

Constructing responsible citizenship: A social constructionist study of how teachers cultivate responsibility through pedagogical practices in Finland

Muchammad Tholchah * 

* Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia/Tampere University, Finland
muchammad.tholchah@unusia.ac.id

Sari Hernawati 

Universitas Wahid Hasyim, Indonesia
sari_hernawati@unwahas.ac.id

*Corresponding Author

Article Info

Article History

Submitted:

9 March 2026

Revised:

15 May 2026

Accepted:

19 June 2026

Keywords

Finland; pedagogical practices; responsible citizenship; social constructionism; teachers' strategies

Abstract

This study examines how Finnish teachers construct the values of responsible citizenship in their pedagogical practices. This qualitative case study involved six teachers from early childhood and primary education in Finland and drew on semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed thematically, focusing on how teachers narrated responsibility in everyday routines, family-school partnerships and references to civic institutions. The analysis identified seven interrelated strategies: encouraging self-reliance, organising collective responsibility, promoting ethical awareness, assigning practical life tasks, facilitating work-life orientation, modelling civic trust and collaborating with families. These strategies show that responsibility is constructed through interaction, narrative and institutional trust, as teachers integrate citizenship values into everyday routines, ethical framings and examples drawn from Finnish society. Responsibility is thereby enacted both as a personal practice and as a civic virtue anchored in public institutions. The study contributes to international debates on citizenship education and social constructionism by illustrating how responsible citizenship is cultivated as a lived practice that links everyday school life to wider social, economic and ecological orders. As the study focuses mainly on teachers' perspectives, future research should incorporate students' views, compare contexts and trace change over time in order to understand how ideas of responsibility develop across diverse educational and cultural settings.

Article Link: <https://journal.uny.ac.id/index.php/civics/article/view/96328>

Introduction

Finland is widely recognised as one of the most liveable countries in the world, renowned for its high levels of social trust, its strong welfare system and its sustained commitment to equity (Saari, 2023). It also consistently ranks among the world's most transparent countries, with one of the lowest levels of perceived corruption (Transparency International, 2024; Vento, 2024). Crime rates are relatively low: research shows that youth offending is declining and that overall crime levels have remained stable (Könönen, 2024). At the same time, citizens express



strong trust in public institutions, particularly in education, healthcare and governance (Välilmaa, 2021). Finland consistently ranks among the highest countries for institutional trust, a factor closely linked to perceptions of fairness, transparency and the legitimacy of the welfare state (Loen, 2025; OECD, 2021). Together, these indicators portray Finland as a society in which civic values are deeply embedded in everyday life.

This combination of high institutional trust, strong institutions and educational performance makes Finland a strategic case for examining how civic and citizenship values are represented in schools. Rather than presenting Finland merely as a success story, research can use this context to probe how ideals of democracy, human rights and participation are constructed and negotiated in everyday educational practice.

One of the most significant factors underpinning Finland's international reputation is the integration of civic and citizenship education into its national education system (E. Kuusisto et al., 2025; Sahlberg & Walker, 2021; Simola, 2015). By incorporating civic and democratic values into schooling, Finland has made education a cornerstone of its identity as a trusted nation. The National Core Curriculum, issued by the Finnish National Agency for Education (FNAE), explicitly frames education as a means of preparing students for active citizenship, embedding democracy, human rights and participation as transversal competences across subjects from as early as the day-care level (FNAE, 2022, 2024). In practice, education – and teachers in particular – has played a significant role in sustaining these values across generations (E. Kuusisto et al., 2025). Teachers are key agents in cultivating a democratic culture and in shaping citizens whose dispositions reflect both national priorities and global ideals (Rautiainen et al., 2019). Moreover, teachers are not merely implementers of the curriculum but autonomous professionals entrusted with interpreting these values in their classrooms. Their autonomy is widely recognised as a cornerstone of Finnish education, enabling them to adapt civic education to local contexts while remaining aligned with national goals (Chung, 2023).

Recent scholarship has increasingly examined how citizenship is articulated and contested within Finnish educational institutions. Kasa et al. (2023) suggest that educators regard democracy and human rights education as essential but not self-evident, requiring deliberate pedagogical strategies. Fornaciari and Juutilainen (2023) show how teacher education programmes embed democratic values in their curricula, preparing educators to support responsible citizenship in diverse classrooms. Haapaniemi et al. (2021) demonstrate how teacher autonomy supports integrative teaching, enabling civic and democratic values to be constructed across subjects. These studies indicate that democratic and civic values in Finnish education are sustained through a deliberate interplay of curriculum design, teacher preparation and professional autonomy.

Policy frameworks reinforce these scholarly insights. Kouros et al. (2024), for example, highlight how national institutions collaborate with schools to operationalise human rights education. Taken together, these studies and policies make clear that Finnish teachers are positioned as civic educators, entrusted with embedding democracy, human rights and citizenship in everyday teaching and classroom practice.

Despite this policy support, several studies have identified challenges. Kasa et al. (2023) argue that democracy and human rights education is not self-evident but requires intentional effort and reflection. Teachers may face tensions between curricular demands and classroom realities, particularly in multicultural settings where notions of citizenship are contested. Joseph (2023) highlights ethical dilemmas in reconciling anonymity with recognition, which parallel the challenge in civic education of protecting individual identities while fostering collective belonging. These tensions show that constructing responsible citizens is not a straightforward matter but a negotiated process shaped by complex factors.

While Finland’s civic reputation is well documented, less is known about how teachers themselves narrate and negotiate the construction of citizenship in their everyday practice. Existing scholarship has emphasised policy frameworks and curriculum design, whereas practising teachers’ lived experiences and discursive strategies remain underexplored. This study addresses that gap with respect to the construction of the value of responsibility. It is grounded in a social constructionist perspective, which holds that knowledge, identities and social practices are actively produced and reproduced through discourse, interaction and institutional processes (Berger & Luckmann, 2023; Burr, 2015). From this perspective, responsible citizenship is continually constructed through the language teachers use, the narratives they hold and the pedagogical practices they enact in their professional contexts. The study therefore examines how teachers’ practices shape and reproduce understandings of what it means to be a responsible citizen, and how Finnish teachers articulate the notion of citizenship and embed civic values in their teaching. The study is guided by the following research question: *How do Finnish teachers construct and incorporate the values of responsible citizenship in their pedagogical practices and narratives?*

We conceptualise this research as a case study of Finnish basic education, focusing on early childhood and primary teachers working in public comprehensive schools in Central Finland, Pirkanmaa and Uusimaa. Within this setting, the study examines how teachers construct notions of responsible citizenship in their everyday work.

Empirically, the study contributes by highlighting Finnish teachers’ constructions of responsible citizenship in basic education. Analytically, it shows how civic ideals move from national policy frameworks and curricular texts into situated classroom practice through teachers’ discursive work, which sustains, adapts or contests notions of democracy, human rights and participation.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach, a research design that seeks to understand phenomena in their natural settings while privileging participants’ perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative approaches emphasise contextual sensitivity, interpretive analysis and the complexity of lived experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). More specifically, the study used a case study design, widely understood as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018) and offers a holistic, context-sensitive exploration of a bounded system (Stake, 2013). This design provides interpretive insight into how civic values are socially constructed and transmitted (Aguzzoli et al., 2024; Pope et al., 2023; Simeonova & Fitzgerald, 2023). Finland was selected as a compelling case, given its internationally recognised civic culture and democratic resilience.

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling (Cohen et al., 2018; Patton, 2015) via professional and institutional networks. Recruitment required persistence (Negrin et al., 2022), as workload and institutional demands often constrain access to teachers, particularly in Finland (Bæck & Autti, 2025). After repeated contact and negotiation, eight teachers from Central Finland, Pirkanmaa and Uusimaa initially agreed to participate; however, two withdrew before the interviews, and six teachers were ultimately interviewed. Although modest, the sample was sufficient to generate detailed narratives of practice, since small, information-rich samples are widely recognised as appropriate in qualitative research, where the goal is depth of understanding rather than statistical generalisation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants’ profiles are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.
Profile of participants

Name	Educational institution level	Length of service	Area
Heikki	Primary education, teacher of grade 3	7 years	Pirkanmaa
Karla	Primary education, teacher of grade 8	8 years	Central Finland
Marko	Primary education, teacher of grade 6	6 years	Uusimaa

Pekka	Primary education, teacher of grade 9	10 years	Uusimaa
Riika	Primary education, teacher of grade 8	6 years	Uusimaa
Saana	Early childhood level	4 years	Pirkanmaa

Source: Research Data, 2026.

Data were collected through interviews, which are effective for exploring practices and values, as they combine comparability across cases with the flexibility to pursue unexpected insights (Brinkmann, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Patton, 2015). The interview guide comprised semi-structured questions on issues and practices relating to responsibility in educational settings.

Before the interviews, participants received an information sheet and signed consent forms. To maximise their comfort, participants chose the venues themselves, including public libraries and cafés. Interviews were conducted in English to ensure clarity of communication, audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim to preserve accuracy (Seidman, 2019). As supplementary data, we also conducted observations in the Uusimaa region, focusing on everyday public transport practices. These included passengers boarding buses through the rear door and voluntarily tapping their travel cards even when the driver did not check, and tapping their cards at the gates before entering the metro, despite the absence of security staff or ticket inspectors.

The analysis followed a thematic approach guided by social constructionism as the theoretical lens (Burr, 2015; Burr & Dick, 2017), which provided a framework for examining how responsibility is negotiated through everyday practices. Transcripts were coded to identify recurring metaphors, narratives and strategies that teachers used when discussing the value of responsibility among students. MAXQDA software supported efficient coding, data integration and the management of the analytical process (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019).

In practice, coding in MAXQDA began with preparing clean interview transcripts and field notes, importing them into a new project and creating an initial code list based on the research question and emerging ideas. Once the documents had been organised in the 'Document System', all researchers read each transcript closely and highlighted meaningful segments. Codes were applied by selecting the relevant label from the code list, and MAXQDA allowed multiple codes to be attached to the same passage. Observation notes were coded in the same way, using the same code system, so that themes could be compared across data types.

As coding progressed, the code list was refined by adding new codes or reorganising existing ones to reflect patterns emerging from the data. MAXQDA's retrieval function enabled the researchers to view all segments associated with a particular code, making it easier to compare teachers' accounts, identify recurring themes and examine how the interview data aligned with the field observations. This process supported a systematic and transparent analysis, helping the researchers to move from raw text to organised themes that informed the study's findings.

To protect participants, confidentiality was ensured through pseudonymisation, with all identifying details removed (Tracy, 2025). The names Saana, Heikki, Riika, Karla, Pekka and Marko used in this article therefore do not correspond to participants' real identities. The use of pseudonyms is standard practice in qualitative research, particularly when addressing sensitive issues of identity and professional responsibility (Kaiser, 2009; Pascale et al., 2022).

Results and Discussion

Drawing on a social constructionist perspective, the analysis identified seven themes that illustrate how teachers in Finland shape responsibility in everyday practice. The following sections present each theme and discuss critically how responsibility is negotiated within educational and community settings.

Encouraging Self-Reliance in Early Childhood

One theme that emerged from the interviews was the construction of responsibility through scaffolding self-reliance in daily routines. Teachers emphasised that responsibility is expressed through small acts of autonomy. Saana, a day-care teacher, said:

We advise children bringing their own bag pack because it is their own need... also the issue of wearing winter clothes which is so challenging for some kids. Initially we helped them, but gradually we let them do it themselves.

Here, responsibility is integrated into a step-by-step process in which adults gradually withdraw their support to enable children's autonomy and independence. This reflects Vygotsky's (1978) notion of scaffolding, whereby skills emerge through guided interaction with a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 66). Responsibility is also co-produced in everyday interactions, in which teachers and children jointly define what it means to be 'responsible' through routine practices of dressing, packing and managing personal belongings.

Recent studies indicate that Finnish early childhood education (ECE) emphasises autonomy as a civic virtue (Koivula et al., 2019; E. Kuusisto et al., 2025; Paavola & Pesonen, 2021), one that is jointly developed through social practices rather than transmitted as a fixed norm (Saleem et al., 2021). Everyday acts such as dressing or handling belongings thus become symbolic rehearsals of citizenship, embedding responsibility in lived routines. These practices express a wider civic ideal in which citizens are expected to manage their own lives reliably without constant surveillance. They show that ECE settings not only prepare children for school but also transmit a specific set of values that links self-reliance to a trust-based, collective system (Kersh et al., 2021).

Organising Collective Responsibility

The same participant, Saana, described responsibility as something built through cooperation and mutual support, as illustrated by the following exchange:

Saana: We frequently play outside in the yard with little trucks, shovels, spoons, and buckets. Once playtime is over, we ask everyone to put the toys back into the container and carry them to the storage.

Researcher: Did all children do that?

Saana: Yeach one two sometimes refused, saying "I am not using that one", but we advised to help each other.

The act of returning toys is framed as a shared obligation: children are responsible not only for the toys they have used but for the common play environment. This constitutes collective responsibility, understood as the shared moral, social and practical obligation of a group to act together in pursuit of common goals, in which accountability is distributed rather than located in a single individual (Schwenkenbecher, 2021). This framing shifts responsibility away from individual obedience towards relational practices in which children are positioned as co-responsible for one another.

These routines can be regarded as sites where the meaning of 'we' is negotiated through interaction. When some children resist tidying up ('I am not using that one'), Saana does not resort to punishment; instead, she invokes the norm of mutual assistance by asking them to help each other. Through such talk, responsibility is discursively constructed as collective care. Everyday activities such as tidying up toys thus become small moments in which children learn to see themselves as part of a community with shared obligations towards common materials.

Previous studies show that early childhood settings often embed cooperation and peer collaboration in daily routines, using group tasks and joint problem-solving to foster shared responsibility (A. Kuusisto et al., 2021; Vlasov et al., 2024). These practices resonate with conceptions of democratic education that emphasise learning to live together (Osberg & Biesta, 2021) by situating responsibility within shared practices rather than individual merit. The

collective tidying routine is thus not merely about efficiency; it is a means by which common resources and spaces are maintained through joint action.

In the Finnish context, such constructions are particularly significant, since educational institutions are widely framed as collective goods that should be equally available to, and sustained for, all children rather than as individual entitlements (Simola, 2015). Within this framework, schools and day-care centres help children to strengthen the values of solidarity, equality and shared care in concrete ways (Kumpulainen et al., 2014; Välimaa, 2021). Organising responsibility as a communal practice in the playground reflects the construction of a sense of the common good through cooperative action (Trägårdh, 2010). At the same time, by involving young children in such collective tasks, teachers position early childhood settings as places where participation in shared responsibilities is practised concretely, rather than merely as preparation for citizenship in adulthood (Einarsdottir et al., 2015; Karila, 2012).

Promoting Ethical Awareness

Teachers also framed responsibility as ethical awareness, linking everyday practices to global concerns. They emphasised that this value involves a moral consciousness of interconnectedness. Heikki, a Grade 3 teacher, explained:

At lunch in the cafeteria, the kids are reminded to finish their meals. Still, some food ends up wasted, I feel a bit sad when we think about how many people around the world don't have anything to eat.

Teachers thus situate responsibility within a moral frame, teaching students that their everyday choices carry broader implications. By connecting the act of finishing a meal to global inequalities, Heikki demonstrates how ethical awareness can be cultivated through ordinary routines. Such talk actively constructs a particular understanding of the self in relation to others, positioning children as moral agents whose small actions matter. The school lunch thus becomes a site where the meanings of being 'responsible' are negotiated and connected to distant others and to environmental limits.

What emerges here resonates with eco-social approaches in which sustainability, solidarity and global responsibility are integrated into pedagogy (Kasa et al., 2023). Ethical awareness in education develops when moral narratives are embedded in daily activities, enabling students to experience themselves as part of a community (Wolff et al., 2022). In Finland, this orientation is reinforced by policy: ecological sustainability and global responsibility are explicitly embedded in national curricula and steering documents (Mykrä, 2023; Savolainen et al., 2025), and recent reforms emphasise sustainability and equity as cross-cutting principles that position schools as agents of social justice and ecological responsibility (Nilivaara & Soini, 2024; Thrupp et al., 2023).

Heikki's account further shows that responsibility is framed not only as personal discipline (finishing one's lunch) but also as an ethical stance towards others and the more-than-human world. Finnish teachers are guided by professional ethical codes that stress care, fairness and responsibility beyond the self (Ronkainen et al., 2023; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2025), and these codes are translated into micro-pedagogical choices, such as how to talk about leftovers on a plate. By linking local routines to global challenges, teachers foster a sense of civic and ecological responsibility that extends beyond the classroom. Research on sustainable food education highlights how shared mealtimes are used to connect students' everyday experiences with broader ecological concerns and policy goals (Janhonen et al., 2024; Silvennoinen et al., 2025). National strategies to halve food waste by 2030 further embed these moral expectations in school life, framing waste reduction as a civic duty in a context that seeks to combine material security with planetary responsibility (Buseti & Pace, 2022; Vesterinen, 2024). In this way, classrooms become key sites where ethical awareness of global interdependence is socially constructed through the act of eating together.

Assigning Practical Life Tasks

Teachers also constructed this value among Grade 3 students through practical life tasks. Heikki emphasised that responsibility is expressed through competence in everyday life, extending beyond academic achievement:

We give children various homework. Some are academic, but others are more practical, like helping parents with laundry or cooking. The main point isn't about getting a high score. It's about the process of doing the task. Once they grow up, living somewhere, they can manage everything themselves.

In this approach, homework is not narrowly defined as academic exercises but reflects a philosophy that values life skills and responsibility alongside learning. These tasks are not simply preparation for the future; they are practices through which students are invited to see themselves as capable contributors to their homes and communities. Responsibility is enacted and recognised when a child helps with the laundry or cooking, and these everyday acts become moments in which identities as 'reliable' or 'caring' are negotiated with teachers and families.

Research shows that incorporating everyday activities into schooling can support children's independence and sense of responsibility (Häärä et al., 2025), and that Finnish basic education increasingly frames learning as preparation for participation in society rather than solely as the pursuit of academic performance (E. Kuusisto et al., 2025). Setting household tasks as homework indicates that practical competence is valued alongside traditional schoolwork. This practice also reflects a broader Finnish educational culture that emphasises teamwork and shared responsibility in both school and family life (Ranta et al., 2023). Teachers' emphasis on children 'managing everything themselves' represents a Finnish ideal of citizens who can navigate everyday life autonomously while remaining embedded in supportive networks. Moreover, the integration of daily tasks into teaching underlines that care and learning are inseparable and that responsibility is expressed in the daily routines of school and home (Heikka et al., 2024; Moberg & Kuusisto, 2025). Practical homework thus serves as a site where Finnish notions of responsible, self-directed yet relational citizenship are realised in children's everyday worlds.

Facilitating Work-Life Orientation

A further theme concerns readiness for civic and economic participation. Teachers emphasised experiential learning as a means of preparing students for adulthood, situating responsibility within practices that connect schooling to society. Riika, a Grade 8 teacher, explained:

Our school has a programme called TET, which is like a kind of short internship in a company, business enterprises or store. It usually lasts about two weeks. The idea is to introduce students to issues related to working life in real practices.

Riika's narrative shows that responsibility is not a fixed attribute handed down to students but something shaped through participation in meaningful social contexts. By taking part in *työelämään tutustuminen* (TET), students begin to situate themselves within the world of work, learning to navigate its expectations, routines and identities. Responsibility, in this sense, is co-created as students come to see themselves as contributors in real workplaces, while teachers frame the experience as preparation for civic and economic participation. Rather than merely telling students to be 'responsible', schools and employers together arrange situations in which students must act reliably, negotiate timetables and respond to others' needs.

This approach accords with research showing that Finnish comprehensive schools embed career education and work-life orientation in the curriculum, ensuring that students develop both academic knowledge and practical competence (Kettunen, 2024; Rinne & Raudasoja, 2022). TET placements are central to this process, providing authentic settings in which

responsibility is lived and practised rather than taught in the abstract. Studies indicate that such experiential programmes strengthen students' agency and civic awareness by connecting everyday school routines with wider social and economic structures (Kiikeri et al., 2023). At the same time, they reflect Finland's broader commitment to equity and sustainability, whereby all students, regardless of background, are entitled to meaningful exposure to working life (Messina, 2023; Savolainen et al., 2025).

In this context, schools function as mediating institutions between young people and the labour market. Through dialogue between school and workplace, students learn to recognise themselves not only as learners but also as future workers, taxpayers and community members (Fornaciari & Juutilainen, 2023; Kangas et al., 2024). Responsibility is thus socially constructed at the intersection of educational and economic institutions: by treating students as actors in working life, TET programmes materialise a civic ideal in which contributing to shared economic and social systems is a core dimension of responsible citizenship.

Modelling Civic Trust

Teachers also construct responsibility as trust-based compliance with social norms and institutions, emphasising responsible behaviour even in the absence of surveillance. Karla, a Grade 8 teacher, explained:

I also show my students the concrete example in everyday life. People pay for their tram tickets even though no one is checking. Sometimes there is a guard to check. But people always pay for the ticket, regardless of whether there is someone to check it or not.

Observational data support this view. In the Uusimaa (Helsinki) region, one of the authors noted a consistent pattern in everyday public transport behaviour. Passengers tapped their travel cards at the card readers before entering the metro, even though no inspectors or security staff were present. The same practice was observed on buses: passengers boarded through the rear door and tapped their cards without being asked, and the driver did not check whether they held a valid ticket. This behaviour reflects a strong sense of personal responsibility for paying fares. At the same time, it indicates a high level of institutional trust, as the authorities rely on citizens to meet their obligations without direct supervision.

Marko, a Grade 6 teacher, offered another example:

In Finland, people take pride in paying taxes. We do it consciously. Every time our income changes, we make a report to veero (tax office) for adjustment. We trust that the taxes we pay come back to us in many ways such as education for our children, health services, public facilities or so.

Karla's example of paying for tram tickets even when no inspector is present captures responsibility as trust-based adherence to shared rules. It shows how responsibility is constituted through everyday discourses that link individual action to mutual trust and integrity. Students are invited to adopt the subject position of trustworthy citizens who do 'the right thing' without external control. In the Finnish context, where interpersonal and institutional trust are comparatively high, such narratives mirror broader social expectations that people will follow rules because they regard them as legitimate and oriented towards the common good (Mäkiharju & Smeds-Nylund, 2023; Välimaa, 2021).

Marko's account of 'tax pride' extends this theme by situating responsibility within a civic narrative of trust in public institutions. Citizens conscientiously report changes in income and rely on the fairness of redistribution, trusting that their taxes will return to them as education, healthcare and public services. This echoes recent research on the resilience of Finland's democratic institutions, where equitable education and welfare systems help sustain voluntary compliance with collective rules (Poyet et al., 2024; Rosin, 2025). In teachers' talk, responsibility is thus constructed as loyalty to a system of state provision.

Within this environment, Finnish education emphasises equity and shared responsibility, enabling teachers to translate civic trust into pedagogical routines that make institutional norms visible and meaningful to students (FNAE, 2024; Savolainen et al., 2025). Teachers build a sense of responsibility by showing how trust works in practice and by treating students as capable moral agents whose decisions matter even when no one is watching. The long tradition of trust in Finnish schooling supports pedagogies that encourage students to follow rules willingly, as part of becoming responsible citizens, rather than merely to avoid punishment (Nilivaara & Soini, 2024; Välimaa, 2021). Responsibility thus emerges through active engagement in shared practices in which students recognise their role in sustaining reliable institutions (Fornaciari & Juutilainen, 2023; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2025). By bringing concrete examples into their teaching, teachers cultivate civic consciousness and reinforce the idea that responsible action persists even without surveillance, because it upholds the social order that students currently inhabit and will later steward as adult citizens (E. Kuusisto et al., 2025; Sullanmaa et al., 2025).

Collaborating with Families

The construction of responsibility across home and school was another theme that emerged in this study. Teachers emphasised that responsibility is co-constructed through dialogue with parents. Pekka, a Grade 9 teacher, gave the following example:

During parent-teacher meetings, we talk with parents about how they support children's learning at home. We want to hear how they integrate certain values into children. It is not only teachers's job. So, how it is encouraged at home too.

In this extract, responsibility is portrayed not as a fixed value handed down unilaterally to children but as something co-created by teachers, parents and students. Responsibility is produced through conversations, routines and reciprocal commitments rather than existing as a static norm (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2001). Parent-teacher meetings become spaces in which expectations and everyday practices are negotiated across settings, making responsibility an experience that spans contexts (Koskela & Sinkkonen, 2025; E. Kuusisto & Tirri, 2021).

Pekka's reflections resonate with the Finnish emphasis on inclusive collaboration. Research shows that effective cooperation between home and school rests on mutual trust and dialogic planning, particularly in comprehensive education, where equity and inclusion are guiding principles (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). These partnerships are expressed not only in formal meetings but also through multi-professional collaboration and digital communication tools such as *Wilma*, through which parents are positioned as co-educators whose everyday routines help to sustain children's sense of responsibility (Sirrko et al., 2025).

These practices indicate that responsibility is continuously negotiated across contexts. Teachers invite parents to share their perspectives, routines and value commitments, and together they shape expectations for students (Perälä-Littunen & Böök, 2023). Within the Finnish system, such collaboration is reinforced by institutional arrangements and cultural norms that make the co-construction of responsibility both visible and actionable in everyday school life (Lähdemäki, 2019; Rönn-Liljenfeldt et al., 2024). The partnership between home and school thus does more than coordinate tasks: it illustrates that students learn responsibility through their roles in overlapping communities, where they practise acting ethically and dependably in different settings (Kelly et al., 2018; Perälä-Littunen & Böök, 2023). In the Finnish context, this shared work of nurturing responsibility demonstrates how civic values are socially constructed through interdependent institutions rather than located solely within individual actors (Kasa et al., 2023; E. Kuusisto et al., 2025; Ydesen & Buchardt, 2020).

What the Study Reveals

The themes above show that responsibility is treated as a relational and context-bound way of being that is continually negotiated in everyday practice. Teachers do not simply teach responsibility as a ready-made virtue; rather, they participate in constructing particular meanings of responsible citizenship through the routines, examples and narratives that organise school life (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015). Across early childhood, primary and lower secondary settings, responsibility is configured as a nexus of autonomy, care, participation and trust, closely aligned with the ideals of a universalist welfare state and a trust-based school system (Välilä, 2021).

The first dimension to emerge is everyday autonomy within relations of care, visible in the themes of encouraging self-reliance, assigning practical life tasks and collaborating with families. In these practices, children are positioned as capable actors who gradually take charge of dressing, managing their belongings and contributing to household chores, while remaining embedded in supportive relationships with adults and peers (Einarsdóttir et al., 2015; Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2012). Responsibility is constructed as 'being able to manage' everyday life – packing a backpack, cooking, doing the laundry – rather than as mere compliance with rules. At the same time, collaboration between home and school shows that such expectations are not defined unilaterally by teachers but are co-authored with parents in conversations about how learning and values are supported at home (Perälä-Littunen & Böök, 2023; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). These micro-interactions express a distinctively Finnish civic ideal in which citizens are expected to be self-directed and practically competent, yet also sustained by interdependent networks of family and school (Karila, 2012).

The second dimension concerns collective participation and shared goods, integrating the themes of organising collective responsibility, promoting ethical awareness and facilitating work-life orientation. In early childhood, tidying up toys is framed not as 'my mess' but as 'our space', with teachers discursively shifting the focus from personal use to communal care, echoing Nordic emphases on solidarity and participation in maintaining common goods (Einarsdóttir et al., 2015; Trägårdh, 2010). In primary schools, food waste becomes a lens through which local routines are connected to global inequalities and ecological limits, constructing responsibility as ethical awareness of interdependence (Janhonen et al., 2024; Wolff et al., 2022). In the lower secondary grades, TET placements extend this participatory logic to the labour market, inviting students to try out identities as workers and contributors in real workplaces and thereby linking school to economic and civic structures (Kettunen, 2024; Rinne & Raudasojä, 2022). Across these sites – the classroom community, the ecological environment and the workplace – responsibility is organised around participation in shared goods rather than around individual performance alone. This pattern reflects Finnish policy commitments to democracy, sustainability and equity, and embeds these policy-level aims in the everyday choreography of group work, mealtimes and work placements (Savolainen et al., 2025).

The third dimension is trust-based institutional citizenship, most clearly articulated in the theme of modelling civic trust but also underpinning the other practices. Teachers' accounts of paying tram fares without inspection and taking pride in reporting taxes position responsibility as voluntary adherence to collectively agreed rules, because institutions are seen as legitimate and oriented towards the common good (Poyet et al., 2024). By linking these civic examples to classroom expectations, teachers invite students to see themselves as participants in a community (Fornaciari & Juutilainen, 2023; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2022). This trust-based orientation is consistent with a system in which schools enjoy considerable professional autonomy and relatively little external surveillance: responsibility is cultivated by treating students as trustworthy and capable of making sound moral choices, rather than by controlling them through constant monitoring (Nilivaara & Soini, 2024). Institutional trust is thus not only described but actively reproduced in school discourse, as children learn that their everyday

decisions help to sustain reliable public systems (Mäkiharju & Smeds-Nylund, 2023; Välimaa, 2021).

Across these three dimensions, the study reveals that responsible citizenship in Finland is socially constructed through ordinary practices that connect children's immediate worlds with broader civic, economic and ecological orders. The same lunch table can be a site for learning about global hunger and national sustainability targets; the same homework task can link family care work to societal expectations of self-reliance; and the same class discussion can turn a tram ticket or a tax return into an emblem of shared commitment within Finnish society. These practices do not simply reflect an existing civic culture; they help to sustain it and to shape how each new generation of students understands it (Osberg & Biesta, 2021).

Moreover, the Finnish strategies for cultivating responsibility resonate with broader international debates on how responsibility is promoted in contemporary citizenship and character education. Expectations such as bringing one's own bag or tidying up toys reflect an emphasis on personal agency and self-management, in line with global citizenship education (GCE) frameworks that regard autonomy as a prerequisite for navigating complex global conditions (Auh & Kim, 2026).

Practices such as finishing one's meal or contributing to household tasks correspond to the ethical and relational dimensions of responsibility, echoing arguments that GCE must cultivate everyday moral awareness and interdependence rather than abstract moral ideals (Akkari & Maleq, 2020; Auh et al., 2021). The Grade 8 work placement illustrates how Finnish schooling links responsibility to real-world participation, consistent with international calls for experiential and community-based approaches that prepare young people for social and economic life in a rapidly changing world (Davies, 2023). Similarly, teachers' modelling of civic trust reflects the ethical-civic orientation of responsibility that GCE scholars identify as essential for sustaining democratic cultures (Auh et al., 2021; Stitzlein, 2020).

These practices also align with East Asian discourses that conceptualise responsibility as a blend of moral discipline, relational harmony and contribution to the community (Ho, 2018), suggesting that Finnish approaches share affinities with wider global traditions of moral and civic formation. These examples thus demonstrate how Finnish education operationalises responsibility through everyday routines and lived experience, while also reflecting global discourses that conceptualise responsibility as ethical, relational, practical and future-oriented.

Conclusion

This study has shown that responsible citizenship is constructed not as a fixed moral trait but as a set of trust-based practices that link everyday routines to wider Finnish institutions. The teachers in this study cultivated responsibility by scaffolding self-reliance, organising collective care, framing ordinary actions (such as eating, tidying up and homework) as ethically and socially consequential, connecting schooling to working life, modelling confidence in public institutions and co-authoring expectations with families. These practices reveal a civic ideal in which children are treated as already participating members of communities who can be trusted to act autonomously and cooperatively within a dense web of supportive relationships.

Theoretically, the Finnish case refines social constructionist accounts of responsible citizenship in three ways. First, it shows that responsibility is constructed through mundane, embodied routines – dressing, tidying, cooking and commuting – rather than primarily through formal civics instruction. Second, it demonstrates how these routines are saturated with the norms of a high-trust society: responsibility is repeatedly tied to confidence in redistribution, public services and institutional fairness, so that 'being responsible' comes to mean sustaining collective systems as much as following rules. Third, it highlights the importance of inter-institutional co-construction, as responsibility is negotiated across school, home and the workplace, with teachers, parents and employers jointly positioning children as reliable contributors to shared goods. Together, these insights extend social constructionist

perspectives by specifying how particular configurations of trust, welfare and professional autonomy shape the everyday making of responsible citizens.

This study is limited by its focus on teachers' narratives, which risks overemphasising adult perspectives and presenting responsibility largely as a top-down project. Future research should therefore include the voices of students and families to examine how children adapt to or resist these constructions on their own terms, and should explore how similar or alternative constructions of responsibility emerge in less trust-based or more market-oriented educational contexts.

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank all participants for their time and for providing the information and data required for this study.

Funding Statement

This research did not receive funding.

Ethics Approval

No ethics approval is required. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participants received an information sheet and signed consent forms before the interviews, and all identifying details have been removed through pseudonymisation.

References

- Aguzzoli, R., Lengler, J., Miller, S. R., & Chidlow, A. (2024). Paradigms in qualitative IB research: Trends, analysis and recommendations. *Management International Review*, 64(2), 165–198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-024-00529-5>
- Akkari, A., & Maleq, K. (Eds.). (2020). *Global citizenship education: Critical and international perspectives*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44617-8>
- Auh, Y., Im, M., Kim, C., & Hwang, S. (2021). Educating global citizenship in a changing world via after-school music program in Korea. *Pedagogical Research*, 6(4), Article em0109. <https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/11302>
- Auh, Y., & Kim, C. (2026). Global citizenship education under neo-nationalism: A five-model framework for pedagogical contestation. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2026.2669940>
- Bæck, U.-D. K., & Autti, O. (2025). “Here comes the teacher”: Navigating the complexities of being a teacher in rural Finland. *Education Sciences*, 15(7), Article 880. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15070880>
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (2023). The social construction of reality. In W. Longhofer & D. Winchester (Eds.), *Social theory re-wired: New connections to classical and contemporary perspectives* (3rd ed., pp. 92–101). Routledge.
- Brinkmann, S. (2013). *Qualitative interviewing*. Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Burr, V., & Dick, P. (2017). Social constructionism. In B. Gough (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of critical social psychology* (pp. 59–80). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51018-1_4

- Busetti, S., & Pace, N. (2022). *Food loss and waste policy: From theory to practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003226932>
- Chung, J. (2023). Research-informed teacher education, teacher autonomy and teacher agency: The example of Finland. *London Review of Education*, 21(1), Article 13. <https://doi.org/10.14324/LRE.21.1.13>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Davies, L. (2023). Global citizenship: Abstraction or framework for action? In J. Martin, M. Bowl, & G. Banks (Eds.), *Mapping the field: 75 years of Educational Review* (Vol. 1, pp. 127–146). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003403708>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Einarsdottir, J., Purola, A.-M., Johansson, E. M., Broström, S., & Emilson, A. (2015). Democracy, caring and competence: Values perspectives in ECEC curricula in the Nordic countries. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 23(1), 97–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2014.970521>
- Finnish National Agency for Education. (2022). *National core curriculum for early childhood education and care* (Regulation OPH-700-2022). <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/national-core-curriculum-ecec-nutshell>
- Finnish National Agency for Education. (2024). *Education in Finland*. https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/7.6.23Education_in_Finland_2023.pdf
- Fornaciari, A., & Juutilainen, M. (2023). Who has the power to define the ideal teacher? Insights into the social structure of Finnish teacher education. *Frontiers in Education*, 8, Article 1297055. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1297055>
- Gergen, K. J. (2001). *Social construction and pedagogical practice*. Swarthmore College. https://www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/kenneth-gergen/Social_Construction_and_Pedagogical_Practice.pdf
- Gergen, K. J. (2015). *Relational being: Beyond self and community*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199846269.001.0001>
- Haapaniemi, J., Venäläinen, S., Malin, A., & Palojoki, P. (2021). Teacher autonomy and collaboration as part of integrative teaching – reflections on the curriculum approach in Finland. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(4), 546–562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1759145>
- Häärä, M., Rissanen, I., Kuusisto, E., & Kaukko, M. (2025). The role of mindsets in culturally responsive teaching: Pedagogical strategies among Finnish preservice teachers. *Social Psychology of Education*, 28(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-025-10154-1>
- Heikka, J., Koivula, M., Hautakangas, M., Suhonen, K., & Halttunen, L. (2024). Pedagogical leadership in Finnish early childhood education and care through the lens of practice architectures. *Nordisk Barnehaveforskning*, 21(2), 145–165. <https://doi.org/10.23865/nbf.v21.451>
- Ho, L.-C. (2018). Conceptions of global citizenship education in East and Southeast Asia. In I. Davies, L.-C. Ho, D. Kiwan, C. L. Peck, A. Peterson, E. Sant, & Y. Waghid (Eds.), *The Palgrave*

- handbook of global citizenship and education* (pp. 83–95). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59733-5_6
- Janhonen, K., Manninen, M., & Hjalmskog, K. (2024). Sustainable food education in Finnish schools through collaborative pedagogy. In J. E. Gaddis & S. A. Robert (Eds.), *Transforming school food politics around the world* (pp. 77–94). MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/15426.003.0013>
- Joseph, P. (2023). 'It's all public anyway': A collaborative navigation of anonymity and informed consent in a study with identifiable parent carers. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 17(2), 191–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2023.2206671>
- Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19(11), 1632–1641. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732309350879>
- Kangas, J., Maunumäki, M., Maunula, M., & Harju-Luukkainen, H. (2024). Critical consideration of sustainable teacher education in Finland. *Education in the North*, 31(1), 62–78. <https://doi.org/10.26203/K107-3324>
- Karila, K. (2012). A Nordic perspective on early childhood education and care policy. *European Journal of Education*, 47(4), 584–595. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12007>
- Kasa, T., Karilainen, L., Cantell, H., & Kallioniemi, A. (2023). Finnish UNESCO school educators' understanding of global citizenship education: Analysis through typologies, ecosocial understanding, and human rights. *Prospects*, 53(3–4), 459–476. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-021-09597-z>
- Kelly, K., Merry, J., & Gonzalez, M. (2018). Trust, collaboration and well-being: Lessons learned from Finland. *SRATE Journal*, 27(2), 34–39.
- Kersh, N., Toiviainen, H., Pitkänen, P., & Zarifis, G. K. (Eds.). (2021). *Young adults and active citizenship: Towards social inclusion through adult education* (Vol. 26). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65002-5>
- Kettunen, J. (2024). Finnish lower secondary career education through a systems lens. *Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance*, 5(1), 73–85. <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.85>
- Kiikeri, P., Uusiautti, S., & Purtilo-Nieminen, S. (2023). Finnish vocational education and training (VET) students' perceptions of the joy of studying in an online learning environment. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 28(1), Article 2252893. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2023.2252893>
- Koivula, M., Gregoriadis, A., Rautamies, E., & Grammatikopoulos, V. (2019). Finnish and Greek early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices in supporting children's autonomy. *Early Child Development and Care*, 189(6), 990–1003. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2017.1359583>
- Könönen, J. (2024). Enforcement of public order and security. In J. A. Brandariz, G. Fabini, C. Fernández-Bessa, & V. Ferraris (Eds.), *Border criminologies from the periphery: Cross-national conversations on bordered penalty* (pp. 247–264). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003333166>
- Koskela, T., & Sinkkonen, H.-M. (2025). Parental involvement in supporting their children in inclusive education: Cooperation with school professionals in Finland. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), Article 2464272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2464272>
- Kouros, K., Toivanen, R., & Kasa, T. (2024). The Finnish national human rights institution's approach to human rights education. In A. Osler & B. Goldschmidt-Gjerlów (Eds.), *Nordic perspectives on human rights education* (pp. 44–58). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003340676-5>

- Kuckartz, U., & Rädiker, S. (2019). *Analyzing qualitative data with MAXQDA: Text, audio, and video*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15671-8>
- Kumpulainen, K., & Lipponen, L. (2012). The dialogic construction of agency in classroom communities. In M. B. Ligorio & M. César (Eds.), *Interplays between dialogical learning and dialogical self* (pp. 193–217). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-62396-066-720251011>
- Kumpulainen, K., Lipponen, L., Hilppö, J., & Mikkola, A. (2014). Building on the positive in children's lives: A co-participatory study on the social construction of children's sense of agency. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(2), 211–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.778253>
- Kuusisto, A., Poulter, S., & Harju-Luukkainen, H. (2021). Worldviews and national values in Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish early childhood education and care curricula. *International Research in Early Childhood Education*, 11(2), 41–62. <https://doi.org/10.26180/16935091.V1>
- Kuusisto, E., Rissanen, I., Timm, S., & Kaukko, M. (2025). Civic purposes in teaching: A study among Finnish and German student teachers. *European Educational Research Journal*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041251359342>
- Kuusisto, E., & Tirri, K. (2021). The challenge of educating purposeful teachers in Finland. *Education Sciences*, 11(1), Article 29. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11010029>
- Lähdemäki, J. (2019). Case study: The Finnish National Curriculum 2016—A co-created national education policy. In J. W. Cook (Ed.), *Sustainability, human well-being, and the future of education* (pp. 397–422). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78580-6_13
- Loen, M. (2025). Norm adherence, trust, and citizens' compliance: Exploring citizens' attitudes to public welfare institutions across Europe. *Governance*, 38(3), Article e70037. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.70037>
- Mäkiharju, A., & Smeds-Nylund, A.-S. (2023). Finland: A structure of trust. In A. E. Gunnulfsen, H. Ärlestig, & M. Storgaard (Eds.), *Education and democracy in the Nordic countries* (Vol. 21, pp. 29–44). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33195-4_3
- Messina, N. (2023). Sustainable development: A comparison between the Finnish and the Italian education systems. *Sustainability*, 15(10), Article 8077. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15108077>
- Moberg, J., & Kuusisto, E. (2025). Manifestations of purpose in life among Finnish student teachers. *Journal of Moral Education*, 54(4), 664–683. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2024.2312151>
- Mykrä, N. (2023). Ecological sustainability and steering of Finnish comprehensive schools. In M. Thrupp, P. Seppänen, J. Kauko, & S. Kosunen (Eds.), *Finland's famous education system: Unvarnished insights into Finnish schooling* (pp. 87–104). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-8241-5_6
- Negrin, K. A., Slaughter, S. E., Dahlke, S., & Olson, J. (2022). Successful recruitment to qualitative research: A critical reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221119576>
- Nilivaara, P., & Soini, T. (2024). Alternative futures of Finnish comprehensive school. *Policy Futures in Education*, 22(3), 308–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103231173615>
- OECD. (2021). *Drivers of trust in public institutions in Finland*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/52600c9e-en>

- Orell, M., & Pihlaja, P. (2020). Cooperation between home and school in the Finnish Core Curriculum 2014. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 40(2), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.23865/nse.v40.2224>
- Osberg, D., & Biesta, G. (2021). Beyond curriculum: Groundwork for a non-instrumental theory of education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(1), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1750362>
- Paavola, H., & Pesonen, J. (2021). Diversity discourses in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 10(3), 1–20. <https://journal.fi/jecer/article/view/114168>
- Pascale, J., Lineback, J. F., Bates, N., & Beatty, P. (2022). Protecting the identity of participants in qualitative research. *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, 10(3), 549–567. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jssam/smab048>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Perälä-Littunen, S., & Böök, M. L. (2023). Finnish teacher-students' views on home-school cooperation. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 11, 37–45. <https://doi.org/10.54195/ijpe.14120>
- Pope, E. M., Brandão, C., Bower, K., & Verdugo-Castro, S. (2023). Qualitative research for interdisciplinary studies: Multiple methodologies for multiple disciplines. *New Trends in Qualitative Research*, 16, vi–xi. <https://doi.org/10.36367/ntqr.16.2023.e825>
- Poyet, C., Niemikari, R., & Raunio, T. (2024). What makes democratic institutions resilient to crises? Applying a novel analytical framework to the case of Finland. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 32(1), 246–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2023.2230456>
- Ranta, S., Heiskanen, N., Heiskanen, N., & Syrjämäki, M. (2023). Teamwork as a cornerstone of a child's educational support in early childhood education and care in Finland. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 12(2), 158–178. <https://doi.org/10.58955/jecer.121462>
- Rapp, A. C., & Corral-Granados, A. (2024). Understanding inclusive education – a theoretical contribution from system theory and the constructionist perspective. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(4), 423–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1946725>
- Rautiainen, M., Männistö, P., & Fornaciari, A. (2019). Democratic citizenship and teacher education in Finland. In A. Raiker, M. Rautiainen, & B. Saqipi (Eds.), *Teacher education and the development of democratic citizenship in Europe* (pp. 62–73). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429030550>
- Rinne, S., & Raudasoja, A. (2022). Finland: Vocational guidance in Finland. In C. Enoch, C. Krause, R. Garcia-Murias, & J. Porath (Eds.), *Vocational guidance in Europe* (pp. 53–65). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-06592-7_3
- Ronkainen, R., Kuusisto, E., Eisenschmidt, E., & Tirri, K. (2023). Ethical sensitivity of Finnish and Estonian teachers. *Journal of Moral Education*, 52(2), 172–188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2021.1960491>
- Rönn-Liljenfeldt, M., Sundqvist, C., & Ström, K. (2024). Between vision and reality: Finnish school leaders' experiences of their own and teachers' roles in the development of co-teaching. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 68(4), 647–660. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2023.2175247>

- Rosin, A. (2025). The employment status, working conditions and social protection of vocational education trainees: The example of Finland. *European Journal of Social Security*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13882627251397570>
- Saari, J. (2023). Welfare state in a fair society? Post-industrial Finland as a case study. In P. Haapala, M. Harjula, & H. Kokko (Eds.), *Experiencing society and the lived welfare state* (pp. 325–346). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21663-3_15
- Sahlberg, P., & Walker, T. D. (2021). *In teachers we trust*. W. W. Norton.
- Saleem, A., Kausar, H., & Deeba, F. (2021). Social constructivism: A new paradigm in teaching and learning environment. *Perennial Journal of History*, 2(2), 403–421. <https://doi.org/10.52700/pjh.v2i2.86>
- Savolainen, P., Karhu, A., Närhi, V., & Savolainen, H. (2025). From fidelity to sustainability – school-wide PBIS in Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2025.2506376>
- Schwenkenbecher, A. (2021). *Getting our act together: A theory of collective moral obligations*. Routledge.
- Seidman, I. (2019). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Silvennoinen, K., Nisonen, S., Kettunen, M., Kostensalo, J., Raulio, S., Niinistö, S., Meinilä, J., Vepsäläinen, H., Korkalo, L., Erkkola, M., Forma, L., Virtanen, S. M., & Saarinen, M. (2025). The impact of adhering to a more plant-based menu on food waste at Finnish early childhood education and care centres. *British Food Journal*, 127(6), 2091–2106. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-09-2024-0981>
- Simeonova, B., & Fitzgerald, G. (2023). Case study research revisited. In B. Simeonova & R. D. Galliers (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of qualitative digital research* (pp. 140–159). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106436.013>
- Simola, H. (2015). *The Finnish education mystery: Historical and sociological essays on schooling in Finland*. Routledge.
- Sirrko, R., Kotilainen, N., & Mononen, R. (2025). Parents' experiences of home school collaboration via the digital platform Wilma. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 45(3), 228–246. <https://doi.org/10.23865/nse.v45.6972>
- Stake, R. E. (2013). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (4th ed., pp. 119–149). SAGE.
- Stitzlein, S. M. (2020). *Learning how to hope: Reviving democracy through our schools and civil society*. Oxford University Press.
- Sullanmaa, J., Tikkanen, L., Ulmanen, S., & Pyhältö, K. (2025). Life satisfaction, relatedness, and study engagement in the upper secondary school transition: The function of social support. *Social Psychology of Education*, 28(1), Article 128. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-025-10081-1>
- Thrupp, M., Seppänen, P., Kauko, J., & Kosunen, S. (Eds.). (2023). *Finland's famous education system: Unvarnished insights into Finnish schooling*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-8241-5>
- Tirri, K., & Kuusisto, E. (2022). *Teachers' professional ethics: Theoretical frameworks and empirical research from Finland*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004532649>
- Tirri, K., & Kuusisto, E. (2025). Teachers' professional ethics: Theoretical frameworks and empirical research from Finland [Response to book review symposium]. *Journal of Moral Education*, 54(4), 769–773. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2025.2568360>

- Tracy, S. J. (2025). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact* (3rd ed.). Wiley Blackwell.
- Trägårdh, L. (2010). Rethinking the Nordic welfare state through a neo-Hegelian theory of state and civil society. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 15(3), 227–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2010.513853>
- Transparency International. (2024). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2024: Finland*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/finland>
- Välimaa, J. (2021). Trust in Finnish education: A historical perspective. *European Education*, 53(3–4), 168–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10564934.2022.2080563>
- Vento, I. (2024). Trust, collaboration, and participation in governance: A Nordic perspective on public administrators' perceptions of citizen involvement. *Public Administration Review*, 84(5), 870–887. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13833>
- Vesterinen, M. (2024). Sustainability competences in environmental education: Research on guidebooks for teachers at Finnish primary schools. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), Article 2286120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2286120>
- Vlasov, J., Sarkkinen, T., & Harkoma, S. (2024). *Sustainable political decisions are needed to deliver high-quality early childhood education and care*. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). https://www.karvi.fi/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/FINEEC_Policy_brief_0324.pdf
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.). Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4>
- Wolff, L. A., Laherto, A., Cheah, S., Vivitsou, M., & Autio, M. (2022). Transformation toward sustainability in Finnish teacher education policy: Promises and shortcomings. *Frontiers in Education*, 7, Article 856237. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.856237>
- Ydesen, C., & Buchardt, M. (2020). Citizen ideals and education in Nordic welfare state school reforms. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1450>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE.