shape the social and linguistic practices in these schools, and particularly with regard to separation. [36] "Natural" contacts and social encounters, as mentioned in the previous quote, do not occur much. Even if most of the studied co-located schools aim to organise mutual activities to maintain a sense of community, the pupils seem to orientate themselves towards the material and social language boundaries, as well as linguistic hierarchies in their everyday spaces.

The balancing between separation and co-presence of two languages can be assumed to hinder the recognition and implementation of the pedagogical and educational possibilities that a bilingual school environment would entail. In this sense, co-located schools can be considered to hold under-utilised potential for language learning, promoting language diversity and pluralism of identities, even if some of the schools actively seek to deconstruct the institutional separation in their everyday curricular activities.[37]

Bilingualism as Profit in the Debates Around the Nordic School in Helsinki

The demand for bilingual schools is often presented as an interest deriving from the outside of the Swedish-speaking community and Swedish-medium language immersion for the Finnish-speakers is suggested as a solution for this interest. In the past decade, however, the policy of separation of the national languages has also been discussed in relation to proposals of actual bilingual schools.[38] In these instances the politically established status of Swedish in Finnish society and recognition of the Swedish language as a valuable resource unfold, resulting in debates where language governance and discourses of profit intertwine.[39] The on-going debate of a prospective bilingual public school in Helsinki represents a discursive shift, where language is detached from political and cultural debates, whereas individual needs and the right to education according to these needs are emphasised.[40]

In 2014, the Swedish People's Party in Finland (SPP) handed in a motion about the establishment of a new kind of bilingual school to the Helsinki City Council. The plan was to establish a public school under the Finnish-speaking department of the municipal educational administration of Helsinki. The concept was named in Swedish as *Nordiska skolan*, the Nordic school. The official language of the school was proposed to be Finnish, in order to comply with the requirement of language separation in the

legislation. Moreover, the school would primarily have been directed to Finnish-speakers and operate along the same lines as bilingual or international schools in Helsinki.[41] As a political party promoting the position of Swedish in Finland, SPP has been reluctant towards bilingual solutions in education but promoted the separation of the national languages and monolingual institutions as a means for supporting societal bilingualism.[42] Instead, language immersion and advancing the starting point of language instruction in primary education have been recommended policies in the party's political statements. The initiative for a Nordic school can be understood as SPP's attempt to manage the debate and the prospective political and educational implications, since the interest towards bilingual schools had shown to be prominent particularly among Finnish-speakers. Moreover, it can be interpreted as an attempt to define the discursive conditions and institutional boundaries inside of which these potentially unwanted educational experiments take place. For SPP, the decisive issue throughout the debate has been that the school should be administered under the Finnish-speaking educational department, which was presented as a means to avoid the undermining of the Swedish-medium school network.

The motive remained on the table for several years, but in 2017, as the concept of the Nordic school appeared in the Helsinki City Strategy[43] approved by the City Council, planning was relaunched in the Finnish-speaking department of the Education Committee of the City of Helsinki. In the meantime, the plan for the administrative model and the official language curriculum had changed from monolingual Finnish to bilingual. As the proposed school would have both Finnish and Swedish as the official languages of instruction, it would require either an exceptional permit from the Ministry of Education and Culture or an amendment to the legislation regulating the separation of the national languages in education.[44] The latter alternative has provoked particular opposition among politicians and representatives of Swedish-speaking organisations in Finland, since it has been interpreted as a step towards dismantling the linguistic and cultural autonomy of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland.[45] The most recent Helsinki City Strategy (2021–2025) confirms the plan of the Nordic school but the administrative and pedagogical details remain to be discussed.

So far, the debate on bilingual schools has enclosed two main competing discourses. On one hand, there is the discourse promoting the separation as the protection of linguistic and cultural spaces, appealing to a minority language perspective and reconstructing an ideology of language purity. On the other hand, there is a discourse promoting the instrumental value of language and the potential benefits of the increased contact between the language groups. In their analysis of the media debate on bilingual schools, Sally Boyd and Åsa Palviainen named these discourses as *the preservation discourse* and *the idealist discourse.*[46] Writing back in 2015, the authors highlighted some neoliberal tendencies, such as freedom of choice and the value of language as an individual asset in the idealist discourse, but hesitated to identify solid patterns of linguistic commodification in the debate.

Looking at how the debate has developed subsequently amidst the more recent, concrete planning debates and documents for the Nordic school in Helsinki, it may be argued that the rhetorical shift towards a more commodified view of language

education is starting to emerge more clearly. In the plan, opened for political debate in March 2020, the proposed Nordic school is described as a "concept created in co-operation with Nordic networks".[47] The plan is explicit about using service design in the development of the school concept, a notion common in for-profit services. Furthermore, the plan has been co-developed with potential stakeholders— city dwellers, teachers, pedagogues, researchers—in several workshops, where the *pedagogical vision*, *innovation*, *stepping-stones* and *guidelines* for the process have been discussed.

In the plan, the proposed school is described as a multilingual public school that welcomes everyone without entrance exams:

> The Nordic school is a multilingual school operated by the City of Helsinki that is open for everyone, and emphasizes Nordicness, multilingualism and phenomena related to sustainable development in its operation. In the Nordic school, the child can begin their individual educational path in early childhood education and continue until the upper secondary education. The school functions in Finnish and Swedish. The pupil will grow up to be a bilingual, culturally and linguistically aware young person and find their own way of expressing themselves. During their education, they can study from two to four foreign languages, a part of which can be other Nordic languages. … The school is a multilingual meeting place, which offers the pupils an uninterrupted school day from the morning until the afternoon activities.[48]

The description of the school paints a picture of an inclusive, multilingual school that acknowledges the pupils' individual pedagogical and linguistic needs. The proposed Nordic school would deconstruct the idea of language separation, since it aims to bring together Finnish- and Swedish-speaking pupils and pupils with other languages in shared classrooms. However, this would happen under the label of Nordicness, rather than Finnish-Swedish state bilingualism.

The idea of Nordicness expands the definition of bilingualism and bilingual resources beyond the borders of the Finnish nation-state.[49] This, as such, is nothing new, since Nordic connections have traditionally been present in the debates of studying Swedish in Finland, and Swedish has been pointed out as Finland's entrance ticket to Scandinavia.[50] The possibilities that the Swedish language provides for Nordic co-operation are also mentioned in the national curriculum. Halonen and colleagues have noted that in the Finnish-medium classrooms, Swedish is often "defamiliarised" as a foreign language rather than a national language of Finland.[51] However, in the present debate on the Nordic school, the idea of Nordicness is combined with individual virtues, such as persistence, rather than communal characteristics, resulting in a new kind of neoliberal pupil subject.

> In the Nordic school, perseverance, versatile skills in thinking and communication are appreciated and the pupil is encouraged to seek for solutions by experimenting curiously. … The guiding principle of the Nordic school is that the pupils will grow up to be Nordic adolescents, who master Swedish, Finnish and other Nordic languages. In the learning objectives are included persistence, openness and linguistic and cultural awareness. The aim is to feed the pupils' curiosity, enthusiasm for learning and desire to experiment.[52]

In the mutual understandings of Nordic constructed in the field of education, Nordic is often used to refer to the shared values of democracy and equality in Nordic

educational systems.[53] Even if the survival of such values in the present educational policies have been increasingly questioned due to marketisation and differentiation of Nordic societies and educational systems, the absence of these references in the plan of the Nordic school is remarkable. Instead, while describing the benefits of bilingualism in the plan, individual, instrumental aspects are emphasised:

> Bilingualism is a notable benefit for the learner. According to studies, bilinguals are more effective in sorting information and perform better than monolinguals in linguistic and mathematical tasks as well as tasks that require creativity. … In addition to the benefits on an individual level, a bilingual school produces interaction between the domestic language groups of Finland.[54]

The benefits of bilingualism that are raised in the planning document adhere to a neoliberal discourse of language as an individual resource.[55] The significance of Finland's societal bilingualism and the increased contact between the domestic language groups are mentioned as an additional goal. However, while the value of linguistic resources is repeated throughout the plan, the aspect of Finland's societal bilingualism is only mentioned once.

Conclusion: A Critical Focus on Bilingualism as an Inclusive Resource

This chapter has provided an analysis of the national languages in the educational system of Finland from the perspective of language governance. The framework of language governance has provided a lens for looking at the separation of Finnish and Swedish and the recent negotiations of bilingual educational solutions. In the past decade, discussions of both co-locating Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools and the initiatives for actual bilingual schools have channelled a multiplicity of ideological and political stances with regard to the separation. While the primary agenda of the Swedish-speaking political representatives seems to be the protection of the present legislation, which aims to keep Finnish- and Swedish-speaking pupils in their separate schools, the political debates of developing bilingual educational practices have moved on to a new discursive space where language governance is founded on managing individual skills rather than collective identities. Even while questioning the policies of language separation and representing a more inclusive view of linguistic spaces, the present debates and plans for bilingual schools also entail risks of social differentiation. Despite controversy about the position of Swedish in Finland, bilingualism in Finnish and Swedish is a resource, which is not only symbolically valuable in a bilingual country like Finland but also recognised as a material asset.[56] In the present plans of a bilingual school in Helsinki, this asset would be particularly within the reach of the parents who are capable of conducting school choice.[57] In recognising the benefits of the proficiency in national languages, it is therefore necessary to pay attention to how access to bilingualism is regulated and for whom this resource is available.[58] Pupils with other home languages than Finnish or

Swedish have especially restricted availability of these resources and this might lead
to increasing differentiation in the future. Inequalities in access to language education
is discussed in more depth by Ensser-Kananen and colleagues in this book.

The emphasis on linguistic diversity in Finnish national education policies can be
assumed to amplify the voices of resistance towards the unconditional separation of
national languages in the basic education system of Finland in the near future as well.
At the same time, means and resources for supporting the significant number of bilin-
gual and multilingual pupils are critically discussed in Swedish-medium schools.[59]
Many of these current questions touch upon language and social differentiation but it
seems that Finnish-Swedish bilingualism is struggling to enter the discursive space
of multilingualism as one means of addressing educational inequality.

Notes

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   discourse. In *Language policies in Finland and Sweden: Interdisciplinary and multi-sited
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7. See e.g., Grin, F., and I. Schwob. 2002. Bilingual education and linguistic governance: The
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   Walsh, J. 2012. Language policy and language governance: A case-study of Irish language
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   commodification of language. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 101–114.

Heller, M., and A. Duchêne. 2012. *Language in late capitalism. Pride and profit*. New York: Routledge.

9. Salo, op. cit.
10. See e.g., Cenoz, J., and D. Gorter. 2017. Minority languages and sustainable translanguaging: Threat or opportunity? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38(10): 901–912.

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    From T. 2020. *Speaking of space. An ethnographic study of language policy, spatiality and power in bilingual educational settings*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Helsinki.
11. Pöyhönen and Saarinen, op. cit.

    Debates on the separation of national languages in bilingual states and their educational systems are not restricted to the Finnish context. International comparisons can be found for example in the attempts to establish bilingual education or even co-locating French- and English-speaking schools in the Franco-Canadian context, where education remains as the major site of linguistic struggle. See Heller, M. 2013. *Crosswords: Language, education and ethnicity in French Ontario*. Berlin: DeGruyter.
12. From and Sahlström 2019, op. cit.
13. Heller, M. 2007. *Bilingualism: A social approach*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
14. Moreover, the bilingual pupils in Swedish-medium schools are provided instruction in Finnish according to a bilingual syllabus as far as possible, but there is great variation in resources between schools and municipalities with this regard. See Hellgren, J., C. Silverström, L. Lepola, L. Forsman, and A. Slotte. (2019). *Hur hanteras två- och flerspråkigheten i de svenskspråkiga skolorna? Resultat av en utvärdering i åk 1–6 läsåret 2017–2018. Report*. Finnish Education Evaluation Center.
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17. From, op. cit.
18. Language Act, 423/2003.
19. See Boyd and Palviainen. op. cit. From and Sahlström, op. cit.; Halonen, Ihalainen, and Saarinen, op. cit.
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57. See Kosunen, op. cit.

58. See also Heller, M. 2013. *Crosswords: Language, education and ethnicity in French Ontario.* Berlin: DeGruyter.
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59. Hellgren, Silverström, Lepola, Forsman, and Slotte, op. cit.

Tuuli From, Ph.D. is Project Researcher at the Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies, Åbo Akademi University. Her ethnographic doctoral dissertation focused on the spatiality of language policies and bilingualism in education in Finland and Sweden. From's core research interests are in critical language studies, educational sociology, and cultural geography. She is currently involved in a research project that applies ethnography and citizen science as a method for studying language policies and practices in co-located schools in Finland and South Tyrol, Italy.

Chapter 24
Religions and Worldviews as "The Problem" in Finnish Schools

Inkeri Rissanen and Saila Poulter

Abstract Finland has a rather unique model of non-confessional worldview education that draws on pupils' "own worldview". Internationally this model has been applauded for ensuring freedom of religion and belief, but in Finland it is regularly debated. In this chapter we employ a wider notion of worldview education that takes into account the role of worldviews in school culture and allows scrutiny of how all education is nested in a system of values and can be analysed as education into (and from) worldview. We introduce the foundations of worldview education in Finnish basic education, and analyse negotiations about the inclusion of worldview plurality in the every-day life of schools in light of our empirical studies. We argue that, despite the official multiculturalist and inclusivist ideals, unrecognised monoculturalism prevails in Finnish schools as majority worldviews are not seen as worldviews but deemed universal and therefore neutral. This universalism induces perceptions of religions and worldviews as "the problem" in school: while more superficial cultural differences are celebrated, recognition of diversity at the more profound ethical, ontological and epistemological level would demand willingness to question the universality of the core values and ideals of the education system. We discuss the necessity and prospects of departing from monoculturalism and moving towards critical worldview education.

Worldview refers to the ways in which individuals, groups or traditions perceive and understand the world and attach meaning to it. These stances may be secular, religious, or hybrid: spiritual and secular elements often intertwine. Worldviews are classified as organised (*Weltanschauung*) and personal (*Lebensanschauung*) onto-logical, epistemological and ethical orientations which ascribe meaning to the world but also orient people in their everyday and function as identity markers and social

I. Rissanen (✉)
Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, P.O. Box 700, 33014 Tampere, Finland
e-mail: inkeri.rissanen@tuni.fi

S. Poulter
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: saila.poulter@helsinki.fi

categories.[1] This chapter focuses particularly on worldview education in Finland at the level of basic education, where pupils are taught religious and worldview education according to their "own religion" in separate groups but not in a confessional manner, while pupils with no religious affiliation study Secular Ethics. This model reflects the rather strong multiculturalist policies in Finland,[2] which also manifest in official norms of developing inclusive school cultures and supporting minority identities.

The Finnish model of worldview education sometimes receives international praise for its way of ensuring freedom of religion and belief (both positive and negative), but in Finland it is much debated and there are many unresolved practical issues as well as matters of principle. The practical issues mostly relate to the worldview education of minorities—there is a lack of qualified teachers and proper teaching materials, sometimes the lessons need to be scheduled outside regular school hours and pupils have to travel to other schools to participate in religious education (RE).

Matters of principle include the very idea of separating pupils into different groups, which has been criticised since it can be seen to essentialise pupils' identities through fixed affiliation to organised religious denominations, whereas there should be options for pupils to explore and adopt various different worldview positions.[3] The Ombudsman for Children in Finland (*lapsiasiavaltuutettu*) announced that Finnish religious education model should be re-evaluated to better correspond with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as membership-based religious education reveals the child's religious identity and is not based on voluntary announcement.[4] However, the model is defended especially by minorities, who see RE as an important safe space for identity development. In addition to these debates concerning the school subject RE, the role of worldviews (and particularly the issue of singing traditional Lutheran hymns) at end-of-the-term festivities is regularly debated in public.

Altogether, in both Finnish public and professional discussions, religions and worldviews often emerge as particular problems in schools and appear as separate entities to be "dealt with" or learned about, whereas discussions on the worldview basis of all education are scarce. However, all education is nested in a system of values and can be analysed as education into (and from) worldview. We consider it reasonable to differentiate between three different dimensions of worldview education in Finnish schools, which also mirror distinct but interlinked academic areas of discussion. These are: (1) the worldview basis of basic education that manifests, for instance, in the mission and values of education expressed in the national core curriculum and should serve as the background for all education planning; (2) ways of accommodating worldview diversity in the school culture; and (3) instruction within particular school subjects. These levels are intertwined and contribute to transversal competences such as multi-literacy and cultural competence as key skills in working and civic life. They all contribute to citizenship formation and the development of distinct collective identities—often through the exclusion of Others[5]—but they are rarely analysed jointly as the constituents of holistic worldview education in school.

We begin here by introducing the foundations of worldview education in Finnish basic education and some of the challenges it faces. We then delve deeper by analysing

the minority-majority positions and power-structures related to worldview plurality in Finnish basic education, giving concrete examples of how this plurality is handled as observed in our empirical studies. In particular, we draw on studies concerning the inclusion of Muslims in Finnish schools as well as integrated religious education.[6] Finally, we develop discussion on the possible ways of understanding and developing worldview education in Finland—alongside the wider task of rethinking the core and purpose of education in the face of the current 'wicked problems' of humanity.

Worldviews in Finnish Basic Education

The history of Finnish education cannot be understood without studying its Protestant Christian origin. The role of religion in the making of modern nation-states in the Nordic countries, in general, has been a blind spot to many scholars. The Reformation and Lutheranism have had close connections to Finnish nation-state building and therefore also to the origins of educational institutions in the nineteenth century. Lutheranism as secular Lutheranism is still inextricably linked to contemporary Finnish national identity, values and society in general.[7] The trinity of religious values, national identity formation and respect for education created the value basis on which the Finnish education system was established, and from which stemmed many educational ideals claimed to account for the success of Finnish education, including equal learning opportunities and autonomy of teachers.[8] Along with the secularisation of society, the religious and moral connections to civic identity have dissolved; nevertheless, citizenship education is still connected to the dimension of worldviews through values, beliefs and norms.[9]

Against this historical background, the homogeneity of the Finnish population has been a cherished illusion: some minority religious and worldview communities have existed in Finland for centuries but have not gained public recognition. Visible religious diversity has been closely linked to immigration: for instance, media discourses of religious diversity emerged at the same time as the increase in immigration in the late 1990s. Before that a shift from "taken-for-granted Lutheranism" to secularism had already occurred. Current media depictions of religion portray what can be regarded as the mainstream stance: the social and cultural role of Lutheranism and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church are supported, but negative depictions emerge whenever there is (perceived) friction between religion and liberal values.

A current powerful mainstream worldview position in Finland, which has replaced Lutheranism as the often taken-for-granted basis for education discourses, policies and practices, could be described as culturalised Protestantism intertwined with the values of liberalism, neoliberalism, secularism, multiculturalism and human rights. A comprehensive analysis of the currently prevailing worldview basis of Finnish basic education is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a short overview of the value bases of education as manifested in the current National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (henceforth NCCBE) will give an indication of some of its aspects. The ethical baseline for education is provided by the UN Declaration of Human Rights

and international human rights treaties to which Finland is committed. The child's best interest as the paramount consideration of all teachers is the core principle that arises from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and should form the ethical basis for education.[10]

The current curriculum mentions four central underlying values of education, all of which reflect the high value of individualism. The first, "*Uniqueness of each pupil and right to a good education*" proclaims the well-being and good life of the individual pupils as the core aim of education and emphasises the importance of value education (as individuation)—pupils are encouraged to construct "their own value-bases", and respect for pupils' and families' autonomy and diversity is called for. The second, "*Humanity, general knowledge and ability, equality and democracy*" further emphasises the development of pupils' individual critical ethical thinking skills and the ability to participate in democratic decision-making.

However, the curriculum also states that "Education shall not demand or lead to religious, philosophical or political commitment of the pupils". According to the third value, "*Cultural diversity as a richness*", education should support the development of pupils' personal cultural identities and growth into active members of their own communities but at the same time towards global citizenship. The fourth value is "*Necessity of a sustainable way of living*". Education should aim at cultivating the "eco social knowledge and ability" of the pupils, which means that they should understand the seriousness of climate change and strive for sustainability.[11]

The manner in which the curriculum manifests, on the one hand, values and ideals based on enlightenment, liberalism and human rights culture and, on the other hand, emphasises the philosophical, political and religious impartiality of education as well as the accommodation of diversity, gives an impression of ideas of universality being attached to this value basis. The way this general worldview basis of education goes much undiscussed in Finland, and the fact that both educators and the public mostly associate questions of religious and worldview influences with school celebrations as well as the subjects of religious education and ethics,[12] hints at the perceptions of worldview neutrality attached to education outside these particular visible issues and the continuation of the monoculturalist conception of education.

Accommodating Worldview Plurality in School Culture

The official ideals and norms of accommodating the constantly increasing worldview diversity in Finnish schools have shifted from assimilationism to multiculturalism and interculturalism.[13] NCCBE 2014 refers to diversity as richness and demands respectful treatment for it, while worldviews and religions are mentioned as one form of this diversity. For instance, it is noted how the appreciation of diversity should guide school-home collaboration: "The joint reflection of school and homes on values, and cooperation underpinned by this, promote security and the pupils' holistic well-being. The staff's open-minded and respectful attitude towards different religions, views, traditions and conceptions of education lays the foundation for constructive

instruction".[14] The curriculum further demands that "the knowledge that the pupils and their guardians and communities have of the nature, ways of living, history, languages and culture in their own linguistic and cultural areas are drawn upon in the instruction".[15]

However, research has identified a big gap between these official principles and the practical reality: monoculturalist and assimilationist practices prevail in the everyday life of schools.[16] Despite the growing multiculturalist awareness in curriculum development, there is much to improve in the resources and practices of including cultural and worldview diversity in preservice and in-service teacher education.[17] Furthermore, even though mainstream educational discourses increasingly acknowledge intercultural competencies (and focus on the promotion of equality and social justice) as necessary for all teachers, it is only in recent years that the acknowledgement of particular needs related to worldviews and worldview diversity has become more prominent. The increased public prominence and political relevance of religions has enhanced the recognition of the educational relevance of worldviews—for instance, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra[18] forecasts the importance of understanding religions and ideologies as a part of future civic skills.

At the same time, the need to 'understand worldviews' is typically associated with the importance of comprehending 'others' and 'dealing with' those professing non-Western worldviews. It is still very common for Finnish teachers and student teachers to make claims about the need to safeguard the neutrality of the public space of school and to emphasise worldviews as a personal and private matter.[19]

Instruction on Worldviews

The Finnish model of religious education can also be seen as an example of striking a balance between multiculturalist ideals (catering for the rights of minorities to their identity and culture by organising separate RE) and a monoculturalist educational ethos (aiming at supporting commitment to common civic values "through religions" in all types of RE). Currently there are individual national curricula for 11 minority religions and secular ethics parallel to mainstream Lutheran education and Orthodox Christian education. RE is a knowledge-based subject steered by the general pedagogical aims of state schools rather than by the interests of religious communities. According to the current National Core Curriculum for Basic Education,[20] the "… instruction in religion supports the pupil's growth into becoming a responsible member of his or her community and a democratic society as well as becoming a global citizen". These civic aims of RE are pursued by offering teaching about one's own as well as other religions and supporting the development of dialogue and other relevant skills.

Secular ethics, on the other hand, aims at helping pupils to search for good life. Both subjects emphasise critical thinking skills in constructing comprehensive knowledge about worldviews and cultures. Similar to RE, "the goal of secular ethics is to develop pupils' abilities to become independent, tolerant, responsible

and discerning members of the community".[21] There are typically educators with minority worldviews involved in the curriculum process, but, in principle, worldview communities do not have any role in defining the national curriculum because RE is defined as a non-confessional and non-binding subject. Religious observance is not permitted in RE classes and teachers are expected to use language that is impartial and inclusive.

The centrality of the civic aims in RE reflect the ways in which the legitimacy of the subject has been tied to adaptation to the changing political and ideological needs of society. The development of RE in Finland has reflected the increasing influence of transnational actors: the Finnish case has to be seen against the broader European educational framework and policy documents concerning RE, such as the *Toledo Guiding Principles*[22] and the Council of Europe's publication on religion and intercultural education, *Signposts*.[23] In these documents, RE is increasingly framed as closely linked to intercultural education and seen as an instrument for the promotion of social cohesion. Its aims are formulated in the language of the competency-based discourses of education influenced by neoliberal educational thinking.

These developments have given rise to some criticism of the skills-based goal setting and instrumentalisation of RE both internationally and in Finland, as well as of using RE as a tool to enhance security around and governing of religious minorities.[24] However, in Finland, religious minorities generally support the current model and its spirit of supporting societal values "through religions".[25]

Empirical Examples of Negotiating Worldview Diversity in Finnish Schools: The Case of Muslims

We have demonstrated how perceptions of universality and neutrality attached to the majority worldview influence the development of worldview education in Finland in its different levels. Yet this illusion of neutrality which maintains monoculturalist educational practices is increasingly challenged in many Finnish educational contexts. We now discuss such negotiations on worldview diversity in education with the help of some empirical examples.

In Finnish society, as in many other European societies, negotiations of pluralism and secularism often revolve around the question of Islam and Muslims and the perceptions of them as challengers of liberalism—this is also the case in the field of education. Finnish Muslims are a diverse group holding very different views on religion and its importance, but they have brought to the fore the question of visible religiosity that resists restriction to private sphere and discussions about the "inclusion of worldview diversity in schools" very often concern the issue of inclusion of Muslims. The first author's recent qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews with Muslim "cultural broker" teachers and school principals,[26] describes negotiations around the development of an inclusive school culture and aligned processes of citizenship construction.

In many ways, Muslim students are in a marginalised minority position in Finnish schools. Despite the inner diversity of this group, they suffer from stereotyped views and prejudiced treatment,[27] reflecting the generally negative attitudes of Finns towards Islam and Muslims.[28] According to Muslim teachers, this has much to do with low levels of experience and knowledge of Islam among Finns, low levels of cultural self-awareness on the part of educators, and lack of open dialogue that could help to increase understanding.[29] Naturalisation of culture-bound (i.e. Protestant) conceptualisations of religion among educators is mirrored in their expectations that Islam in Finland should follow the same assumed logic as the Protestant tradition—for instance, having canonised doctrines or a local religious leader who can be consulted as a representative of Muslims in the school. When this logic fails and Muslim families resist school policies based on a single local imam's views or present internally diverse perceptions, they are easily regarded as "difficult" or "overly religious".[30]

However, it is not only reticence towards religiosity but also towards "strong" non-religiosity that is common among Finns.[31] The group that most visibly challenges the hegemony of culturalised Protestantism in schools and which most often publicly discusses experiences of exclusion is those with markedly secular worldviews. These two groups, Muslims and secularists are the ones sometimes being claimed to be "difficult" by Finnish educators—and who feel exasperation at having to bear this stigma of being difficult when striving for equal rights. Therefore, many Muslim teachers work to present Islam as a value system and life choice comparable with other (religious and non-religious) values and practices. According to their view, adjustments may at times be easily made for other practices or identities (e.g., vegetarianism vs. the halal diet), but choices based on religion are interpreted as a threat to "Finnish values".[32]

At the same time, ideas of equality and equity are at the core of the Finnish educational ethos. The case of Muslims shows that, despite the curricular ideals of multicultural recognition, equity and inclusion are still mostly promoted through the strategy of colour-blindness—by focusing on the similarities, togetherness and individuality of the pupils.[33] The problems of the colour-blind strategy are that it is often based on ethnocentric conceptions of similarity and fails to support minorities' participation and belonging.[34] Even those Finnish educators, who have traded colour-blindness for more intercultural pedagogies typically regard religion—particularly Islam—as an exception.[35]

This strategy of "religion-blindness" is based on assumptions of the irrelevance or shamefulness of Muslim identities for pupils—making sure that they "do not need to be seen as Muslims". Sometimes religion-blindness implies religionisation of the minority: for instance, Islam is regarded as "too religious" to have any prominence in the public space of the school and its festivities—in which, at the same time, elements from the majority tradition of Lutheranism are continuously present as cultural heritage.[36] Such monoculturalist ideas of cultural heritage uphold the tying of citizenship with holding a majority worldview; furthermore, lack of recognition of minority cultural heritage as cultural capital can have an impact on pupils' educational performance.[37]

Culturalisation (the way of characterising majority religious symbols as cultural heritage) can be seen as a strategy on the part of the majority to retain their power in the changing context: the presence of the majority worldview is legitimised by arguing that the values it promotes reflect universal values.[38] Thus, culturalisation may lead majority pupils to adopt ideas of universality and superiority, while preserving the stigma attached to minority identities emerging in the every-day life of the school as "restrictions".

However, these dynamics are challenged by many Muslim teachers and parents. Their claims for positive religious rights vary—some support the restriction of religion mostly to the private sphere and not being a too visible a part of the school culture. None of the Muslim cultural broker informants of these studies, however, demanded the removal of Christian elements from the schools; mostly they hoped that minority religions could be granted a more equal status with Protestant Christianity. Connotations of backwardness attached to Islam could be deconstructed by giving the high culture and values of Islam some visible space as "cultural heritage" in school, aligned with the celebration of Protestant heritage in the secular space. In fact, there are schools in Finland which have endeavoured to develop more inclusive school cultures with the help of cultural broker teachers and parents. Obvious examples of this may, for instance, include the celebration of Ramadan in schools, or simply creating more space for mutual learning, openness and dialogue in home-school collaboration and actively developing ways for parents from different backgrounds to contribute in school.[39]

Sometimes Finnish principals prefer to try to meet the multiculturalist demands of the curriculum by recruiting minority teachers and "outsourcing" questions of cultural and worldview plurality to them.[40] This seemingly inclusive aim of diversifying the teaching staff, however, has its risks when linked to the idea of promoting inclusion by "giving minorities more space" without ideas of the reciprocity of inclusion. Muslim teachers question this idea of inclusion as being up to minorities. It is based on ideas of one-way rather than reciprocal inclusion, without any demands for self-awareness, self-criticism and change given to the majority culture. However, even though the initial purpose of these efforts has been to manage the worldview minorities rather than to learn from them, they have opened up a space for minority members to gradually challenge the monoculturalism of schools.[41]

Negotiating Worldview Diversity in Integrative Worldview Education

The public debate on the worldview education model in Finland has been active in recent years but without political outcomes that change the fundamentals of the model established in the 1920s. Demands to modify the worldview education model that would integrate the teaching of religions and other worldviews not only in practice but also in theory to create a platform for dialogical learning, have gained

strength among educators. The challenges with the current religious education model also reveal that there is a need for critical discussion of the concept of "a pupil's own religion" as a juridical and curricular principle for assigning pupils to certain worldview categories. Several schools across the country have pioneered integrative teaching, where different religious education subjects and secular ethics are partly taught in a common classroom space. There has been some anxiety and resistance, especially among minority religious and secular groups, to these integrative initiatives as they are sometimes seen as violating children's rights to their own religions or as a violation the principle of freedom of religion.

The second author and colleagues[42] have examined teacher discourses in both separative and integrative classes to scrutinise the inclusive and exclusive effects of language in reproducing and legitimising certain worldview positions and identities. Typically, teachers use so-called "scientific language" (vocabulary and expressions used in academic theology or religious studies) or the "language of belonging" (harnessing pupils' experiences and feelings of belonging using expressions such as 'we' or 'us' and other ways of marking the borders between insiders and outsiders) which are different discursive strategies and balancing techniques in aiming at inclusivity. For instance, the language of belonging was used in discussing the role in pupils' lives of Christian rituals such as Lutheran confirmation or to mirror great worldview conflicts from church history to the present situation where pupils were able to study together despite differences in worldviews. Scientific language, on the other hand, was visible in comparative approaches, for instance when a teacher challenged a pupil's understanding of the originality of the Golden Rule in Christianity and in the debates concerning the nature of science versus religion.

When scientific discourse is dominant in a worldview education class, it often suppresses religious stances.[43] For instance, teachers in an integrative class ignored pupils' religiously charged views, which can be a message to pupils not to make religious claims at school.[44] Furthermore, pupils from secular ethics were concerned that the religious views were too strongly present in a classroom space and wished the religious content to be addressed to those pupils actually studying RE "according to their own religion".[45] Both teachers and pupils being concerned about "too much religion" and considering the presence of religious views and epistemologies to be dubious implies the prevailing of secular-Protestant monoculturalism also in the RE classroom.

A pervasive theme in the aforementioned studies has been to investigate the perceptions of epistemological neutrality attached to strong secular worldview positions, leading to the exploitation of religious positions while the secular positions go unanalysed in the classroom, thereby creating exclusion of the more religious pupils. Anna-Leena Riitaoja and Fred Dervin[46] critically note that the secularist bias is located in the belief that a secular-liberal subject is able to 'step outside' of his own framework and that religious people are not free to choose or to think independently. Thus, the idea of scientific language as epistemologically neutral should be critically elaborated and particular ideological influences behind any notion of the 'scientific' should be identified.

On the other hand, when the language of belonging is used in a worldview education class, positions outside the mainstream religious group are often ignored. When the discourse is constructed in a manner that emphasises minorities versus the majority, the majority position goes unrecognised and sets the standards for world-view objectivity to which all other positions are compared.[47] The teachers' approach designed for inclusive and multicultural initiative translates into latent monocultur-alism when, for instance, they assume that pupils to share similar culturally Lutheran ways of life or consider certain knowledge, such as church history, to be a general starting point for learning for all pupils.[48]

Comparing different worldviews and their similarities to and differences from one's own worldview is a much-used didactical tool in worldview education. However, these didactical practices are often based on the idea of an epistemo-logically neutral observer and can either strengthen the conception of worldviews as radically different, as others being 'alien', reduce difference into sameness and blur the profound uniqueness of each worldview. When identity is reinforced through the dialectic between similarity and difference, it leaves little room to imagine alter-natives.[49] As scholars of post-colonial studies argue, to emphasise the common, similar or same features of religions or people can be seen as a blind univer-salism of hegemonic and privileged identities.[50] Again, worldview difference in Finnish education means placing particular worldviews outside "normal religion" (Lutheranism) and outside non-religiosity (secularity), which are most often seen to apply to conservative Christian views and Islam.

Some minority worldviews like Buddhism are often exoticised and discussed only in a positive light without criticality similar to that levelled at Islam, for instance. As the number of minority pupils is typically small in Finnish schools, teachers can make an effort to "bring minorities in", with unintended consequences. We observed instances when teachers reinforced and essentialised minority pupils' assumed iden-tities and belonging to certain worldview categories through comments that were not meant to be discriminatory but represented pupils' identities through cultural artefacts such as clothing or food. This discourse also reduces the internal diversity of a religion into single features to be generalised to the entire religious tradition.[51]

Yet it is important to note that the challenge concerning education on worldviews reflects a wider scholarly debate on the concepts of religion and worldview.[52] Also, more emphasis should be placed on speaking about worldviews without bypassing diverse personal interpretations and the way they are actually lived.[53] Nevertheless, the idea of simply "putting all worldviews together" is not enough to create an epistemologically plural and socially just education. Integrative teaching of religious and secular worldviews requires that teachers recognise how complex is the issue of making non-discriminatory and inclusive learning possible for all.

Conclusion: From Seeing Worldviews as Problems Towards Harnessing Their Critical Potential

We have demonstrated how on different levels of Finnish worldview education the understanding and inclusion of diversity is rather superficial and that at the more profound epistemological and ethical levels universalism and monoculturalism prevail. As a result, religions and worldviews appear as problems in Finnish schools from the perspective of those representing hegemonic positions shaped e.g., by enlightenment rationality and culturalised Protestantism. However, we have also presented empirical examples of grassroots-level negotiations on inclusion in Finnish schools, through which the exclusion and othering of minority worldviews is resisted.

What should these negotiations achieve? As noted at the beginning of the chapter, Finland has followed the wider European trend in developing worldview education increasingly as an instrument for the promotion of social cohesion. Much of the research in the field, including our own, has focused on questions of inclusion. However, the current pressing global problems call for prioritising social change over social cohesion as the core purpose of education—an increasing number of education scholars question the reasonability of working to make the existing social order more equitable and sustainable, and call for solutions that "cannot yet be imagined". [54] We would like to see research and policies of worldview education shift its focus more towards harnessing the critical potential of worldview diversity in widening imaginaries—rather than managing the problems worldview diversity causes for social harmony.

In other words, monoculturalism and universalism in Finnish schools should not be seen merely as threats to the inclusion of minorities, but also as obstacles to the necessary societal change. According to the Finnish educational philosopher Veli-Matti Värri,[55] times of global sustainability crisis call for cultural revolution, and there is a desperate need to deconstruct the taken-for-grantedness of the deep cultural structures that serve as the ground for unsustainable lifestyles—and for the education that reproduces them. Change is possible only if we are able to problematise the ways in which educational systems currently produce moral subjects who continue to see and retain the existing structures and hegemonic ontologies as taken for granted.[56] The necessary task of unravelling the metaphysical assumptions that steer socialisation processes is certainly difficult, but the existing worldview plurality in our society and education system could be regarded as a lifeline in this process rather than a problem.

There is critical educational potential in the epistemologies and ontologies as well as educational philosophies of non-mainstream worldview traditions that can be used to widen imaginaries and deconstruct the received hegemonic cultural assumptions. However, this demands efforts to find spaces at different levels of the education system—from educational policy and curriculum development to school cultures and classroom pedagogies—where it is possible to deconstruct the monoculturalist educational ethos and approach worldview diversity with intellectual courage.

The Finnish education system does have some structures that enable this. These include, for instance, the involvement of worldview minorities in curricular processes (even though in all the time more limited manner) and the principles of dialogical and culturally responsive school-home collaboration. Furthermore, the current model of worldview education, in some respect, makes room for epistemological plurality and non-Western knowledge traditions in schools and also increases the number of teachers with minority worldview background in the professional community. The development of an integrative approach to worldview education could offer new opportunities for epistemological dialogue where different knowledge positions are made visible not only as objects of study but by encountering lived experiences and the exchange of personal worldviews. However, integrative worldview education includes a risk of toning down the true plurality of perspectives—"neutral" and "objective" integrative forms of religious education in the Nordic context have been demonstrated to be profoundly influenced by cultural Protestantism but in a way that is not recognised by teachers themselves.[57]

The ideals of inclusion and critical intellectual braveness are not incompatible. The starting point for worldview education should not be the aim for neutrality but rather to create a potential dialogical space of plurality. It might be useful to differentiate between the concepts of 'dignity safety' (absolute respect for individuals) and 'intellectual safety' (a need to encounter a critical debate about problematic issues in worldviews) in education.[58] Worldview education can be safe in the sense that it is inclusive and supportive of different identities—but intellectually courageous and risky, bringing to the fore diverse truth claims, taking different wisdom traditions seriously in order to enable debates on them, and courageously submitting to critical scrutiny the "received" worldview basis of education.

Worldview education, which aims at harnessing the critical potential of worldview plurality, recognises the particularity of different knowledge traditions and turns the gaze back on oneself, on one's own position and contexts, roots of knowledge and limits of understanding.[59] Rather than finding quick fixes in dealing with worldview diversity in practical situations, we should develop educators' awareness of how the hegemonic educational epistemologies inform our educational aims, theories and concepts,[60] and how through uncritical acceptance of these we may contribute to the production of worldview identities that place individuals in disadvantaged positions.[61] Making the existing epistemological and wider worldview pluralism in our system more visible will create new opportunities for thinking, seeing, knowing, relating and being 'otherwise'[62] in a world in desperate need of rapid social and cultural change.

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Inkeri Rissanen is University Lecturer of Multicultural Education in the Faculty of Education and Culture at Tampere University, and also holds the title of Docent of school pedagogy at the University of Helsinki. Her main research interests include religion in public education, intercultural professionalism of teachers and growth mindset pedagogy. Currently Rissanen studies teachers' malleability beliefs on an Academy of Finland-funded project and leads a Finnish sub-project on a European Consortium CCC-CATAPULT researching young people, climate agency and climate education.

Saila Poulter, Ph.D. is University Lecturer in Religious Education at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. She also holds the title of Docent in education at the University of Jyväskylä. Her research interests concern religious and worldview education, secularism, teacher professionalism, and intercultural and citizenship education. Poulter's current research is on diversity of worldviews in early childhood education and care.

Chapter 25
Inclusion in Finland: Myths and Realities

Markku Jahnukainen, Ninja Hienonen, Meri Lintuvuori,
and Sonia Lempinen

Abstract Although inclusive education is a strong trend in education policy around the globe, there are different definitions and variations used in different nations. The case of Finland is interesting, because the long-term direction of the Finnish school system has supported every child's right to participate in education, but inclusive education is not mentioned or defined anywhere in education legislation. This absence of definition not only leaves the defining to the parties concerned, but also adds to creating inclusive myths and varying realities in everyday life. Meanwhile, in public discussion, there has been a constant and quite polarised debate about putting students with support needs in regular classrooms. The recent Government Program (2019) in Finland states that special education legislation should be investigated from the point of view of students as well as teachers' wellbeing. In order to define the current state and equality of the Finnish support system, the Ministry of Education and Culture has established a working group as part of the "Right to Learn" initiative 2020–2022. In this chapter, we discuss the historical development of Finnish inclusion and contrast myths and realities of the Finnish model in supporting students with support needs in the light of international trends in inclusive and special education. We also discuss possible future trends of inclusive education in the Finnish context.

M. Jahnukainen (✉)
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 8, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: markku.jahnukainen@helsinki.fi

N. Hienonen · M. Lintuvuori
Centre for Educational Assessment, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: ninja.hienonen@helsinki.fi

M. Lintuvuori
e-mail: meri.lintuvuori@helsinki.fi

S. Lempinen
Department of Education, University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: sonia.lempinen@utu.fi

Globally, inclusion is a contested concept in many ways, especially by its definition but also whether it is a goal or a means in educational policy. As Elizabeth Kozleski and colleagues have put it, inclusive education "has meant anything from physical integration of students with disabilities in general education classrooms to the transformation of curricula, classrooms, and pedagogies, and even the transformation of entire educational systems".[1] This chapter is highlighting inclusion-related, often contested discussion, of policies and practices in Finnish compulsory schooling. The case of Finland is interesting, because the long-term political will and direction of the Finnish school system has supported every child's basic right to participate in education, but even during recent reforms inclusive education is not mentioned or defined anywhere in education legislation. This lack of definition not only leaves the defining to the parties concerned, but also adds to creating inclusive myths that contrast with the realities of provision in Finnish everyday life.

Although the concept of inclusive education has not played any legislative role in Finnish development, it has been widely used in public discussion to define situations, in which students considered as 'special needs students' are placed in general education classrooms. It is clear that we can't talk about inclusion without talking about special education and its tradition, which has long been exclusionary or segregative. Inclusion has emerged out of special education in Finland as elsewhere.[2] For the purposes of our discussion, we are using a broad definition of inclusion as meaning the equal right to belong to education and society for all, with adequate support, resources, staff, training, and equipment for participation in a neighbourhood school.

A Brief History and the Development of Unhelpful Myths About Inclusive Education in Finland

One of us has argued previously that at the *system level* the current Finnish comprehensive school system is inclusive.[3] This is based on the fact that practically every student is served in the same comprehensive, compulsory school system.[4] However, system level inclusion does not necessarily mean inclusive placement in general education classrooms, not even in general education schools, although the number of separate special schools as well as other special education facilities has been decreasing steadily in recent years.[5]

Recently, we have celebrated the centenary of the first *Compulsory Education Act 1921* of Finland. Although the spirit of the law from the beginning was to include every child in basic education, it has taken a long time to get every student with disabilities even into the same school system. The first Compulsory Education Act stated as following:

> The children of Finnish citizens are subject to compulsory education according to this law, which will be enacted as following. From the compulsory education are exempt: those residing further than five kilometres from the closest compulsory school in those municipalities, where the mean number of inhabitants per square kilometre does not rise over 3; and

students with intellectual disabilities as they are decreed separately. (Compulsory Education Act 101/1921, § 1).[6]

During the early years, it was easy to get an exemption to leave children out of schooling, in particular in rural areas and especially if the child was considered to have any kind of impairment. Indeed, based on disabilities this was possible even until 1985, when the Comprehensive School Act 1983 came into effect. The year 1997 was also significant for the rights of students with disabilities, as students with the most severe intellectual disabilities were the last group of students transferred administratively from the social and welfare services into the comprehensive school system. However, then and also later, many of these students were still educated in locations that were not connected to general education.[7]

Comparing Finnish special education to other school systems is a challenging task because what has traditionally been called 'special education' in Finland covers a broader area with low threshold services and focusing on students with milder difficulties than in many other school systems.[8] On the other hand, it might seem that there is a lot of 'special education' students served in general education in the Finnish system, but not all of them are comparable with students with special educational needs (SEN) in other school systems. This complex nature of provision partly explains why it has not been an easy task to get an overview of inclusion in Finland. The complexity has also allowed many misunderstandings or myths to develop related to Finnish support services. Here we look at three such myths that we believe need to be challenged especially. Some have gained international attention and some are more related to national discussions about inclusion and its consequences. They are:

1. Myth 1: Finland holds the world record for the number of students receiving special education.
2. Myth 2: Special education students have overwhelmed general education classrooms.
3. Myth 3: There is only one future for inclusive education in Finland.

By discussing these myths in the following sections, we are trying to give the most accurate account of the state of affairs related to inclusion and special education in Finland. We start with a rather long-standing criticism about the sheer number of students getting special education in Finland, which is seen as so excessive that Finland leads the world (Myth 1).[9] This fallacy is partly entangled with our second topic, the fear of special education students conquering general education classrooms (Myth 2). This topic has been mainly debated in national media and supported by classroom teachers as well as by OAJ (Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö, The Trade Union of Education in Finland, see Nivanaho and Thrupp in this book). We respond to these myths by explaining the current support system and using available educational statistics and relevant research findings. We then start a discussion about unlocking the national vision for inclusion in Finland: is there really only one direction? (Myth 3).

Myth 1: Finland Holds the World Record for the Number of Students Receiving Special Education

In international comparison, at least since the OECD report 2000 titled *Special Needs Education. Statistics and Indicators*, the high total percentage and yearly increase of students served in special education in Finnish comprehensive schools has raised concern.[10] This is, however, a matter of the definitions used in different school systems. In a recent European cross-country report, the percentage of students with SEN varied from 1.02% to 25.12%.[11] If more equivalent definitions are used across countries, the comparison looks quite different. In many other school systems, special education is defined using a language of disabilities and the services available under the label of "special education" often refers mainly to special schools and separate special classes only.[12]

One aspect, often misunderstood, is that so-called 'part-time special education' has played a key part in the Finnish support system since the 1970's.[13] Part-time special education is provided for any students who have, for instance, difficulties with linguistic or mathematical skills, learning difficulties or problems with their study skills, interaction skills or school attendance.[14] The objective is to reinforce the student's capabilities for learning and to prevent difficulties in learning and school attendance. A total of 22% of comprehensive school students received this kind of part-time special education during the 2018–2019 school year.[15] It should be noted that these students are not actually counted in the special education quota for administrative purposes, even though special teachers are providing this support to them. In many other school systems, this kind of support by special teachers might be sparse,[16] or it might be offered under the name remedial education. It should be also understood that part-time special education can be offered as traditional clinic-type support (for example once a week), or by way of co-teaching between classroom teachers and special teachers in regular classrooms.[17]

To make the comparison between countries and over time even more difficult, significant changes have been made in the Finnish system of support. After 2011, the special education system became referred to as *Learning and schooling support* in the Amendments of the Basic Education Act.[18] Since 2011, the three levels of support have been general (Tier 1), intensified (Tier 2) and special (Tier 3).[19] A student can receive only one level of support at a time. The support methods and tools are almost the same at all tier levels; however, the intensity of the provided support increases from one level to the next.[20] Tier 1 general support is provided as soon as a support need arises, and no specific evaluations or decisions are required. Tier 1 support usually means individual pedagogical solutions and guidance as a part of daily school life.[21] Tier 2 intensified support is provided for students who need regular support or several support forms simultaneously.[22] Tier 2 student's support is based on a pedagogical assessment and must be provided in accordance with a learning plan devised for the student. Tier 3 special support is provided for students who otherwise cannot adequately achieve the goals set for their growth, development and learning.[23] Tier 3 support consists of special needs education and

other support needed by the student provided according to the Basic Education Act.[24] Before making the decision on Tier 3 support, the education provider needs to draw up a pedagogical statement on the student. A decision on special support is made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act and the reasons for the decision are contained in the pedagogical statement and in all other additional statements. The decision on special support must state, for instance, the student's primary teaching group. An individual education plan (IEP) is drawn up for any student receiving Tier 3 support.

Looking at recent (2019) educational statistics,[25] we find that on top of that share of 22% receiving part time special education (including 11% of Tier 1 students not counted separately) the Tier 2 level intensified support was received by 10.6% and Tier 3 special support by 8.1% of comprehensive school students (OSF 2020). These numbers, however, *should not* be simply added together, because part-time special education can be provided at all tier levels of support as a means of support. Based on this statistical information we can, however, estimate that the total share of students at compulsory schooling level receiving some sort of additional support under the tiers of *Learning and Schooling support* can be as high as approximately 30%. This, however, is not the correct number to use in international comparisons as a reference to special education students in Finland. If any of those classifications should be used, in most cases the share of students at the Tier 3 level is the most accurate option.[26] In a comparison between the United States, province of Alberta, Canada, and Finland, using the best available estimates for K-12 comparison, the percentage of students with official SEN definition (Tier 3 equivalent) were 10.8., 10.1 and 7.0 (respectively).[27] Using this as a reference, the myth of Finland as a world record holder in special education is probably not so evident anymore.

Myth 2: Special Education Students Have Overwhelmed General Education Classrooms

The kinds of changes in Finnish special education support mentioned above, along with complex ways of defining support needs, have evoked a lot of educators' opinions and some heated public debates about the possible 'invasion' of 'troubled students' into general education classrooms. For example, in recent years inclusion has remained a topic of public debate in Finland especially in platforms owned by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE), using opinions gathered mostly from teachers and sometimes from parents.[28] The focal point of the argument has been the perceived advantages of placing pupils in special versus regular classes. A survey presented by the national YLE news[29] to members of the Finnish parliament revealed that most participants, especially from the centre and right-wing parties, would like to increase the number of special classes throughout the country. This opinion amongst Members of Parliament as well as many teachers and parents, arises from concern that the pupils are not receiving enough support and that teachers are not coping

with heterogeneous classrooms either.[30] The statements in the news are verified by studies highlighting teachers, assistants and principals views of not coping with heterogeneous classrooms due to lack of pedagogical training.[31] It is argued that comprehensive school subject teachers use few inclusive education practices of co-teaching, group work and differentiation, due to lack of training.[32] These frequently offered opinions have their roots in misinterpretation of inclusive measures.[33] Inclusion is often misinterpreted as integration, which can be used to describe the moving of pupils from classroom or setting to another, however, unlike inclusion, integration does not involve belonging automatically. Hence, the public discussion about special versus regular classes could be described as being about integration rather than inclusion.

Another misinterpretation of inclusive education on a municipal level has revolved around using inclusion to make savings. According to the OAJ, a reduction in the number of special schools has led to moving pupils to regular classrooms without sufficient resources following them.[34] Lack of support with resources in heterogeneous classroom groups where differentiation of learning ends up being a copious task, has become a major concern for many teachers.[35] The inclusive measures were intended to direct support along with the pupil to neighbourhood schools and regular classrooms, rather than shut down the support system along with the special classes and special schools.[36] However, it is often the idea of inclusion or, more specifically, the so-called inclusive reform of special education in 2011, that has become the target of blame—even extreme blame—for most problems regarding support needs. For instance, a recent devastating incident of long-term bullying ending with three teenagers ganging on their peer, and the loss of a life. The press then started hunting for where to attribute blame, and "inclusive" education was raised as a possible cause behind the incident. Inclusion in this case was seen as moving a pupil from special education to regular education, and without sufficient support measures.[37]

Looking at the national educational statistics and empirical data, the picture is more balanced. Although nationally the number of students in separate special schools has decreased over time and the number of students with special needs in general education settings has increased, the students with special needs in Finland still study both in regular and special classes, as well as in special schools.[38] Most of the Tier 3 level students placed in general education schools are studying in general education classroom only part-time: at the national level, only 23% of Tier 3 level students (1.9% of all comprehensive students) are fully included in general education classes.[39] This means that in a school of 200 students, there are around four fully-included Tier 3 students. If taking account of the Tier 2 students as well, there are special needs students in about half of the regular classes in lower secondary education.[40]

There are, however, wide differences between municipalities: these may explain the public debate. The proportion of comprehensive school students full-time in special classes ranged from 0 to 10% across municipalities. In 2019 there were 311 municipalities that differ in size enormously. For example, the number of comprehensive school students in a municipality varies from just 16 students in the smallest to 54,000 students in the largest and unsurprisingly this affects how they organised

their support (see also Kalalahti and Varjo in this book).[41] In addition, even amongst the largest municipalities much variation is evident, for instance 1.5 to 6.3% of comprehensive school students full-time in special classes in 2019. Some municipalities continue to support students mainly in special schools and some mainly in regular classes (OSF, 2020). It is also noteworthy, albeit based on just a few Finnish studies, that there are no obvious performance differences that can be traced to student placement between different educational settings.[42]

Myth 3: There is Only One Future for Inclusive Education in Finland

It is possible to speculate that there are many ways in which inclusive education could be developed in Finland in the future. Here we take the discussion to a general level mirroring general education policy trends on future inclusive education. So far, we have argued that there are no differences between student performance regardless of the setting, although municipalities vary greatly in their way of organising inclusive education and allocating resources, and that Finland has signed many international agreements to implement inclusive education. Furthermore, in public discussion, the future possibilities of inclusive education often seem to be restricted to resources, which indicate misinterpretation of inclusive education from policies to practice. In order to address this, the recent Government Program (2019)[43] in Finland stated that "special education legislation as well as functioning of inclusion should be investigated from the point of view of students as well as the teachers' wellbeing". As a way of defining the current state and equality of the Finnish support system, the Ministry of Education and Culture has established a working group as part of the "Right to Learn" initiative 2020–2022.[44] To add to previous discussions, some major trends concerning the Finnish education system are considered from the point of view of inclusive education. These trends include both technologies and access to resources in the future. Lessons from COVID-19 and the use of technologies and OECD perspectives on inclusive education have been followed by a discussion of general policy trends linked to resources that may impact the future of inclusive education.

Recent changes caused by the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19 and pressures for digitalisation could certainly change the way inclusive education is organised in the future also. Finland was amongst the countries that chose not to close its schools during the pandemic but to continue education in mainly digital form. Data gathered from Spring 2020 will give insight into the impact of highly digitalised education.[45] Another important angle on the future of Finnish education revolves around the organisation of municipalities after recent proposals for reform, this includes influences on how special and inclusive education will be organised, and the future of municipal and state funding. Diminished funding could potentially support a shift to relying more on private provision. This privatisation has already started in the area

of early childhood education and care,[46] which operates under different legislation than compulsory education. Furthermore, the way that the Finnish public education system has become influenced by the private sector could also have a considerable impact on the inclusive education. Whether inclusive education is high enough up the agenda of policy-makers, education providers, teacher and the community will also affect the extent to which inclusion is applied to education.

We now consider a number of issues that will be important in the future. One is how COVID-19 distance learning has impacted on pupils receiving support. Another is the OECD definition of inclusion, which links inclusive education to future workforce (tech-savvy) skills. A third issue is municipal and state funding and its impact on Finnish inclusive education.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in the spring term of 2020 Finnish teachers went quickly from using technologies in education to teaching fully online.[47] Survey data from some 61,000 pupils in Grades 4–10 and more than 39,000 parents with children in Grades 1–10 indicates that distance learning practices varied widely between schools.[48] In the same study, teachers ($n = 5361$), principals ($n = 870$) and parents ($n = 35,586$) highlighted that Tier 2 and Tier 3 pupils' support was not realised as well as before the pandemic. Nor was it as good for distance learning or in the classroom education that was arranged later in the Spring term for the most vulnerable pupils, for instance Tier 3 pupils and pupils in Grades 1–3.[49] By the Autumn term, pupils were mostly in classroom education in Finland and the state had directed extra funding to schools because of COVID-19. It is a relief that by this time the majority of respondents were suggesting that most Tier 2 and Tier 3 pupils had received learning and schooling support that was as good as before the pandemic.[50]

Another influence on the future of inclusive education in Finland is the OECD. According to the OECD, inclusion in education means the ability to reach a minimum level of skills, but these are also linked to twenty-first century employment.[51] This OECD definition of inclusion is driven by economics, which necessitates active participation to learning and instead of changing the environment, the emphasis is on the individual to learn skills. The future of inclusion in Finland may take a different route depending on whether this OECD definition of inclusion will become widespread or whether inclusion will be considered more as a right to participate, to get support, and to have the environment moulded to fit the person with special needs,[52] rather than the other way around. The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014[53] has looked towards twenty-first century skills, referred to as transversal competence areas, as a central part of the curriculum in all subjects.[54] The use of technology and technological industries have also become very important, such that alongside more traditional barriers to equity like special education, socio-economic status, migrant background and gender, the OECD has highlighted access and ability to use digital devices.[55] It seems that the increasing use of modern digitalised technology entails great possibilities but also possible risks for students with special needs.

Policy trends concerning municipal and state funding are presently affecting Finnish inclusive education, and will do so in the future also. The Finnish municipalities have the autonomy to organise education in ways that follow the national legislation and curriculum, but which also suit the municipality. One of the main discussion points in inclusive education is the allocation of resources. In a successful inclusive environment, funding is allocated in a way that supports pupils, teachers, and all others involved in the provision of special education to make choices enabling participation. For instance, allocation of resources to support special schools instead of funding inclusive settings will keep supporting the special education school system. On the other hand, funding that is saved from closing down special schools can relocated back to the general system, in a way that more special education teachers and assistants can become available in regular neighbourhood schools.[56] Allocating resources to training teachers to meet the needs of children of all abilities and from all social backgrounds would help towards creating more inclusive learning environments for pupils. Professional learning about how teachers and students can collaborate, teachers can differentiate, and how teachers can understand the uniqueness of each person are also practical ways to create inclusive environments. One recent small-scale study suggested that by collaborating with special education teachers, Finnish primary school teachers were starting to develop relevant skills to manage in the tiered system.[57] A survey of 500 Finnish teachers in the Autumn term of 2020 suggested that half felt they had the expertise and knowledge to support SEN but lacked time and resources.[58]

Many municipalities in Finland are currently having significant financial difficulties[59] and as organisers of education, the effects on schools are inevitable. The OAJ suggests[60] some municipalities should merge, in order to create better municipal networks and providers of services. If proposed reforms of social and medical welfare systems are carried through, organising education will become the municipalities' primary duty. Yet the weak financial situation of municipalities poses a potential threat of reducing public funding. If this eventuates, compulsory schooling might even need to be opened to the market, increasing private actor provision, involvement and investment. This kind of privatisation of education could lead to similar concerns as in Sweden during recent decades. In Sweden special schools are strengthening again in large cities as there is less special support offered in regular schools, the project of social inclusion is failing, and parents who can afford it, send their children to better performing independent but socially segregated schools.[61] Finland is likely to have more successful future inclusive education through clearer legislation in support of special education and support by municipalities for more universal inclusive practices in public education.

Conclusion: Towards Unified National Guidelines of Inclusive Education

It is worth noting that educational support and inclusive education in Finland has gained significant attention both internationally and nationally since the early 2000s. It seems that the motives for this attention have been wide-ranging. The international interest has been at least partly related to broader interest in Finland's success in PISA comparisons and trying to solve the mystery of the supposed 'Finnish miracle of education'.[62] Nationally, debates have been about the rights of students with special needs to participate in general education and, at the same time, what kind of consequences this inclusive education might have for teachers' workloads as well as for the learning results of those students without recognised special needs. Such debates rarely end conclusively because the field of inclusive and special education is fairly broad and definitions are not fixed nationally or even internationally,[63] and there are few studies that can offer hard evidence of the outcomes of different policies.[64]

Carrying out successful inclusion requires, amongst other things, resources, knowledge and a certain attitude.[65] When the prerequisites for inclusive education have been studied at the school and municipal levels, the views between Finnish teachers, principals and municipal-level administrators have differed slightly.[66] Teachers considered the reduction of class size as the most important prerequisite for inclusive education whereas principals mentioned co-teaching as the primary issue. Otherwise, teachers and principals often agree that educational assistants and support from special education teachers are important prerequisites for inclusion. Municipal-level administrators considered support for inclusion from school leaders as the most important requirement. It is clear that when inclusive education is provided, there are many views to be taken into account. This easily offers room for multiple interpretations—even the creation of myths—about the pros and cons of inclusive education. Furthermore, it is important to make unified efforts to clarify what the outcomes of inclusive policies and practices are, and to differentiate them from the outcomes of other reforms, societal changes and statistical definitions. More research, based on solid empirical data about the outcomes of different practices is also needed to get a more comprehensive picture of the state and effectiveness of the Finnish system for organising inclusive and special education. Forthcoming national guidelines related to legislation and definitions are needed to clarify procedures at the municipal and school level. The present lack of definitions unhelpfully leaves the defining to the parties concerned, and also helps to create inclusion myths that stray far from everyday realities.

Notes

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Markku Jahnukainen is Professor of Special Education and Vice-Dean in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. His expertise is in international and comparative research related to inclusive and special education policy. Jahnukainen is currently a PI and consortium leader in a project called INCLUSIVE about the cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes of inclusive versus special education placement funded by the Academy of Finland.

Ninja Hienonen is Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Helsinki and a Project Manager at Tampere University. Ninja is interested in the different levels of the education system and their relationship to student performance and learning-related attitudes. In her research she focusses particularly on students with special educational needs and measurement issues around performance of lower-achieving students.

Meri Lintuvuori is Postdoctoral Researcher in the Centre for Educational Assessment at the University of Helsinki and in the Research group for Education, Assessment and Learning at Tampere University. Her doctoral dissertation was about the learning and schooling support system and related official statistics of special education in Finland. Her research interests lie in the learning and schooling support in basic education. She is also interested in the equality and equity of education.

Sonia Lempinen is University Teacher in the Department of Education, University of Turku. Her expertise is in inclusive education, policy studies, and the commercialisation of education. Lempinen's postdoctoral research involves studies of policies and practices of commercial interests in public education. She is a researcher on the Academy of Finland- funded 'Hollowing Out of Public Education Systems? Private Actors in Compulsory Schooling in Finland, Sweden and New Zealand' (HOPES) research project.

Chapter 26
Exclusively Included? Finland's Inclusion Success Story and Hidden Dual System of Mainstream and Special Needs Education

Anna-Maija Niemi and Reetta Mietola

Abstract This chapter focuses on the divide between special and mainstream education in the Finnish education system. We analyse how this divide runs through educational experiences, opportunities and pathways of students receiving special education. We first examine the different educational pathways opening up for different groups of students, and their experiences of educational choice-making. Then we move on to analyse pedagogical arrangements and practices across lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels; and to consider how different pedagogical practices expect and produce different kinds of students. Our analysis shows that distinct educational cultures make it challenging to move across the divide of special and mainstream education, and this divide contributes to students understanding of themselves as learners. The chapter draws on six studies conducted in recent decades in Finland, four different ethnographic studies, one life-history interview study and a longitudinal life-history study.

In December 2019, Finland's national public broadcasting company Yle published an article about educational inclusion on its webpage. In the article, Members of Parliament responded to the question, "Should the number of special education classes be increased in Finland?" (This is referring to special education classes within regular schools). We interpret this question directed to politicians as a logical continuation of recent public discussion around special education and inclusion, and it goes to the heart of how the issues are being framed. Put simply, the discussion has emphasised the question of whether inclusion is a good or a bad thing. At the same time, there has been considerably less discussion about what inclusion actually means. As a school-related reform, inclusion has also been caught up in debates about the 2014

A.-M. Niemi (✉)
Department of Education, University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: anna-maija.niemi@utu.fi

R. Mietola
Department of Cultures, University of Helsinki, PL 4, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: reetta.mietola@helsinki.fi

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reform of the national core curriculum in Finland, which has caused similar public criticisms. The harshest remarks have even described inclusion as a fad.[1]

The above examples are only part of the public inclusion discussion, and a key worry amongst individuals seems to be that students in need of special support are not receiving it. We argue that from an education system perspective, this discussion also reflects concern over the future of Finland's strong special education system: is inclusion destabilising this bedrock that educational equality and high standard education for all has been built on, as some would argue? In both public and professional discussions, inclusion is not considered a process or target that the Finnish education system has firmly committed to but rather as conditional and the notion that inclusion can be cancelled if "it is not successful" underpins these perspectives.[2] It seems that inclusion is "on trial" and the option of returning to the "good old days" is constantly present. For many commentators, any failure of inclusion—such as children with special educational needs struggling in or dropping out of education, or feeling socially excluded—just proves the superiority of the previous approach of having children with special educational needs segregated away from mainstream classes.

This chapter aims to provide a counter-narrative about special education in Finland, one that challenges the image of an equal education system eroded by inclusion policy. Our starting point is a critical reading of historic and present-day developments in the special education system, considering especially the impact of inclusion policy on structures and practices. We acknowledge that ever since the comprehensive school reform of the 1960s that aimed to build a common school for all, special needs education in Finland has been approached progressively. Whether successive reforms have actually achieved their aim, an equal and unsegregated school system for students with special needs, is what needs to be investigated.

In general, the developments during the past fifty years could be seen as an inclusion success story.[3] At system level, legislative and structural changes have followed from Finnish policies committed to integration during the 1980s and inclusion since the 1990s. These developments have shaped the outer boundaries of the mainstream education system and institutions by integrating special education classes (SE-classes) into mainstream schools (1980s) and moving the education of students with intellectual disability from social services into the education system (1985 and 1997). Additionally, new pedagogical solutions and teaching arrangements have somewhat shifted traditional boundaries between mainstream and special education. Nevertheless, these changes have not taken place without some counter developments. For instance, the first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed a rapid increase in the numbers of pupils transferred to special education, which has been explained by the development of new diagnostic methods and categories.[4] Sociological analyses have connected this rise to wider neoliberal tendencies in education policy that have emphasised competition and selection,[5] thus countering inclusion policy and narrowing down the boundaries of normality.[6] As the standard learning requirements set by the national curriculum have become more specific and demanding, students struggling to achieve these were increasingly identified as having special needs and thus received either part- or full-time support in special education.

At the same time, the history of special needs provision over the course of the past century is still felt in the current system. For instance, the most segregated forms of special education, namely special schools and SE-classes, still exist and the changes in the proportion of students in each age group studying full time in segregated settings have been small. Even the steering group formulating the long-term strategy for special education has stated that Finland has enforced inclusion calmly.[7] Being more direct, we would argue that inclusion policy has failed—but not in the way suggested by public discussion. Rather it has failed to challenge the persistent divide between special needs and mainstream education.

Our concern in this chapter is this divide between special and mainstream education, and how it runs through educational experiences, opportunities and pathways of students receiving special education. We first examine: (1) the different educational pathways opening up for different groups of students from basic education to post-compulsory education; and (2) experiences of educational choice-making at this phase of the education system. We then move on to analyse: (3) pedagogical arrangements and practices across lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels; and consider (4) how different pedagogical practices expect and produce different kinds of students. We show how distinct educational cultures make it challenging for students to move across the divide of special and mainstream education, and how this divide contributes to students understanding of themselves as learners.

Our analysis draws on six qualitative studies previously conducted with our colleagues. We will be referring to four ethnographic studies, one life-history interview study and one continuing longitudinal life-history study, all conducted in recent decades. Table 26.1 provides a brief description of these studies.[8]

Drawing on all of these different projects and datasets, our work provides the possibility of recognising and analysing key points in the education system where segregation and various inequalities in the form of separate educational contexts, pathways or limited educational options are reproduced. Additionally, our data allows us to focus our analysis on educational practices that challenge or widen this division. The ethnographic fieldnotes recording our observations are descriptions of everyday practices and experiences in different educational contexts. The life-history interviews enable us to look back with our research participants to their past schooling experiences and their current interpretations of what followed. To us, it opens up another way of analysing how former special education students make sense of their educational pathways and themselves as learners.

Suitable Pathways and Educational Choice-Making for Students with Special Educational Needs

A key expectation linked to the image of the Finnish education system is that everyone has equal educational opportunities and students are able to follow their aspirations and train themselves in a profession of their choice. While in some ways the Finnish

Table 26.1 Studies referred to in this chapter

Name of the study	Data	Focus of the study
Niemi, Mietola & Helakorpi (2010)[9]: Special needs class in the course of life-interview study[10]	27 interviews with young people	The educational and working life experiences of young people with disabilities, Roma or migrant backgrounds who had studied in special needs education classes during basic education
Mietola (2014)[11]: 'Troubling special' Ethnographic study	Fieldwork during 2002–03 in one lower secondary school in the Helsinki metropolitan area	The boundary between mainstream and special education; who or what kind of behaviour or needs is considered as "special" in the school
Niemi (2015)[12]: Special educational paths? Multi-sited ethnographic study	Fieldwork of six months each in two institutes of VET in Southern Finland, 2008–09	Definitions of the concept of special educational needs in relation to students' positioning, educational choice making and the pedagogical practices in which they participated
Vehmas & Mietola (2021)[13]: People with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMD) and good life research project[14]	Fieldwork over 2015–16 with six adults living their lives in learning disability services	(In relation to schooling) What kinds of educational opportunities are there for young persons with PIMD after compulsory schooling
Niemi & Jahnukainen (2020)[15]; Niemi & Laaksonen (2020)[16]: Employability, education and diversities research project (EMED)[17]	Fieldwork 2016–17 in one vocational and one general upper secondary school institute in the Helsinki metropolitan area	Support practices and students' participation and sense of belonging during their studies
Niemi (continuing): Diverse paths to adulthood life-history study (DILE)	Annual interviews with 10 young adults since 2019	How do young adults build an understanding of themselves and their possibilities and obstacles in educational and employment pathways? What kinds of resources do they draw on?

system does comply with this image, research has repeatedly pointed out how societal inequalities are reproduced, how educational pathways differ according to students' backgrounds,[18] and how educational choices of young people are, in fact, strongly constrained.[19] This is also the case when we look at educational pathways of students receiving special educational support.[20] Such students are primarily guided towards educational pathways that are considered as "suitable and safe"[21] rather than the programmes they have dreamt about.

In this section, we focus on the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education in Finland, as this is considered crucial from the viewpoint of educational and societal equality. Students are moving from the unitary comprehensive school to

the post-compulsory education system with differing curricula and targets, but they also complete their compulsory education, which in principle opens up the choice of not continuing their studies.[22] This transition phase has also been recognised as a critical drop-out point, where many Finnish young people leave the education system either permanently or periodically. In order to prevent drop-out, the transition has been a target of many policy measures, most recently the extension of compulsory education to 18 years of age.[23] We have argued elsewhere that concern over students dropping out of education is intensified in the case of students with special educational needs, and that this reinforces the need to secure a safe choice and transition for them.[24]

Our discussion in this section follows the structure of the Finnish post-compulsory education system and the options that it offers to students. We start with the primary choice between general (academic) upper secondary school (GUS, *lukio* in Finnish) and vocational education and training (VET, *ammatillinen koulutus* in Finnish). We then dig further into the VET system and the different options that students with special educational needs have within this field. We argue that there are very clear pre-determined educational pathways for students with special educational needs that differ according to different student categories. Students with specific kinds of needs or diagnoses are considered as suitable for particular pathways and vocational positions that await at the end of the pathways. For some students with special educational needs the horizon of choices is wider, with the key choice being between general or vocational stream. For others the horizon of possibilities is very narrow, with only specific training programmes considered as viable options. We aim to make visible this differentiation of pathways and the guidance practices that steer specific students to specific pathways. These practices carry and reproduce dominant conceptions of students with special educational needs and make visible the process through which such students' educational opportunities are determined.

Towards General or Vocational Pathways?

The majority of students with special educational needs in Finland seek admission to and start their studies in vocational or preparatory education and training, where special support has been organised for many decades.[25] Until legislative reform in 2019, which obliged GUSs to offer special support for the students who need it, legislation did not require special needs education to be organised in GUS.[26] Even though there are currently special needs education teachers working in the majority of GUSs in Finland, we have suggested elsewhere that special needs education does not necessarily belong in the school culture of GUSs.[27] The ideal of an academic student as a student who is not in need of support is still produced and reproduced in the practices of schools and wider Finnish society.[28]

For many young people, seeking admission to VET has been a matter of not choosing a GUS path, even though the chosen vocational programme might not particularly interest them. GUS is often not raised in guidance practices as a possible

option.[29] Rather teachers referred to GUS being not meant for students in SE-classes because they were not up to the academic workload or did not have high enough grades. It is hardly unsurprising then that the academic stream rarely came up in students' talk either. Only one of thirty students studying in the SE-classes that Reetta followed chose GUS as their primary option. It seems that a background in special needs education is seen to rule out the option of GUS:

Anna-Maija   So how come, that it is not worth applying for admission to GUS, was it some kind of an idea that you had thought yourself or did it come (from somewhere else)?
Vivian   Yes. So, it came as a statement and then my parents agreed that, it is not worth applying for. It was decided, that there is no reason to apply to it. If I will apply for admission, then to somewhere where there is not much reading of books.[30]

Like Vivian, many of our interviewees thought that VET was emphasised in guidance because of either their background in SE-class or the diagnosed difficulties with learning they had. Bea had pondered a choice between VET and GUS, but because of special educational needs, GUS was always side lined in discussions with guidance counsellors and teachers:

Bea   I feel that maybe the teachers would have wanted that we seek admission to VET. They probably thought that we won't get along in GUS. They just always emphasised vocational […].
Anna-Maija   Okay. That's very interesting.
Bea   I've had that kind of a feeling that, maybe I could have tried GUS or that, would I have succeeded there or no. […].
Anna-Maija   Did you by the way bring out the idea of GUS?
Bea   No, I didn't, because I had that kind of feeling. You were so overridden, that 'do not apply for admission'. It is so hard there. I didn't even dare to say it, that should I apply.[31]

Most of our interviewees had not been encouraged to seek admission to GUS, which has in relation to VET, generally been seen as a more valued, and demanding study pathway after basic education in Finland.[32] In all of the studies referred to in this chapter show similarities in the gap between GUS and VET, even though students went to school in different decades. In her interview, Bea (quoted above) emphasised the need to allow students to try different study fields before making decisions. Ironically, young people in GUS are allowed more time to find their educational aspirations than in VET, because VET programmes are divided according to professions and trades, whereas in GUS students study a variety of different general school subjects. It contradicts the general message that young adults gave in the interviews: "Now at the age of 20 I can say what I want, but when you are 15-years-old, you are certainly too young to choose".

Differentiation Within Vocational Education

Whereas mainstream study guidance focuses on making sense of the division between GUS and VET, in SE-classes the focus is on different kinds of options within VET,

as Reetta noticed while observing guidance processes. These options included vocational SE-institutions, SE-classes in mainstream vocational institutions and preparatory programmes. It raises the question whether special needs education actually has its own distinctive post-compulsory education markets.[33] This notion of differentiation is supported by our life-history interviews, as many interviewees noted that SE-classes and vocational SE-institutions had been emphasised in the guidance practices and introduced to them and their classmates as interesting and realistic options. Some interviewees had not only been encouraged to apply to certain type of education but to a specific institution or programme. We have both observed teachers guiding some students to specific training programmes and institutions that were already familiar to them and where they were confident that the students would receive support. Additionally, it was a common practice to recommend vocational programmes with low admission criteria.

When we inquired about the reasoning behind the guidance practices, educators explained that while one should be critical towards "the special education path", the teacher's ethical responsibility is to guide students to programmes from which they are unlikely to drop out. While this is understandable, teachers' preconceptions in the guidance process can limit students' agency and shape their understanding of their capacities and educational opportunities. In the life-history study, we interviewed Patrick who described how insecure he was about his educational ambitions at the time of choosing post-compulsory education. This made him rely on adults' advice and eventually he ended up in a gardening programme which he was uninterested in:

> [M]aybe I should have said at that point that it is not my field. Maybe they just didn't realise it. If you think that I was only 17-years-old and couldn't hold my own against three adults with strong, expert opinions.[34]

Whilst teachers' actions may strongly recommend some choices over others, it is not necessary to be explicit that "you won't be up to that" in order for students to conceive that some choices are out of their reach. Our analysis indicates that in the context of special needs education, expert views are strongly emphasised in guidance practices whilst students' hopes often get disregarded.[35]

Another aspect that narrows down the students' educational opportunities is that SE-groups are not provided in all VET programmes and vocational SE-institutions often provide only specific training programmes, such as catering and caretaker training. Additionally, these programmes are not available in all localities. We have noticed that young people with specific support needs are often experiencing difficulties finding their own field or have to adjust their vocational targets in educational transitions. For deaf students, only some programmes are organised in sign language and these can be geographically unattainable for many. Youth with intellectual disabilities are a group whose educational paths tend to lead to specific vocational institutions with more than a century of specialising in post-compulsory education of persons with intellectual disabilities.[36] There is also another significant divide for students with severe disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities: some of them are considered capable to study in VET programmes that lead to professional qualifications and some only in preparatory programmes. The capability evaluation is

based on professional assessment of the capacity of the applicant and their suitability to the programme.

It is not only specific diagnoses that push students out of paths or fields, but also some are inaccessible due to the content of the programmes or specific admission criteria. One such field is social and health care, where in Finland the basic requirement to work in this field in nurseries or care homes is a practical nurse qualification attained through 180 competence points in vocational training. Doing care work came up repeatedly in our interviews with young women as their dream job, but many had realised that they would not be able to apply for training. The typical reason provided was that the skills they had acquired during basic education—especially in mathematics—would not suffice:

Hanna   (Sighs) Somehow, the idea of child care was turned down. That one was faced with—is
               difficult to, to get there.
Anna-Maija   How was it turned down?
Hanna   (Long pause). Some medicine calculations, like, when you are studying to become a
               practical nurse. Or do they have them, I don't know. Do you necessarily have to have
               them? Well, I don't want to discuss this further.[37]

Hanna's account shows how different structural barriers and guidance practices affected her choice-making. For Hanna, as for many other interviewees, the narrowing down of educational options due to their background in special education came as a surprise and was difficult to process. Suddenly her first preference was turned down with arguments that she seemed unsure were true ("Do you necessarily have to have them?"). Hanna's story makes visible the way that doors are not open for everyone as the needed support is not equally distributed and available in all programmes. The narrative of individualised pathways actually hides a system where students sometimes just get placed in training programmes and institutions that are considered suitable for them.[38]

The group with the narrowest educational options is persons with severe or profound intellectual disabilities. They gained equal educational rights as late as 1997 when basic education of this group was finally included in the education system: that moment has been considered a major turning point, where the whole age group was included in the same school system. Whilst it was indeed a major step towards more equal educational opportunities in conjunction with achieving an important disability policy target, the narrowness of educational opportunities of disabled persons is amplified when considering those at the far end of the disabilities spectrum. Young people with severe or profound intellectual disabilities have in practice only one post-compulsory option, namely TELMA-training,[39] which is organised exclusively by special education colleges situated around Finland.

Even though the existence of TELMA-training is the starting point of realising educational rights for this disability group, access to the training is unequally distributed around the country and supply of the training is inadequate. For example, in the case of Hugo, a young person with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, admission to the programme was considered a lottery win. People close to Hugo were referring both to the scarcity of opportunities available for him and how becoming a student opened up totally new resources and opportunities for Hugo,

whose life had been restricted to the intellectual disability service system.[40] While having an essential role in the education system as a guarantee of educational opportunities, the position of the TELMA-programme can be considered vulnerable in the context of the neoliberal education policy climate emphasising productivity and excellence. As part of VET, the TELMA-programme submits to the policy rhetoric binding targets and justification of provision to the needs of employment: the goal is to produce employable professionals for labour markets. Given this, it is difficult to justify training students who will never participate in the open labour market:

| Reetta | Do you think post-compulsory education has started to become an established path for persons with profound intellectual disabilities, or is it still very selective? |
| Hugo's teacher | It really has not become established (…). This is not in any sense self-evident (…). There is the possibility that society decides that vocational colleges are only for persons that are employable. This is the horror scenario. [In this scenario, one can ask] what is the profit this training produces, if you think about this group of students that will never take part in the labour market. That there are so many value questions to consider here, I suppose.[41] |

The teacher's response makes visible a perspective from which people with profound intellectual disabilities are seen as uneducable as they are unable to become employable. Ultimately, this is a question whether an education that does not aim at training productive citizens can be considered as valuable and justified—as a necessity.[42] Acknowledgement of the educational rights of all does not suffice if realisation of these rights is questioned by a political climate that challenges the value base these rights are standing on.

Identification and Belonging Within Distinctive Educational Cultures and Practices

One of our interviewees, Verna, asked why it is that in the Finnish comprehensive school where all pupils are supposed to go to the same school, some people are wheeled off to special schools "just because they are disabled or they learn differently. They are kind of segregated from the rest of age group". Other interviewees raised similar criticisms concerning segregation. In particular those who had completed their basic education many years ago were able to look back at their experiences critically and realise how their experiences did not suit the image of an equal education system and society.

Although many were critical of special schools, this did not lead to them challenging their own position in segregated settings in any straightforward way. Many considered mainstream education too academically challenging and thus special education as better meeting their needs. Not even doubts about the quality of teaching they had received were able to unsettle the idea that "special needs students" belonged in special education. Mary, who studied in GUS after basic education in SE-school, was one of the few who challenged with confidence the idea that as a disabled student she belonged in special needs education. Instead, the transition from SE-school to

GUS made her realise that "there was nothing wrong with me, but I had just received poor teaching [in comprehensive school]".

In this section, we discuss the distinct pedagogical cultures of special and mainstream education. We consider how students build understanding about these differences and themselves as learners whilst moving between the two cultures. This movement can provide new perspectives for students to reflect critically on the divide and their position in a school but also emphasise feelings of otherness.

Moving Across the Divide: Failing Students or Failing Practices?

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the key measure to put inclusive education policy to practice was integration: students from segregated SE-classes were studying in mainstream groups during the lessons of specific school subjects. In Reetta's research school, all students in SE-classes were integrated to mainstream classes at least in one subject, typically in PE or Arts, but like Peter, some students were seen as more suitable for integration and were integrated in academic subjects too. Peter's class teacher described him as "a borderline student"—one who may manage in mainstream entirely, but benefitted from the support of the SE-class. The SE-teachers repeatedly mentioned how difficult it was to arrange integration, and that the students often returned to their SE-class because integration did not work. The SE-teachers explained the difficulties by referring to both the subject teachers' attitudes and lack of relevant skills and to characteristics of the students.

While the teachers attached the problems of integration to individuals, after observing classroom practices in both SE- and mainstream classes, Reetta noticed the differences between these contexts. In the SE-classes, learning was teacher led, whereas in the mainstream classes the students were expected to take control of their learning. These two contexts expected different skills from the students, and the teaching opened up different positions for the students to take.[43] In the following excerpt, Peter is in a mainstream Finnish language class. At the end of the lesson, other students are leaving but the teacher continues talking with Peter:

Peter   Ok then, I'll go and borrow that book again [a book he had read for book review] from the library.
Teacher Yes, you really should do that.
Peter   When does that [review] need to be ready for, by the end of this course?
Teacher Yes, by the end of the course. (The teacher adds that once Peter has written the first draft, he can bring it for the teacher to check, if he wants comments).
Peter   How about Friday, would you have time to have a look at that work application, if there's any errors?

The teacher says that she can try to find time, but cannot promise.[44]

The teacher later told Reetta that Peter was doing well, but needed lots of support. Reetta wondered whether the teacher's description of Peter was possibly based on

Peter's actions of seeking support as in the conversation above. However, it can also be interpreted that by seeking confirmation from the teacher in each step in the learning process Peter was performing as a student in SE-class is expected to. SE-classes' practices contrast with those of mainstream classes in which each students' responsibility in developing self-governing is emphasised.

Following up Reetta's analysis, we have paid attention to how the definitions of students with special needs and practices in SE-classes end up producing the student that these practices anticipate. We suggest that segregated SE-classes socialise the students to the practices of these classes.[45] However, when the students then perform like "special education students", their behaviour can be interpreted as natural to them, as symptomatic, confirming their specialness. This also underlines the difference between the educational cultures of mainstream and special education as Eva concluded below when summarising her experiences in a lower secondary school's SE-class and then later dropping out of VET:

Eva   At first, I studied in laboratory assistant programme (in VET). Then it was, too difficult, because I've been in rehabilitative class in lower secondary, and I haven't studied there a lot of mathematics and so forth. We studied maybe a half of the book when the other classes had studied a whole book. The teacher always said that let's keep a one-hour break that let's play cards or so. It's just such an easy-going class that you can't go far from there. I got good grades, averaged more than seven (in scale 4–10). Many of the numbers were nine, though we didn't study a lot. In a sense, it was just a false report.[46]

It can be difficult to turn the analytic gaze from the students to pedagogical practices and to ask what kind of student positions and subjectivities these allow students to take. Examples of how students recognise differences between the educational cultures, pedagogical and—as in Eva's example above—assessment practices are repeated across the different data sets. For some, these notions are based more on a hunch, while for students who end up moving between the two cultures—like Mary or Eva—their experiences confirm the different expectations and pedagogical practices. Many interviewees described a sense of distance: mainstream education appears as foreign and demanding to the students in segregated SE-classes, even when the classes were located in the same building.

A sense of distance appeared during Anna-Maija's fieldwork in GUS, when she noticed that SE-teachers participated rarely in regular lessons, but they generally withdrew the students to teach them individually at their own office. This is certainly a question of resource allocation as the major part of SE-teachers' workload was devoted to testing students and writing statements on students' support needs concerning difficulties in learning. It was also, however, a question of how educational equality was seen to be reached. Some of the SE-teachers argued that their participation in the lessons as a co-teacher might even further stigmatise the students who need support in learning as it would point the finger at their difficulties. Others argued that through strengthening co-teaching and SE-teacher's visible role and participation in a school community it is possible to fight stigmatisation.[47]

Stigmatising or Normalising Support Needs

The mainstream is not distant only academically, but also socially. There was very little interaction between the pupils in SE-classes and in mainstream classes in Reetta's research school. In spite of integration practices, many students in SE-classes found themselves socially excluded, even stigmatised, in the wider student culture. They talked about how they did not enjoy being in the mainstream groups because of not knowing anyone and because of the negative conceptions or comments that one might be subjected to. As Peter told us, "people [in mainstream groups] think that they [those studying in SE-classes] are dumb (…). Like that people still have really bad conceptions." Although these moments where social exclusion became manifested were described as hurtful, the students did not seem to wallow in the feeling of being excluded. Rather, the SE-classes were their primary social field within which they formed important peer-relations, felt safer and more accepted. In the life-history study, many interviewees recounted similar experiences by emphasising the positive atmosphere of the SE-classes. They had experienced segregated classes being more approving of difference, as spaces where one could ask for help without having to feel ashamed, and some recounted forming long-lasting friendships with their classmates over the years. These experiences of belonging and being accepted were contrasted with feelings of exclusion from the wider student culture where many had experiences of name-calling.

As in lower-secondary school, we have encountered experiences of stigmatisation in relation to how young people conceptualised their support needs in GUS context too.[48] The analysis of student interviews in GUS indicated that to receive support at school leans on students' and their families' willingness and ability to take responsibility for making contact with teachers. For some of the students, it was not straightforward to ask for help, because it reminded them of their marginalised position as a student with special needs—the opposite of the ideal of academically competent skilful learner.[49] As Leo put it: "Usually if you want to get support, you have to go and ask yourself. In my opinion, the teachers should be more active. Sometimes I'm like, I don't want to ask for help 'cause it's embarrassing". Our argument here is that Leo tried to avoid being stigmatised as a student with special needs. In interviews after graduating from GUS, he criticised the school culture being selective so that certain students were positioned lowest down in hierarchy. The interpretation of his position was that he was "down there" because of his support needs, and because of the low position, he did not want to highlight himself as a special need student more by visibly asking for help from the teachers. These notions echo the results of Reetta's study where she concluded that the status of the students from SE-classes was the lowest in the school's student culture. We argue that hierarchies in the student cultures and students' differing positions may lead to situations in which students positioned in the margins and having experienced stigmatisation, may not dare to ask for the help they would need. This may also have an effect on how the practices of support and SE-teacher's work is seen in the school—as regular and organic part of a school's pedagogical practices or as something deviant and remote.[50]

In Anna-Maija's analysis from two different studies of VET, in turn, there are various examples of pedagogical practices, which seem to lower the barriers between mainstream and special education and thus advance students' belonging in school community. When analysing observations of metalwork and machinery classes, Anna-Maija noticed how co-teaching as a pedagogical practice reduced students' responsibility in seeking support and they did not have to choose whether to go and meet a SE-teacher in a separate room, but the teachers participated in the classes as co-teachers. Co-teaching was used especially in mathematics lessons.[51] As Leo reflected above, in a school culture where organising educational support as a part of mainstream studying is rare, even asking for help can lead to stigmatisation. On the contrary, when SE-teachers, resource teachers or other staff members support the students during the lessons, it is not up to the students to leave the study group to get the help one needs. During a recent ethnographic study in VET, Anna-Maija noticed that the SE-teacher's work as a co-teacher in mathematics lessons was experienced as important. Students who needed more support in their learning knew that they could also go to the SE-teacher's office every now and then—the door was always open for them—and the role of special education was not similarly stigmatising as during basic education—it was considered ordinary practice in the school.[52] Reetta made similar observations in her research school where at the same time as SE-classes were considered highly stigmatising, support that was provided in part-time special education—in a resource room—was not affecting students' social positioning similarly.

Conclusion: The Misplaced Focus of the Finnish Special Education Success Story

We started our examination here by challenging both the ongoing public discussion concerning failure of the inclusion policy and the dominant success story of the efficient special education system ensuring educational equality. We have aimed to produce a counter-narrative that makes visible how the longing for the "good old days" present in the current discussion is founded on a partial view of the Finnish special education system and its recent history. While it is possible to narrate a success story of Finnish education system introducing new concepts and pedagogical solutions of (inclusive) special support, our closer look has made it clear that the divide of special needs and mainstream education has always existed and stills runs through educational experiences and opportunities of students.

Based on the reading of the multi-sited ethnographic and life-historical data, we argue that the inclusion narrative in Finnish education system—seen either as a success story or as a story of failure—hides the dual system of mainstream and special needs education. This means that despite the commitment to development of inclusive education in national policy discourses, disability and children's rights alignments and in the key national steering documents, deeply rooted system level

divides still exist along with pedagogical, spatial and school culture-related practices and attitudes that reproduce the division. From our point of view, the recent discussion around inclusive education has a misplaced focus. The "good or bad inclusion" framing systematically passes over the perspective where inclusion is examined in its wider policy and historical circumstances. Most often inclusive education is reduced to a school level pedagogical or spatial question, thus avoiding recognition that it is a question of human rights—not something that is up to national or municipal education officials or teachers to decide about.

However, even if inclusion is framed as a pedagogical question, a notable absence has been a constructive pedagogical discussion on *how* to put inclusion into practice compared to discussion around whether or not we should have inclusion. In many occasions, current resources of special needs education shape support to be a separate addition for general teaching, even though education policy alignments lead support to be communal and multi-professional.[53] This is obviously a question of resources—but also of what is done with resources. We propose that the often-repeated question of whether all kinds of students should be taught separately or together has to be reformulated to the question of how belonging can be achieved in various school contexts. During our studies, we have also fortunately come across practices which seem to enhance inclusion by producing participation and belonging for students. However, what seems rather surprising is that certain experiences of feeling different or other in the school culture—which contributes to students' understanding of themselves as learners—are repeated from one decade to the next.

We have suggested elsewhere that the pedagogical, spatial and social distances at school turn into symbolic distance: the distancing practices reinforce interpretations that special education and mainstream students are profoundly different.[54] The symbolic distance also means that the position of a mainstream student became inaccessible to our interviewees, as it was difficult to relate their abilities as a learner to abilities expected from students in mainstream education. This way mainstream may become something of a mythical context, seen as having extremely high expectations. The distance also makes it difficult to challenge the dominant practices and conceptions that sort people into categories of special and normal student. In addition to this discussion on symbolic distance, critical examination of educational equality requires moving beyond the abstract "students with special needs"—category and focusing on diverse and differing educational experiences, pathways and opportunities of different groups positioned under the category. It challenges us to think what educational equality or inclusion actually can be, and how different groups are currently positioned in relation to the policy goals. It would also force us to pay attention to margins and silences in the inclusion discussion, as there has been, for instance, a notable exclusion of children and youth with intellectual disabilities in the inclusion debate. At the same time, both research and policy documents provide only a very fragmented picture about how inclusion policy has affected this group's school progress, especially in the compulsory education. These are the questions that should be asked when assessing the success or failure of the Finnish special education system—and inclusion policy.

In order to build fruitful discussion around inclusion, there is a need to take a step back and examine the Finnish special education system from a wider perspective that can make sense of the historical developments of the system and the effects of other policy developments on the enactment of inclusion policy. This involves not only looking back but also helps to recognise current and future challenges faced by inclusive education. As an example, we could mention Hugo's teacher's concern about realising educational rights of students with profound and multiple disabilities within a neoliberal policy context centred on paid employment. In addition, as we have discussed, the school culture of GUS already leans on the idea of the academically competent student who does not need support in their learning. Therefore, it is important to follow and evaluate the reform of GUS from the perspective of students with special educational needs, when the simultaneous reform of higher education entrance examinations has transferred competition related pressure and self-responsibility towards even younger students and earlier school levels.

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31. EMED-study.

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36. See Hakala, Mietola, and Teittinen 2013, op. cit.

37. 'Special needs class in the course of life' study.

38. Hakala, Mietola, and Teittinen, op. cit.

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48. See Niemi and Laaksonen, op. cit.

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Anna-Maija Niemi is Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Education, University of Turku. Her research areas include educational inclusion, both in education policy and in school's everyday practices as well as youth studies and disability studies. Niemi's previous research focused on educational paths in special needs education. Currently she is leading a longitudinal life-historical study focusing on young adults and their hopes, possibilities and obstacles in educational and employment paths.

Reetta Mietola is Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Arts, University of Helsinki. Her research areas include disability studies, youth research and inclusive education. Mietola's previous research has focused on everyday practices in special needs education, educational experiences and paths of students studying in special needs education, development of housing for persons with intellectual disabilities and lives of adults with profound intellectual disabilities. Currently she is undertaking research projects focusing on political participation of young people and the past and present of disability activism in Finland.

Chapter 27
Student Disengagement in Finnish Comprehensive Schooling

Piia af Ursin, Jenni Tikkanen, and Tero Järvinen

Abstract There is a clear consensus amongst educational researchers that school engagement contributes to students' academic development. However, not all students share the enjoyment of learning and a sense of belonging at school, nor are all of them willing to exert effort in learning and school activities. Students who disengage from school are at risk of a range of adverse academic and social outcomes, which, at worst, culminate in students' decisions to leave school early. Since the beginning of the 1970s, various findings about Finnish students' school engagement have raised concerns along with the question of why Finnish students repeatedly rank lowly in international comparisons of happiness at school. This chapter provides insights into the issue of Finnish student (dis)engagement from school drawing on a range of research and survey data. In our view, student disengagement is a process that develops through an interplay between individual and contextual factors in a vicious circle of negative emotional and cognitive school and learning experiences, and is—if not reversed—rather stable or progressive. For this reason, it is crucial to identify early signs of disengagement and individual, social, and institutional factors associated with it.

The origin of the concept of school disengagement lies in the literature related to students with special needs and students dropping out of school.[1] While school dropout is a widespread problem in many education systems around the world, in Finland, dropping out of basic education is rare. In the academic year 2018–2019, there were only 443 comprehensive school dropouts, which made 0.59% of the age

P. af Ursin (✉) · J. Tikkanen · T. Järvinen
Department of Education/Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education, University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: pkafur@utu.fi

J. Tikkanen
e-mail: jenni.tikkanen@utu.fi

T. Järvinen
e-mail: tejuja@utu.fi

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group. The percentage is considerably higher for students at upper secondary education level, where around 5% discontinue their studies each year. At this level there are remarkable differences between academic and vocational track: while discontinuation was 3% in general upper secondary education (GUS), it was 9% in initial vocational education and training (VET).[2] It is not, however, the low percentages that count. The Finnish education policy is based on the fundamental principle of including all children and, therefore, a single dropout is too much. For this reason, much attention has been paid to assuring high-quality special needs education and early diagnosing of difficulties in schools. In fact, due to the existence of a flexible support system in schools, some 30% of Finnish comprehensive school students receive special education services at some point in their school career. This is a much higher fraction of the school population than in other OECD countries.[3]

Dropping out and other overt signs of disengagement, such as school truancy, low grades, and disturbance behaviour are easy to spot and intervene in. For such cases, school level practices exist, including multidisciplinary student welfare groups.[4] Well before dropping out, students normally exhibit some symptoms of disengagement from learning, social life, or emotional involvement at school. These earlier signs are usually more covert, which makes early identification and handling of disengagement difficult. However, exactly this kind of disengagement has shown alarming levels among Finnish students compared to students in many other countries as shown by the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) studies. This has triggered wide public and academic discussions in recent decades. Indeed, even though Finland has constantly been a high achiever in PISA studies, the comparative results have not been as ideal regarding student engagement.[5] For example, Finnish students' feelings about school life and learning, their sense of belonging at school, and student–teacher relations proved more negative than those of students in the other Nordic countries.[6] Looking at the long-term trends, the disengagement has continually increased: Finnish students have ranked 60th out of 65 countries for how much they like school as nearly third of them were classified as being unhappy at school.[7] While reaching the OECD average regarding sense of belonging by the year 2018, Finnish students—on average—feel awkward and out of place in school more frequently when compared to their Nordic counterparts.[8] The comparative results among primary school students do not comfort either: Finnish children have reported less emotional and cognitive engagement than their international peers in several studies.[9]

Both Finnish and international studies indicate that being disengaged is a significant risk for students' academic and social development across and beyond their school career. Students who are disengaged have lower levels of academic achievement, poorer health and wellbeing, and are in an elevated risk for problem behaviors, delinquency, and substance use.[10] Even if disengagement culminates in early school leaving only for a small proportion of students, for those who dropout, it usually predicts an increasing risk of becoming and staying unemployed along with poorer health and mental health outcomes.[11] For these reasons, it is important to pay attention, from early on, to those students who—for one reason or another—show signs of school disengagement. However, it is equally important to pay attention also to

the institutional structures, cultural features, and exclusionary practices of a school that contribute to the disengagement of students. In other words, although an early identification of the first signs of disengagement among students is necessary for the provision of early support, it is not enough. Since student disengagement is a process that develops through an interplay between individual and contextual factors, one should pay attention to these contextual factors, such as institutional schooling arrangements, as well.[12]

Three Dimensions of Disengagement

Ever since Jennifer Fredricks and colleagues[13] concluded that school engagement relates to a variety of positive academic outcomes in their seminal review, a wealth of research on student engagement has emerged.[14] Encouraged by the evidence that engagement is a malleable state that can be shaped by teacher and school practices,[15] it has been considered a linchpin of endeavours to both promote positive academic outcomes and prevent academic underachievement and dropout.[16]

Despite the vast number of discussions and debates around the concept,[17] (dis)engagement still lacks a universally accepted definition and is described and measured in diverse ways across and even within disciplines. Much of the engagement research suggests that engagement and disengagement represents different ends of the same continuum.[18] Accordingly, engagement refers to *the* extent to which students are involved in (behaviourally engaged), attached (emotionally engaged), and committed (cognitively engaged) to academic and social activities in school, whereas disengagement reflect either lower levels or the absence of engagement.[19] In contrast, some researchers have theorised engagement and disengagement as being separate constructs each with their own continua.[20] This approach emphasises that disengagement does not indicate only the absence of engagement but also the presence of maladaptive states and processes.[21]

A widely accepted understanding of disengagement is that it is a meta-construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. Accordingly, disengaged students are "… those who do not participate actively in school and class activities, do not become cognitively involved in learning, do not fully develop or maintain a sense of school belonging, and/or exhibit inappropriate or counterproductive behavior".[22] In addition to the different dimensions, disengagement may exist at different levels. A student may be disengaged with study content, in class, with school, or with education. In its lowest levels, disengagement may appear, for instance, as feelings of boredom (emotional disengagement), disruptive classroom behaviours (behavioral disengagement), and poor self-regulation (cognitive disengagement). Minimal connection to school, absenteeism, and beliefs of irrelevance of education are all considered indicators of a 'higher level' disengagement. In everyday school life, students may be disengaged at all levels or none, or at some levels but not others.[23]

Disengagement components not only interrelate but also mutually shape each other over time.[24] For instance, when a student withdraws emotionally and/or cognitively from school, their participation declines, which may lead to poorer academic performance, which again promotes emotional and cognitive withdrawal. If this cycle continues over the school career, it may culminate in such disaffection with school that the student leaves school entirely. A complex web of proximal processes, including social relationships and participation across multiple environmental contexts, is expected to further influence school (dis)engagement.[25] According to an ecological understanding of human development, student disengagement is the result of an interplay between individual and contextual factors. While individual factors relate to students' behaviour, emotions, and cognitions, contextual aspects refer to different contexts, for instance families, schools, and communities—as well as to key features within them: their composition, structure, resources, and practices.

Prevalence and Correlates of Disengagement

Due to the complexity of the concept, there is no established practice or single set of indicators to measure the prevalence of student disengagement.[26] As a result there is a lot of variation even within Finnish research in which various markers have been applied as indicators of different types of disengagement. While school dropout is considered an extreme indicator of school disengagement, school truancy presents another strong indicator. It is one manifestation of behavioral disengagement, which is considered to be the primary driver of school dropout.[27] Even though missing school days or classes and being late from school are relatively common in general—and more frequent among Finnish students in comparison to the OECD average—only 2–3% of all Finnish lower secondary school students have a large number of repeated absences from school.[28] Although the truancy rate is rather small, these numbers are growing. The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly contributed to school non-attendance in Finland. According to one survey conducted in spring 2020, 8% of teachers reported that they had been unable to make any contact with some of their students during the school closures.[29]

Finnish students' disengagement exposed by the international comparisons seems to have an emphasis on the earlier and more covert aspects of disengagement, meaning emotional and cognitive disengagement. Drawing on Finnish survey data collected within the *International Study of City Youth* (ISCY),[30] Table 27.1 provides an overview of the prevalence of these forms of school disengagement among 1058 compulsory school leavers at Grade 9 in Turku sub-region (42.5% response rate). The prevalence of behavioral disengagement, already discussed above, is left outside the scrutiny here. As seen in Table 27.1, cognitive disengagement was measured as students' disengagement with learning and negative attitudes towards school.[31] Respectively, emotional disengagement covered negative feelings about schoolwork and sense of not belonging at school.[32] As the last row of Table 27.1 shows, the overall

Table 27.1 Frequency of emotional and cognitive disengagement according to student demographics (percentage of students classified as disengaged)

Student characteristics (n)		Cognitive disengagement		Emotional disengagement	
		Disengagement with learning	Negative attitudes	Negative feelings	Sense of not belonging
Gender	Boy (517)	22.6[c]	35.5[b]	24.4[c]	6.9
	Girl (500)	15.1	25.8	15.0	4.4
Disability	Yes (62)	19.4	37.7[a]	27.9[a]	8.2
	No (937)	18.8	30.3	19.1	5.6
Family SES	Low (316)	22.9[b]	39.3[b]	24.0[b]	8.5[b]
	Medium (474)	16.7	26.7	18.0	4.6
	High (227)	18.3	26.7	16.8	4.0
Immigrant	Yes (67)	14.3	22.7	9.0[b]	3.0
	No (946)	19.1	31.2	20.3	6.0
Total		19.0	30.7	19.6	5.7

Note Immigrant background if student and/or both parents have not been born in Finland; disability based on whether student has a long-term health condition, impairment, or disability that affects learning; family SES (socio-economic status) based on highest ISEI of parental occupation divided into three groups based on the upper and lower quartile. Differences between groups: [a] significant at the 0.05 level; [b] significant at the 0.01 level, [c] significant at the 0.001 level (X^2 tests)

level of school disengagement was high. While students' sense of not belonging was rare (5.7%), nearly a fifth of the students reported not putting effort in learning (19.0%) and/or having negative feelings about schoolwork (19.6%), and as many as a third of them had negative attitudes towards school, thus, perceiving learning irrelevant (30.7%).

As seen in Table 27.1, students' characteristics were connected to disengagement as follows: aligning with both Finnish and international study results, boys were less willing to put an effort into learning, had more negative feelings toward schoolwork, and valued school less than girls.[33] Students with disabilities had more negative attitudes and feelings towards school than students with no disabilities. Moreover, school disengagement—in its every form—was more prevalent among students belonging to the lowest family socio-economic status (SES) group. Students with an immigrant background showed fewer negative feelings towards schoolwork than their native peers did, but did not differ from their Finnish peers in other aspects of emotional and cognitive disengagement. Also, this result aligns with the finding of previous studies about immigrant students' generally positive view towards school. However, compared to students with a long family history in Finland, students with immigrant background tend to show slightly more behavioural disengagement, which occurs, for example, as pronounced truancy or being late for school.[34]
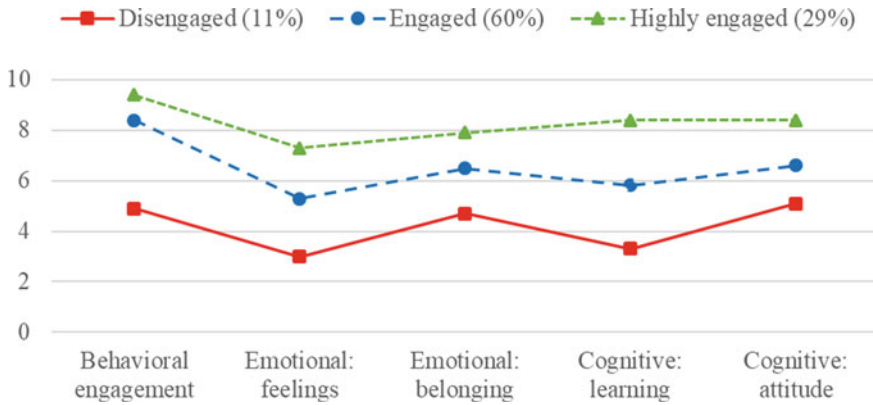
Fig. 27.1 School engagement profiles among grade 9 students (n = 1022)

One way to examine student disengagement is to apply a person-centered analysis to identify different engagement profiles by unifying behavioural, emotional, and cognitive aspects of engagement. Such studies give more insights on possible subgroups of individuals who engage in school in different ways. The share of disengaged students that have been identified in research varies significantly even within national studies.[35] The numbers for disengaged have varied between 5 and 27%. The wide difference in the share of disengaged students may result from different operationalisation of engagement as well as from the different number of identified subgroups. Drawing on the survey data among Finnish 9th graders in the Turku sub-region just presented, we identified homogeneous profiles through latent-profile analysis using all three dimensions of engagement (Fig. 27.1).[36]

As seen in Fig. 27.1, three profiles show similar patterns across the engagement subscales dividing students into three groups differentiated by the strength of engagement (on a scale of 0–10). The highly engaged students were behaviourally, emotionally, and cognitively engaged, while their disengaged counterparts were disengaged in all of its dimensions. While most students showed at least moderate engagement, 11% of the students were identified as disengaged. While disengagement was found nearly equally common amongst boys (12%) and girls (10%), girls (34%) were clearly overrepresented in highly engaged group compared to boys (22%). Other background variables were associated with engagement profiles as expected: the higher the family's SES or parental education, the higher was the engagement of their offspring. For instance, while 17% of students from families with low SES were identified as disengaged, the respective percentages among students from families with middle or high SES was eight.

The Stability of Disengagement and Its Significance for the Future

Despite the malleability of the construct as already discussed, disengagement levels have proven to be persistent.[37] While most students' engagement usually declines over time, individual students retain their relative position amongst other students. That is, the most disengaged students at the age of 10 are likely to be also the most disengaged students at the age of 16.[38] Longitudinal studies of student disengagement patterns are still relatively rare in Finland. However, the ones that exist show similar findings to international studies: school disengagement seems to increase over time and predict lower educational achievement and career. From the studies of Katariina Salmela-Aro and colleagues,[39] we know that emotional disengagement predicts poor academic and psychological functioning. Further, emotionally disengaged students are less likely to aspire to higher education and they show lower levels of life satisfaction two years after leaving comprehensive school than emotionally engaged students.

We made similar observations in the Finnish ISCY data, as the disengaged students were less likely to aspire both to the academic track in upper secondary education and to tertiary education than their engaged counterparts.[40] The school engagement profile predicted educational aspirations even when controlling for the gender, family socio-economic status, parental education, and support received from family and student counselling. Table 27.2 shows the results of logistic regression analyses examining the relationship between student's engagement profile and their aspirations for upper secondary education (GUS) at Grade 9, and GUS attendance after comprehensive education. As seen in Table 27.2, the odds that a student plans to go to GUS were 10 times higher for highly engaged students compared to disengaged ones. Observing the actual GUS attendance, the odds were even higher (OR = 18.15, $p < 0.001$).

According to another Finnish longitudinal study, student engagement—when measured as student participation (including indicators of behavioral engagement) and identification (combining indicators of sense of belonging at school and cognitive engagement)—is both stable and fluctuating throughout comprehensive school and

Table 27.2 The relationship between student's engagement profile and aspirations for general upper secondary education (GUS) at grade 9, and GUS attendance after comprehensive education

Engagement profile	Aspired GUS			Attended GUS		
	N	OR	P	N	OR	p
Disengaged	79	1		11	1	
Engaged	539	3.97	<0.001	102	2.29	ns
Highly engaged	256	10.33	<0.001	67	18.15	<0.01
Nagelkerken R^2		0.23			0.36	

Note Binary logistic regression model controlling for gender, SES, and parental education

upper secondary education. While participation appeared highly stable from primary to lower secondary school, identification did not.[41] This result implies that students' identification with school depends on the context. However, the conceptualisation of engagement combining both emotional and cognitive aspects does not resolve the question to what extent students' emotional and cognitive engagement independently show stability.

In our ISCY study, the most worrying levels of disengagement were identified at the cognitive level as over one third of the students had negative attitudes toward school and considered schoolwork irrelevant for their life and future (see Table 27.1). This is alarming as exactly this component of engagement forms the basis for meaningful learning; cognitively engaged students are more willing to invest time and effort in their studies, are more likely to be efficient in dealing with study demands, and display more persistence when facing problems.[42] Moreover, cognitive disengagement does not only affect learning outcomes at present, but it is also highly relevant for students' future orientation in a life-span context.[43] As research has shown, students' attitudes towards schooling affect their motivation as well as both aspirations and decisions on whether or not pursue further studies.[44]

To add further insight into the current research on student cognitive disengagement, we applied the longitudinal ISCY data to study both the stability of students' cognitive disengagement and its predictive value regarding educational aspirations. The follow-up data included three measurement points ($N = 149$): the baseline (the last year of comprehensive education), the first follow-up (the first year of upper secondary education) and the second follow-up (the first year after upper secondary education). We examined two questions. First, does student's cognitive disengagement identified at Grade 9 hold across the transition to the first year of upper secondary education? Second, to what extent does cognitive disengagement in upper secondary education predict further educational aspirations? Figure 27.2 depicts the hypothesised associations between the key study variables. The outcome 'educational aspiration' measured adolescents' willingness to attain different kinds of diplomas in the future. These were categorized as 1 = vocational degree at most and 2 = higher education degree.

Cross-sectional and longitudinal confirmatory factor analysis models were applied to study the structure and stability of the cognitive disengagement scale. In doing so, the suggested methodological procedures were followed.[45] To examine how cognitive disengagement predicts adolescents' educational aspirations, a structural equation model with control variables was specified. The statistical analyses were performed using the Mplus statistical package with the missing-data method.[46]

Students' cognitive disengagement showed stability across the major educational transition from comprehensive schooling to voluntary upper secondary education. The estimated stability coefficient for the school irrelevancy factor was 0.59, which indicates relatively strong stability of the construct across the time (Fig. 27.3; see appendix for the precise fit indices for the models and model invariance). This indicates that students who do not find education relevant for their life and future at the end of comprehensive school, most likely find it irrelevant in upper secondary education as well. Looking across comprehensive and upper secondary school and
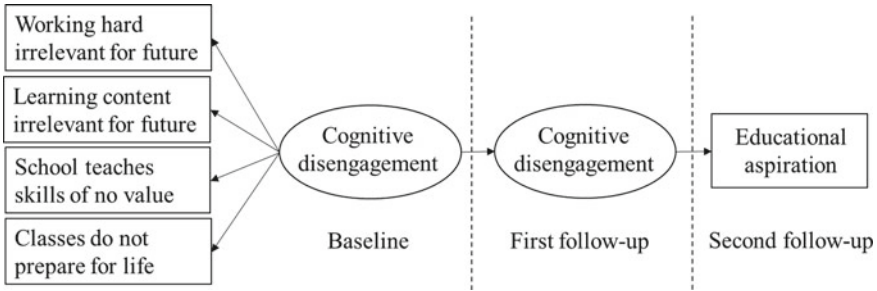
Fig. 27.2 Factor models for cognitive disengagement (negative attitudes) and hypothesised associations between the study variables controlling for gender, immigrant background, and socio-economic status

controlling for gender, immigrant background, and SES, students' cognitive disengagement predicted post upper secondary educational aspirations. Hence, the less students valued school and learning, the lower they aimed with their studies. One path for the controlling variables, namely the one from student SES to educational aspiration, was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$) and in the expected direction: students with higher SES aimed higher in their educational career.[47]

Overall, the majority of Finnish students enjoy school, find learning valuable, and participate in school activities. However, a considerably large proportion of them do not. While the exact frequencies vary across studies depending on the study framework, conceptualization, and methodological choices made,[48] mounting and parallel evidence indicate that a proportion of Finnish students do disengage from school. While in previous studies behavioural disengagement, especially in its serious form of continuous truancy, was rare among Finnish students,[49] other dimensions of disengagement were not. As much as one fifth of the students were classified emotionally and cognitively disengaged. Particularly worrying is that almost one third (30%) of students perceived their schoolwork worthless and irrelevant for future success. Cognitive disengagement was especially accentuated among students with
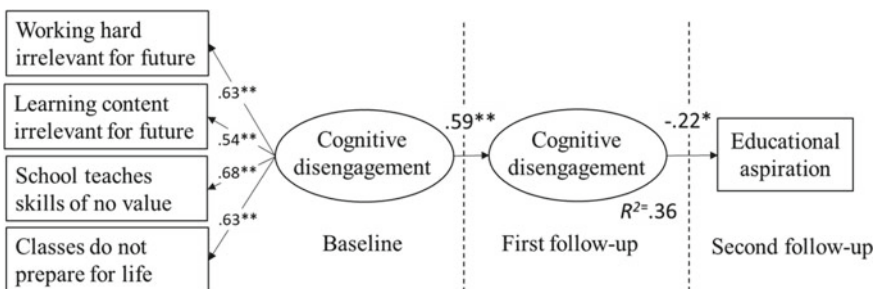

Fig. 27.3 SEM model depicting the longitudinal relations among cognitive disengagement and post upper secondary educational aspiration. *Note* All coefficients are standardized and statistically significant; [**]$p < 0.001$, [*]$p < 0.05$

low SES (39.3%) and students with disabilities (37.7%). Students in these groups questioned the relevance of school for their life and future.

The longitudinal results showed that negative attitudes towards school and education tend to hold through the transition from the last year of comprehensive education (at age of 15) to the first year of post-comprehensive schooling. Thus, cognitive disengagement is a stable construct that may remain unchanged even across the transition to a new school environment. If students have internalised their negative opinions about school by the end of compulsory education, they most likely hold these opinions across the school contexts. Interestingly, in a previous Finnish study,[50] identification with school (i.e., a hybrid of emotional and cognitive engagement) was found unstable from primary to lower secondary school; that is across the previous transition in students' educational career. Even though the studies differed in the operationalisation of the constructs and, as such, are not comparable, an interesting question remains for future studies: at what point before the end of comprehensive schooling does cognitive disengagement, measured as negative attitudes towards school, take its stable form, and whether the construct holds its stability beyond upper secondary education.

Conclusion: Fueling Engagement Through Early Identification of Disengagement and Tailored Interventions to Support Individual Needs

Generally, school disengagement is a phenomenon that occurs in every school system around the globe. However, international comparative studies pointing out higher-than-average levels of disengagement among Finnish students have exposed this fundamental flaw in the Finnish education system. Drawing on the low dropout rates in the Finnish comprehensive school, even the disengaged students seem to complete school and graduate. This, as such, is a merit for the system. In 2021, the minimum school leaving age in Finland was raised to 18 years and compulsory education was therefore extended to upper secondary education. Although this reform will reduce the interruption of upper secondary education, students who disengage from school may underperform and leave the school with inadequate qualifications. Furthermore, they will leave school without an important asset for the future: the skill to engage in learning, which—in the era of global risks and constant changes—is a prerequisite for success in the labour market and life.

There seems to be a wide variation in Finnish students' school engagement, this makes it insufficient to apply average values for all students to describe the full spectrum of students' school disengagement. Instead, Finnish students may differ in the extent to which they disengage and the aspects of engagement involved when they do so. This diversity of disengagement poses challenges to teachers on how to identify students at risk to disengage early enough and on how to intervene effectively in case of disengagement. Hence, there is a need for a preventive strategy, such as a three-tiered model of supporting student engagement,[51] which involves reaffirming, reconnecting, and reconstructing aspects in engaging students. The reaffirming stage, which aims to reaffirm preventively all students' engagement through a continuous school-wide process, is of special interest. It includes regular risk monitoring amongst all students, which enables an early identification and a timely intervention.

It was surprising that we observed the largest degree of disengagement concerning specifically cognitive disengagement that measured students' opinions about school relevancy. This was somewhat unexpected, because Finnish people traditionally value education highly, and education is widely considered to be one of the cornerstones of the Finnish welfare society.[52] It seems, however, that some of the young people have questioned the intrinsic value of education. In today's society, where even the highest education does not guarantee a stable career, this is understandable. Then again, aiming to increase the intrinsic value of learning and education amongst disengaged students is warranted as the student's sense of school irrelevancy is not only stable but it also affects student outcomes beyond comprehensive schooling. Early identification and intervention in comprehensive schools is a way to tackle disengagement from further education. This can be done by strengthening the functional relevance of the curriculum and programmes of study so that students recognise and appreciate how working hard with their studies can pay off for personal interests and career goals.[53] This is, however, a challenging task under the present policy ideology emphasizing efficiency, accountability, and the individual's right to choose. The results of our study, which show that school disengagement is more prevalent amongst students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students with disabilities than amongst the students in Finland as a whole, call for different policies. Instead of intensifying competition between individuals, what is needed is policies to promote the inclusion of all students and to pay particular attention to the school engagement of those in the most vulnerable positions in Finnish society.

Appendix

See Table 27.3.

Table 27.3 Fit indexes for the CFA and stability models of cognitive disengagement

Model[a]	χ2	df	p	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR	Δ χ2 (scaling corr. for MLR)
Cross-sectional CFA								
Time 1 (n = 1004)	4.07	2	0.130	0.072	0.980	0.941	0.025	
Time 2 (n = 205)	3.99	2	0.136	0.071	0.988	0.964	0.022	
Longitudinal CFA								
Model 1 (n = 203)	38.60	19	0.005	0.071	0.940	0.912	0.052	
Model 2 (n = 203)	40.51	22	0.009	0.064	0.944	0.928	0.060	Δ χ2(3) = 2.03, p = 0.567

[a] Time 1 & Time 2 models: structural invariance; Model 1: configural invariance; Model 2: loading invariance

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Piia af Ursin Ph.D., is Senior Researcher and Research Coordinator at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. She has a background in child and youth studies, comparative education and educational inequalities. Her research interests cover themes related to student agency, engagement and participation in diverse educational settings and transitions.

Jenni Tikkanen is Postdoctoral Fellow of the Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS) at the Department of Education, University of Turku. Her main research interests relate to the sociology of education, educational policies, youth studies, life course research, and international comparative education. The focus of Tikkanen's most recent work has been on youth trajectories, educational and societal segregation, and the evolving relations of social change and social reproduction. She is a Visiting Research Fellow in the Academy of Finland's research flagship Inequalities, Interventions and a New Welfare State (INVEST).

Tero Järvinen is Professor of Learning and Education at the Department of Education/Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku. His main research interests are related to comparative studies on educational and school-to-work transitions of young people, as well as education systems and policies governing these transitions. Järvinen is currently co-leading a Finnish team in the European Union-funded CLEAR project, in which factors affecting the learning outcomes of young people are being studied across eight European countries.

Part III
Epilogue

Chapter 28
The Foundations of Critical Studies in Education in Finland

Sonja Kosunen, Jaakko Kauko, Piia Seppänen, and Martin Thrupp

Abstract This chapter considers the historical roots of critical studies of Finnish education, particularly sociology, politics, and the history of education. It presents an interview with six emeriti professors who have participated in constructing the academic field. The chapter highlights their views about the greatest achievements of societally-oriented educational research in Finland, and what they considered the biggest disappointments or mistakes in this line of research.

The editors were pondering the best possible way of recognising the historical roots of critical studies of Finnish education in this book, particularly sociology, politics, and the history of education. In an editorial meeting we decided to invite some of those heavily involved in past decades to discuss the successes of critical studies in education in Finland and what they now think should have been done in other ways.

We gathered together six emeriti professors:

1. Sirkka Ahonen, Professor of history and social studies education at the University of Helsinki.
2. Ari Antikainen, Professor of sociology of education at the University of Eastern Finland, previously Professor of education, especially planning and administration of education at the University of Tampere.

S. Kosunen (✉)
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 9, 00014 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: sonja.kosunen@helsinki.fi

J. Kauko
Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Åkerlundinkatu 5, 33014 Tampere, Finland
e-mail: jaakko.kauko@tuni.fi

P. Seppänen
Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE), University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 5, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: piia.seppanen@utu.fi

M. Thrupp
Division of Education, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand
e-mail: thrupp@waikato.ac.nz

3. Leena Koski, Professor of sociology at the University of Eastern Finland.
4. Elina Lahelma, Professor of education at the University of Helsinki.
5. Risto Rinne, Professor of education, especially adult education at the University of Turku.
6. Hannu Simola, Professor of education, especially sociology of education at the University of Helsinki.

These Finnish emeriti professors have known each other for decades and they often worked together in academic circles in the past. They were also a central group in establishing a national doctoral school in educational sciences, KASVA, in 1995, which has been essential in providing doctoral education for critical and social studies in education. The discussion amongst them took place on the 20th of October 2021 in Helsinki as an invited face to face meeting and with three of the editors present as well.[1] Nearly all the emeriti were able to attend in person (Emeritus Professor Antikainen participated via email). The meeting was guided by two questions that had been sent to all beforehand: 'In your view, what has been the greatest achievement of societally-oriented educational research in Finland?' and 'What do you see as the biggest disappointment or mistake in this line of research?'

The roundtable discussion was one of a kind and the editors hope it will mark a milestone in Finnish educational studies for many years to come. In the interests of authenticity, we have tried to leave it much like a transcript with all the features of spoken conversation that involves. Still, in the interests of a coherent account in the limited space available here, we have made some decisions about what to include, the order of contribution and the best way of translating the conversation to English. Our editorial additions are written in square brackets with contextual notes in italics, and where significant detail has been cut this is marked by ellipsis within square brackets. End notes have been added by the editors for those interested in tracking back the studies named in this discussion and other background details. The emeriti had the opportunity of both commenting on the Finnish version and then approving the final chapter in English prior to publication.

The Roundtable Discussion with Finnish Emeriti Professors of Critical Studies in Education

Rinne: We were asked two questions: what has the main achievement of Finnish social science-oriented educational research been this far, and what has been a disappointment or a mistake? After a fifty-year career or even longer in Finnish educational research, we are all, of course, disqualified to answer this question as we are part of this process, and we have our own attachments to it. The entry of sociology of education into Finnish society always [looks better] from further afield. But if we take a closer look, Kalevi Kivistö and other partners were at the beginning of sociology of education. And then [there was] its rise at the University of Eastern Finland, where Ari Antikainen, Leena Koski and others did [research], right from [the time

of Annika] Takala. And then, we had education policy research in Tampere. And of course, recused, I represent the school of Turku. We set up the Turku research unit, which is specifically a societally, historically oriented unit of sociology of education. […] I would say from my perspective that the most important thing that has been achieved is that we have been able to go deeper and behind the surface and intentions [of education] more strongly than before. For example, I defended my doctoral dissertation on the topic of curriculum history. One of the key concepts that had been brought to Finland was [the idea of] a hidden curriculum, which is extremely rich and abundant in telling us that a curriculum is a document full of goodwill, which can be referred as a curriculum poetry, as the Swedish Svingby,[2] Broady,[3] and some others have said. Seen through the hidden curriculum, its lofty goals and aspirations, or the sublime goals of the discourses and reform are not what they say they are. They are a barrel of wishes in one way. You must be able to look behind the surface and see what the hidden curriculum points out.

As Pierre Bourdieu[4] says, above all, education is a field of symbolic violence that forces everyone who goes through it, over a 10–20-year history, to adapt in a certain way. Understanding the symbolic violence that people sift through in education is the most important opening that has been done in the societally-oriented research in the field of education in Finland. This also provides a closer examination of the social functions of education, what a school does to a people, including the boundaries of normality. And of course, these four functions[5] include selection which means educational selection of the right people in the right place. And even if it is never over-emphasised, selection happens there. Integration into Finnish national ideology and politics is one task. Another task, then, is to produce suitable citizens with certain kind of qualifications. And let's say that what I have seen in particular, and should be brought up more and more these days, is the fourth function of education, common to all, of storage. […] So, all of these, these are the central achievements. In addition, if I think about it, the reality arose in in one single major research project in which I was involved with many others that pointed out that we don't have unified comprehensive schools but unified comprehensive schools which have clearly divided into different blocks, producing different results. The well-off choose better school paths, others [are left with] weaker school paths.[6] This is perhaps the biggest concern.

Ahonen: If I put it briefly, I think that the most important achievement has been to bring the question of educational equality, or rather educational opportunities and equity, to the forefront of research. Equality has always been talked about, since Snellman,[7] but in this research strand the concept has been brought to a post-Second World War perspective. When equality, or equality of educational opportunities, is brought to the front, the school is shown to be a substructure of the welfare state. Pekka Kuusi, who has influenced my ideas, in his great book, [*Social Policy of the 60's*][8] does not mention education at all amongst these structures of the welfare state. And I think now, after this approach of our education or research approach has worked, it is no longer possible to [leave education out]. And in this research approach, the consequences of educational policy decisions are examined from a societal perspective. For example, the consequences of comprehensive school reform are examined from the perspectives of different groups in society. A very central

question since the 1980s has been whether the comprehensive school is a middle-class school after all. Education policy shifts are linked to broad societal background phenomena, most recently neoliberalism. Then an answer has been sought to the question of whether education policy is guided by instrumental rationalism or the ethos of *Bildung* (*sivistyseetos*). Comparative international research is part of this current line of research which has started, not very strongly, but nonetheless [it has started]. Comparative research provides material for answering structural questions in education, for example, to explain the problematic development of higher education governance. And what information technology has to offer is big data giving limitless possibilities for comparative research.

Antikainen: *Ari Antikainen was not able to attend the roundtable, but his written statements were read aloud.* The greatest success in critical studies in educational sciences has been the study of educational inequality in its theoretical and methodological diversity. Its international influence and connection to the examination of the Nordic and Finnish welfare society model has been strong. Its impact on the Finnish education policy debate has been significant.

Koski: I basically agree with the previous ones [Ahonen and Antikainen] and I think that the main achievement of this is the demonstration of various social distinctions and related processes. Proving to us social differences, class-based differences, different manifestations of racism and gender is, of course, important. Then, if you think about the differences, less attention has been paid to disability research. Of course, it has been done, but to lesser extent. These topics have been raised and investigated with a great variety of different materials, from a very wide variety of different theoretical premises. And the procedures for how those differences arise, how the school marginalises some students and how universities marginalise some of the students and so on, it has been quite well proved. Where I disagree with Ari [Antikainen] is that it had political significance. I think it had almost no political significance for what we got from the research. Another point I think is noteworthy, is the education policy research critical towards neoliberalism, which is related with very many educational processes. This individualisation and intensification processes and the rise of budgetary authority over other political efforts. And in general, showing that what is being said about the school and what is shown of schools, and what is shown in the statistics is only part of how school works. A huge number of different political and ideological and gendered and moral processes are involved with school at all different levels from early childhood to liberal adult education. Those same processes work in a slightly different way at different levels. In my opinion, this has been proved again and again in Finnish sociology of education.

Lahelma: It was difficult to choose one achievement. I actually have a list of four achievements that are also interconnected and partly repeat what has already been said. The first that has already emerged is equality and social justice. Their problematization in relation to educational goals. The persistent tensions in education policy have been analysed: on the one hand, the stated goals of education emphasising equality and justice, on the other hand, the neoliberal education policy emphasising individual choice and competition and the measurement of results. Analyzing

this tension and emphasizing the importance of equality has been an important achievement.

The second achievement is expansion of educational research that earlier was largely focusing on didactics. You remember Kansanen's[9] didactic triangle with teacher, student and subject with arrows between them. Without underestimating its importance, going beyond the triangle has been one achievement of critical sociology of education. At this point, I would like to highlight the pioneer of Finnish feminist sociology of education: […] a dear friend and colleague, the recently deceased Tuula Gordon. Tuula's way to open the understanding of school was through defining school layers. In her view the school was viewed analytically through the formal, informal, and physical layers linked to each other.[10] It helped to notice that didactic processes are also interlinked with school spaces, sounds, movements, corporality, and informal relationships between teachers and students, which also continue outside the school. For example, the social relationships of young people, such as the boys' struggle in the informal hierarchy, are relevant in their orientation to studying. Here collaboration with youth research has been important.

The third achievement, related to the first, is intersectional understanding of social distinctions. First, gender. Gender, which had previously been considered as a dichotomous background variable, was now set as the target for analysis. In this, of course, the importance of feminist theoretical research and feminist sociology of education has been absolutely central. Feminists started to analyse gender as social structure, not just a matter of personal identity, as Raewyn Connell[11] and others have pointed out. On the other hand, drawing on Judith Butler,[12] gender was analysed already in the 1990s as habits, repetitions, performatively, with the possibility of change. In intersectional research, analyses of social class, ethnic background, special educational background, gender, sexuality, and other dimensions of differences interact. The theoretical concepts used in feminist gender-related research have also helped to understand other differences in a more multidimensional way.

Fourth, I want to mention the theoretical-methodological development. Especially, I would like to emphasise the significance of ethnographic research. Socially contextualised ethnographic perspective on everyday school helps to see behind the differences that are revealed in statistics. In school ethnography, the focus is on everyday hustle and bustle, on what is really going on in the school, rather than, as often in previous educational research, on what should happen. It has been specific in Finland that ethnographic research began to develop alongside and within feminist research. It has been associated from the beginning with the feminist principles of ethics: the pursuit of respect, equal interaction, and reciprocity in the research relationship.

Simola: Yes, I can agree with all these speakers, of course. I was in the first generation of primary school teachers. A lot of work was done, it was clear. The Finnish Comprehensive School has been a success story but the political significance of societally-oriented educational research has been minor as Leena [Koski] said. I think the greatest success has been in bringing gender equality into the context of education. Of course, this is also a big question of our time, but I think sociological

research in education has been able to answer it well. This was my perception of this in addition to everything others have said.

Rinne: Unfortunately, Ari [Antikainen] is not here and I would have liked to answer him but as Leena [Koski] also represents Joensuu, the province, I could continue my previous comment about what has been really relevant as we haven't gone to the second question yet. A rather big controversy between Ari and me that has been going on for 10 years,15 years—in the early days more vigorously and later more adaptable—is this relationship to benevolent politics. I could also point out the politics of the Social Democrats, which has been very well deserved for the implementation of the unified [folk] school back in the 1920s and into the unified [comprehensive] school of the 1970s. First, compulsory education and then to the unified school. And there were the Social Democrats, the Agrarian League, and the Finnish People's Democratic League running all this. It is said this way in the Joensuu paradigm, there are different paradigms as you have seen, I understand you [Leena Koski] represent more Antikainen's view and it is insane and wrong and brutal that I ask him a question and he cannot answer [because of his absence from this roundtable]. There has been this goodwill to make a big structural change to put all the children in a unified comprehensive school. After that, as if we had resolved societal problems. And you don't see what that basic nature of school is, this machinery of violence and so on. Now, if Leena [Koski] wants to answer, or Leena says if she agrees, whichever?

Koski: Right, I do not recognise this Joensuu paradigm concept at all. I can, of course, agree with Risto's [Rinne] idea in a certain way, I have taken up with Ari Antikainen on this same question several times. […] But I agree with Risto that it's maybe more than the Joensuu paradigm, it's maybe a political issue.

Antikainen: *The editors contacted Ari Antikainen after the debate. His comments on this critique were as follows*: Maybe I'm not as strictly Eastern Finnish or North Karelian in my thinking about the nature of school knowledge as Risto Rinne claims. In fact, I am in favour of a compromise in this case. The other side of school knowledge is what we call Bildung. There is information independent of the social context in addition to the symbolic violence of Bourdieu. This is well illustrated in Michael Young's "Bringing Knowledge Back".[13] Its subtitle explains the change in his curriculum thinking: "From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education". Michael's "powerful knowledge" corresponds, to my understanding, to our Finnish and continental European concept of Bildung. […] My earliest memories of the influence of the researcher on education policy is the Sortavala-born Annika Takala's influence on education policy and education policy makers.

Ahonen: Well, if I answer to Risto [Rinne] then. We have discussed this before, I have always been of this opinion, let's say this Foucauldian[14] pessimistic view then, and we have on the other hand this Habermasian[15] conception, which sees school and knowledge as emancipatory. In the end, if we think of our comprehensive school, it had this common content of liberating knowledge. So, isn't this an emancipatory effect on society instead of compartmentalisation and prevention?

Rinne: I just keep on referring to this, because the biggest ideological documents throughout Finland are curricula. And I am referring only to this concept of the hidden curriculum and to the fact that what the school says it is doing, even by emphasising or increasing major structural reforms and equality and justice, is in any case only one side of the truth. It can be called curriculum poetry, it means that it more effectively prevents you from seeing what the basic nature of the school is, beneath its visible and desired surface. School is a very cruel tool. People go there, as to any job, under certain power relations. And it really depresses others permanently, pushes some into special education, pushes others into inconsolability, cuts off their life chances. And for others, it creates bliss and legitimacy to climb to the top of society. But I don't deny, Sirkka [Ahonen] has been a very important teacher over the years.[16] The Habermasian idea that you have a school, and there were a lot of such thoughts at the birth of the comprehensive school that now we are changing the world and giving people opportunities and so on, I cannot deny it completely. There is no one true truth in this.

Lahelma: Yes, you just said it last that there's no one truth. What is important in sociological school research is precisely to understand that there are contradictions that are then struggled with. There is no single truth about school, it is not only good and not only bad, but it is both, it is complex. Exploring the school's everyday life is a way to see it behind the surface.

The discussion continued on how much research had impacted education policy in Finland, and there was no clear consensus about the possible policy effects. This debate frames and slightly relates to the second discussion topic addressed to the emeriti professors: the biggest mistakes and errors that had been made in the field of critical studies in education in Finland:

Antikainen: I haven't noticed any major mistakes. In fact, however, two things that are linked to each other come to my mind. The first is that there are quite a few amongst our researchers who do not know and recognise the importance of pedagogical knowledge and its connection to societal analysis. I belong to this group. Though I learned its significance, especially in the Noste project for adult education in 2003–2009.[17] Our observation and interpretation of the deep-rooted attitude toward schooling, which we call non-secondary education, called for the creation of material and symbolic resources that enabled people to gain recognition and experience it.

Lahelma: Perhaps I could mention the lack of cooperation between statistical and register-based research on the one side and ethnographic and other qualitative research on the other. That has been one reason why decision makers have not listened enough and understood the complexity of the school. Now I have the impression that quite a lot of progress has been made here, it has taken a lot of work to create cooperation structures, but the editors' [referring to the editors in the room] generation has been more successful than we have been.

Simola: The biggest mistake for societally-oriented education research, I think, has been remaining in a marginal role in teacher education. I was involved in it for one year only at the turn of the millennium in Hämeenlinna [university town] Department of Teacher Education. This may not be understood if one does not know

that I have always been a comprehensive school teacher by heart, as its first generation. That decade was a generational experience for me. Sociology of education could have emerged like educational psychology and rise as to its challenger but perhaps we were trapped in a tradition of critical-analytical research, snared by the hidden curriculum. Sociologically, the systems of school space, time, and rituals, the grammar of schooling, were seen, but only as restrictive. We should also have seen their enabling power. Gender studies did not fall into this trap but instead also made policy recommendations which inspired activism. Sociology of education should get rid of dark sociologies, the mere analysis and criticism, and go for a "sociology of the possible". I mean that the sociology of possible must be based on an extremely rigorous critical analysis of reality but it should go forward. […] I think one should have gone to Hämeenlinna and set up a sociologically focused teacher training there, taken a dozen students, as Maijaliisa Rauste-von Wright did in Helsinki with Educational Psychology. And probably Hämeenlinna would have agreed to that, but I didn't have such an idea at the time. But if I were there now, I would do it this way. This is about the mistakes, rather personal than general, though.

Koski: This is a terribly difficult question, about the worst mistake. I don't know what the worst mistake would be. I think it would suggest that some major research would turn out to be a fake or something. And everyone would have started doing research based on it. But there is no such thing or at least no one has noticed it yet [laughter] […] or I haven't noticed. One problem a bit has been this fragmentation. However, there is quite a lot of such a genuine discussion among critical educational sociology coming from different directions. […] It has been this kind of parallel play sandbox that everyone has their own bucket and their own sand molds, and each makes their own sand cake with their own molds. And then there is what I said at the beginning, what Antikainen probably referred to, that pedagogy is not explicitly studied in educational sociology. Namely pedagogical practices, pedagogical procedures and pedagogical aspirations, in the same way that curricula are analysed and so on. Pedagogy could be one optimistic solution to this question of how school could be something else than the production of mere suffering. With pedagogy we could find such procedures there. But pedagogy is hardly sociologically analysed, at least in Finland. Hannu [Simola] what you said, sociology has lost its status to psychology, yes, because psychology is the science of the policies of neoliberal individualisation policy. Psychology is harnessed to it and it will certainly gain relevance in politics. I think it's bad, that psychology in a certain way implements this Margaret Thatcher idea that "there is no such thing as society but rather individuals". This as some first ideas, not maybe as a mistake as such, but kind of what could have been done better.

Rinne: My starting point is pretty much like what I produced as a response to the best features in societal research is, revealing true realism there. And which is the worst, or disappointment or error in this case, it is this kind of acceptance of various reforms, ideas and aspirations: denying the facts, bona fide, pure-mindedness and, in a way, emphasising one's own position that everything will turn out to be good, decontextualisation. And if you think of three examples, then one of them is economy of education research. So, all this, I confronted with [Professor of Education Economics] Roope [Uusitalo] once in a seminar where I criticised very strongly the

[commercialised antibullying programme by university] KiVa school project.[18] And Roope said that it was the only good educational research that has had a significant impact on the Finnish school system. Then we locked horns a little about this, but not too much. But first, this KiVa school research project, as one example when you make an arrangement, which gradually moves to the private market, or which becomes an international trend and it is sold abroad and so on. Everyone believes that it cures bullying from our schools, which does not correspond with reality at all.[19] The second, if someone still remembers, I was then a young man, was a community education experiment related to Makarenko[20] and many other things. Investing was heavy to all directions and everyone thought that now we are improving schools and no question about it. But what was the result? Nothing, maybe a book by Kalevi Kaipio,[21] but little else. And third, which is related to this same dull reality, is the relevance of politics, which began in the 1990s or in the twenty-first century. We proceeded consciously from the funding and appreciation of pure analytical basic research, step by step towards these top research units. And towards another type of policy-relevant research, to which the largest batches of funding from the state were directed. And yes, it feels bad to just wait for and look at the policy recommendations, which could have been written in advance. They were completely ready, the political stuff, and then we do research. The University of Turku, and many other universities, have a lot of these ongoing projects, while the funding of the Academy of Finland is declining. […] The present and depressing starting point is the fact that what educational science, or social science research more broadly should take seriously is how the school system and different kind of reforms and other factors affect reality.

Ahonen: Well, I'd really like to talk about this now: why haven't sociologists intervened more concretely about what's happening now, to criticise the outsourcing of basic education. There are these Tutor Houses [private supplementary tutoring enterprise] and then there was this KiVa School, which is a product, of course. […] Well yeah. I'll tell you what I think. I've been recently very active in Historians Without Borders.[22] And they have been engaged in a dialogue with different groups in Finland that are in a conflict with the majority population. And in this context, I've come to think that we education researchers, we have not really taken the diversity of Finnish society into serious account. Roma and the Sámi people and the new migrants, they are self-evident, but then there's much more other diversity as well. And the internal diversity of these groups. I feel at the moment that we should give up this kind of categorisation when we study how education reaches different people. […].

Societally-oriented researchers in education have been involved and in interaction with […] researchers of disadvantage, other social scientists, for example [professor of social and health policy] Juho Saari. So, when I was thinking of education, it was enlightening to read his work. He was showing how diversity is changing from the perspective of population research. Or evolving and increasing. And then again, I maybe enter the side of pedagogy now. This multiculturalism, which has been promoted […] in schools in very imaginative ways. But this whole multiculturalism is a very essentialist notion. If you now think there are these and these cultures and then somehow bring in knowledge about them through playing, singing, or acquiring

information for teaching, it doesn't support the impression that people are constantly changing and borrowing cultural stuff from each other and so on. There is a constant state of change and a state of diversification which, interestingly enough, seems to require some coping. So—no more useless categories. And maybe I count as a mistake in societally-oriented educational research that it has not collaborated enough with other social sciences. Especially this, and I gave the example of disadvantage researchers and demographers.

In addition to the mistakes and errors, the emeriti professors ended up reflecting on how the changing environment of the Finnish universities had affected work in the field. The role of the universities has changed along the past decades. Discussants pointed out that a market-shift in Finland materialised with the University Act of 2009. In the literature scholars have seen this as a change at the universities towards a "neoliberal NPM doctrine" from the previous "management by results and competition" era.[23] The roots of this change are in how Finland became more a part of the international community and how the self-understanding of higher education institutions were re-understood as tools and objects of international competition.[24] Of course, the shift towards managerialism,[25] new hierarchies,[26] and the broad structural reforms[27] are European mainstream. The emeriti reflected this through the shifts in their work and their research:

Koski: I think it's a problem that university is targeted with such strong interests. The fields of research which are connected directly to industry, like medicine, physics, science, are useful for them [the industry]. […] It's an aspired policy by those in power. But the problem is that for socio-humanistic research this does not fit at all. We don't have any products. We don't come up with new medicine, with corona vaccination, with waste-management systems or substances. What we invent is an understanding of this world.

Lahelma: Perhaps it could be continued that the goals and policies of these hard sciences at the university have clearly flowed into the field of social sciences. We are required to do the same. We are required to, of course, provide article-based PhD theses…

Koski: … and products for sale.

Lahelma: … and products for sale. Probably the humanists and social scientists haven't been able to pinpoint enough that we're different. That our research fields are different.

[…]

Koski: Yes, but I don't think the problem is that we would search some ideal Snellmannian-Humboldtian *Bildung* university (*sivistysyliopisto*) lost in the past, which never was…

Rinne: Someone defended a thesis on this! [*Referring to Leena Koski's dissertation.[28]*]

[…]

Koski: …Yeah but you can't hope for this *Bildung* university, it was patriarchic, and it was…

Rinne: So, you've written.

Koski: …absolutely a university of the swords of symbolic violence and decapitation and all that.

[…]

Koski: We show how things are, not like they should be.

Simola: Now we've shown that, so what? This is the eternal question.

Koski: I tend to think that it is no longer our task.

Simola: Indeed.

Koski: It is your task! [*Points at the editors, there is laughter*] Starting from what is it at the moment: how things are experienced and lived today. The generational experience that you have.

Finally, the emeriti were asked to indicate some notes and possibly advice for future generations of researchers conducting critical research in education in Finland:

Koski: I think you could continue with the strengths that we all agreed very much about. You pursue them in a new kind of societal situation. The problem with sociology is that when something is found out, society has already turned to another position. In a way, it never ends, and you can always build on what is known so far. And how things have changed and review it. And in a way, also develop the theory going forward, [Pierre] Bourdieu or [Michel] Foucault, or whoever everyone now wants to develop. I don't think it's worthwhile to reinvent the wheel, and it's not necessarily worth navigating unknown waters, at least without preparation. If a question leads to something theoretical or something unheard of, well then. But always claiming that this is something new, starting from here and forgetting what has been, [doesn't work]. […] But most of all, I think it's important to stay vigilant about what's happening in society.

Rinne: I would say exactly the same thing that you actually said for a junior researcher: never compromise the truth and truthfulness, dare to study and publish everything meaningfully. And take part in the societal debate, doubt everything, don't keep quiet. […].

Simola: And activism is allowed, even necessary.

From the Editors, a Closing 'Thank You'

The discussion eventually finished after several hours during which the emeriti navigated effortlessly through British, Finnish, French, German, Swedish and Soviet research debates while reflecting on the past decades of Finnish societally-oriented education research.

How the map of critical studies in education would be drawn in Finland may seem clearer today, but at the time when these professors started their work, it was mostly blank.

A central theme in the discussion was that all of the emeriti professors thought the most meaningful work done in the field was pushing the academic and political

fields of thinking towards questions of equality and equity in the Finnish education system, drawing on strong basic research.

Now looking back, they also recognised that there could have been greater achievements on this front if the different subfields of educational research, such as sociology and pedagogy, had worked together more.

Knowledge of how equality and inequality emerge and may be studied at the macro, meso and micro levels, however, remains a strong legacy in Finnish and international research.

Years and indeed decades of work, as reflected in many of the chapters in this book, are attempting to take this task forward, and this continuity, amidst change, was cherished by the emeriti.

Overall, there is much to challenge new academics and how they will find resources to continue their thought work despite the changes in academia is not yet clear.

Under the circumstances, collaboration has become all the more important in critical studies in education in Finland—we hope this book with its many contributors bodes well for the years ahead.

Notes

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Sonja Kosunen is Associate Professor of Education (tenure-track) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, where she leads the research unit Social studies in Urban Educa-tion (SURE). Her research focuses on the fields of sociology of education and urban studies. She is currently leading research projects focusing on diversity, inequality and segregation across early childhood, comprehensive, secondary and higher education.

Jaakko Kauko is Professor of Education Policy at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, where he co-leads the research group EduKnow (Knowledge, Power, and Politics in Education). His research focuses on the fields of education policy and comparative education. He is currently leading the Academy of Finland-funded project 'Transnational Knowledge Networks in Higher Education Policymaking' (KNETS).

Piia Seppänen is Professor of Education, especially on comparative education and education policy at the University of Turku and also works as Vice-Dean for research in its Faculty of Education. Her research with research groups at the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning and Education (CELE) focuses on pupil selection, urban social segregation and classed practices

within comprehensive schooling as well as on commodification in public education systems and its connections to the global education industry.

Martin Thrupp is Professor of Education at the University of Waikato. His research interests are in education policy, especially the lived effects of policy across diverse primary and secondary schools and their communities. Thrupp has undertaken related educational research in Europe, especially England, as well as in New Zealand, and has won several awards for his research and publications. He has worked in Finnish education circles since 2016 including visits to Finland in all four seasons. In 2022 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Turku.