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### Abstract

In this article, we examine Finnish class teachers as citizenship educators. Over the last ten years, the autonomous position of the Finnish teacher has become a symbol of the world famous education system, and this study aims to illustrate how this freedom comes true in the framework of teacher as a citizenship educator. A prior study shows that teachers mostly share the same universal values, emphasising altruism rather than individualism. Socially, teachers are more focused on maintaining the status quo and continuity of society than changing it radically. This paper aims to answer the question how teachers define their role between society and individual learners and how they prioritize their social educational objectives. We collected our empirical data from teachers and conceptualized it using the framework of three kinds of citizens by Joel Westheimer & Joseph Kahne (2004). This study demonstrates that the level of understanding and interest towards social and societal issues does not easily develop into preparedness or willingness to participate or act. This is a concern worth noticing in teacher education and studies regarding teacher profession in general.

# Finnish teachers as civic educators: From vision to action

## Introduction

The role of a teacher as a social agent and citizen has always been influenced by the expectations of other stakeholders in society. For example, since teachers are civil servants in many countries, their occupation is strongly connected to the ideology of the rulers of the state, especially in countries ruled by one ideology. Despite this, teachers share the same universal values, emphasising altruism rather than individualism. In addition, as a group, teachers are more focused on maintaining the status quo and continuity of society than changing it radically. Moreover, in democracies, such as Finland, teachers also have a proactive role as developers of democracy (Rautiainen 2019).

The Finnish education system is one of the most autonomous in the world. Teachers have a large degree of pedagogical freedom; no inspection system exists, e.g. Ofsted in England, and there are no hierarchies between different teacher groups in schools. All qualified teachers are considered to be equal. The only exception is the head teacher of the school. Since the 1970s, the frame, structures and ethos of the Finnish education system have stressed the role of teachers as educators for democracy. This is visible in curricula and education policy documents.

According to the current national core curriculum for primary education, critical thinking and democratic principles construct the foundation of active citizenship.(NCC 2014) Civic education should not be limited to any single school subject but should be embedded in the entire working culture; in other words, it should be included in every subject. It is typical for civic education to aim to affect values, societal understanding and attitudes, as well as social activity and participation (Suutarinen 2007:101; Brookfield 2005). In practice, because of the nature of the system, teachers decide by themselves, mostly as individuals, what this means in the everyday life of their classrooms. In this article, with the help of a backing framework, we examine how class teachers understand their civic educational aim and how it is visible in their thinking. By class teachers, we refer to teachers in primary schools who teach classes 1-6 (ages 7-13).

New teacher generation—new citizenship?

From the founding of a Finnish teacher training institute in Jyväskylä in 1863 until the 1960s, the role of basic education teachers (folk schools) as citizens was based on the concept of the role model. According to this principle, each teacher has to perform this role in his/her everyday life. For one hundred years, this model was based on Christian values and ethics. Teachers also had a very important role in nation building, and thus, nationality was part of good citizenship. The education system also emphasised uniformity until the 1960s, when the emergence of left wing parties, as well as the construction of a new nine-year comprehensive school system, stressing individualism and democracy, challenged this value (Valtonen & Rautiainen 2019).

The change was radical in many ways, including from the viewpoint of citizenship education. The folk school ethos focused on the education of Finnish citizens, while the comprehensive school approach focused on the individual assessment of each student based on the learning objectives of each school subject. In addition, the autonomy of the individual teachers, as well as the schools as independent units, increased a great deal at this time. In addition, in the early 1990s, the system for the inspection of teaching materials and schools was abolished. These reforms radically changed citizenship education in school. Education for democracy replaced the uniform concept of ideal citizenship represented by the teacher himself/herself. In addition, the responsibility for citizenship education shifted from the institutional level to the individual level based on the new autonomous position of the teacher.

At the same time in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the debate about the teacher's role as a citizenship educator resumed. According to CivEd (Civic Education Study) results in 2001, Finnish students felt that they did not have opportunities to participate as active citizens in society or in their school (see Torney- Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schulz 2001). In addition, interest in active citizenship was very low among 8<sup>th</sup> grade secondary school students. After a few years, the same result emerged among students in initial teacher training (Syrjäläinen, Eronen & Värrö 2006). After these results were released, the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as the Finnish National Agency for Education, began implementing several projects to promote education for democracy and human rights, as well as participatory culture in schools and teacher education. Themes of 'voice for pupil' and the 'right to participate' were also highly emphasised in the national core curriculum for basic education, which has been implemented in Finnish schools since 2016. (Finnish National Board of Education 2016 chapter 2.2).

Over the last thirty years, the autonomous position of the teacher has become a symbol of the Finnish education system, representing highly respected and trusted professionals whose importance is well-established in Finnish society and internationally. Education systems create and challenge schools and teachers to develop new and experimental cultures. However, alongside this characteristic of Finnish education, tradition has also large role among teachers. Part of this tradition is the old idea of the teacher as a role model and an example of a good citizen. (Raiker & Rautiainen 2017.)

The role of the teacher as a citizenship educator underlines the relationship between school and society. In recent decades, this discussion has been partly replaced by an ideological, neoliberalist viewpoint in which business life, including its terminology, has become part of educational speak (such as the use of the term client for student or teacher (Värri 2019)).<sup>1</sup> In addition, compared to the ethical-moral educational assignments of public schools, the market-driven society and the prevailing ideology of citizens as consumers give, in many ways, the opposite input to schools and teachers (See e.g. Värri 2019, Clandinig & Husu 2017, Kinnari & Silvennoinen 2015).

To sum up, since the early 1990s, the teaching profession has been under change from social and individual points of view. This paper aims to answer the following question: (1) how do teachers define their role between society and individual learners? We collected empirical data from teacher interviews and conceptualized it using the framework that Joel Westheimer & Joseph Kahne (2004) presented in the article, *What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy has three categories of good citizen*. Particularly in Finland, where teachers have high degrees of autonomy and freedom in their teaching and the institutional culture in schools has traditionally had challenges in the areas of values and citizenship education, the question, *what kind of citizen?*, is incisive (see e.g. Simola 2015, Sitomaniemi-San 2015).

### Three kinds of citizens

In their article, Westheimer & Kahne (2004) create a framework to illustrate the different kinds of visions that educators, scholars and policy makers have regarding desirable citizenship. The article calls attention to the spectrum of ideas about what good citizenship is and what good citizens do, which are embodied in democratic education programs. The article offers analyses of a two-year study of education programs in the United States (US) that aimed to promote

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democracy in the US education environment. (Westheimer & Kahne 2004). The framework in the article aims to organize some of these perspectives by grouping three different kinds of answers to a question that is of central importance to both practitioners and scholars: what kind of citizen do we need to support an effective democratic society? (Westheimer & Kahne 2004, 3).

Westheimer & Kahne (2004) conclude that their study highlights important differences in the ways educators conceive of democratic educational aims. The concept of good citizenship relies strongly on the educators/teachers' own conceptions of efficient and righteous democratic citizenship, and no uniform or collective understanding exists. Depending on one's societal ideology and way of thinking, the conception of a good citizen differs. For some, a commitment to democracy is a promise to protect liberal notions of freedom, while, for others, democracy is primarily about equality. For some, civil society is the key, while, for others, free markets are the great hope for society (Westheimer & Kahne 2004, 241). More conservative and traditional views aim to foster law-obedient and static citizenship, whereas liberal-leftism ideas pursue more active and critical citizenship.

Table 1. Examples of the three kinds of citizens (Westheimer & Kahne 2004)

	Personally responsible citizen	Participatory citizen	Justice-oriented citizen
Description	Acts responsibly  Pays taxes, recycles, gives blood and volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis	Is an active member of community organizations and improvement efforts  Organizes improvement efforts  Knows how government agencies work and how	Critically assesses social, political and economic structures  Seeks and addresses injustice  Knows about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change

		to accomplish collective tasks	
Sample action	Contributes food to a food drive	Helps organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and <u>acts to solve root problems</u>
Core assumptions	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character, and they must be honest and law-abiding members of society.	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and structures.	To solve social problems and improve society, citizen must debate, question and change established systems and structures when they produce patterns of injustice.

Westheimer & Kahne (2004) argue that it is essential to ask what kind of citizen the public school system promotes. They present that it is insufficient to mention in public documents directing education (in the curriculum etc.) that democratic values are as important as other educational aims; instead, it is necessary to define what are these democratic/citizenship values. Westheimer & Kahne (2004) highlight that the description of the three kinds of citizens is not intended to be exhaustive. All three citizenship categories have limits; for example, having a sense of duty or detecting injustices in society (personally responsible citizen) or analysing the underlying causes of inequality (justice-oriented citizen) do not automatically lead to societal development or rising in the societal structure. However, acting or participating without information or understanding the root causes of a situation does not lead to good results either.

Based on their study, Westheimer & Kahne (2004) conclude that the various democratic citizenship development programs in the US do not support the development of a comprehensive understanding of a democratic citizen, which would be a mixture/amalgamation of the three citizens' positions represented in the article; instead, they support narrower standpoints, depending on the emphasis of the program. For example, where participative citizenship was emphasised, a more in-depth understanding about the societal situation or 'world order' was not provided. In addition, where personal responsibility was

stressed, there were also individualistic and not-collective (withdrawal) interpretations of democratic citizenship. (Westheimer & Kahne 2004).

## Data and method

As in the study by Westheimer & Kahne (2004), the present study focuses less on the strategies educators use to get to a particular democratic destination and more on the varied conceptions of the destination itself. In other words, this study focuses on the conception of schools and, especially, the duty of individual teachers. In this article, democratic citizenship education is studied based on empirical data collected via individual, partly structured one-hour long interviews. In 2015–2016, 13 Finnish class teachers of different ages were interviewed in Finnish, the native language of the researcher and the informants. The participants were randomly chosen from several comprehensive schools in a major city in Finland. All the participants had MA degrees in education (teacher education program), but they were at different stages of their professional careers. The identity of the participants has been protected by deleting their identification details and randomly assigning a number to each participant (teacher 1, teacher 2, etc.).

We used theory or model-driven content analysis (see. Hsieh & Shannon 2005) to examine the data, placing our informants in the three citizenship categories of Westheimer & Kahne (2004). Based on the three categories of Westheimer & Kahne (2004) we created and identified our own three categories based on our findings (see Table 2). These categories provided a way to present civic educational aiming at a general level and illustrate the data collected from the discussions of the two interview themes analysed in the study: (1) how do you see the societal mission of a class teacher? and (2) how does this standpoint appear in your work? (See also Marton & Booth 2013.) The interview data has also been used in other scientific articles studying the foundation of the all-around professional thinking of class teachers (see. Fornaciari 2019. Forthcoming article) and teachers as public servants (see Fornaciari & Männistö 2017) In placing the informants into the categories, we primarily used statements regarding the overall educational goals set by the informants in the field on citizenship/value education. Since our main research interests were enlightening and categorizing Finnish class teachers' pedagogical goal setting in terms of citizenship education, the three citizenship categories suited our study quite well. Moreover, our aim was to answer the following research question: what kinds of citizenship educators are Finnish teachers?



This study's limitations must be acknowledged. As it focused on only 13 class teachers from a single city, albeit from different school units, generalizations to larger populations cannot be made, neither it would be the purpose. In addition, the primary data sources were one-off interviews, so potential shortcomings in the material must be considered as well. It is also clear that the interviewer had expectations about the interviews and the subjects that would be discussed during the interview sessions. Despite this, during the interviews, themes and ideas originating from the interviewees were pursued, and the researcher consciously avoided controlling and directing the discussion. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015). The interviews were confidential, and many of the class teachers told the researcher that they enjoyed the peaceful, reflective period of conversation, which their hectic daily work schedules seldom allow.

## Results

Figure 1. Citizenship education relations among the interviewees based on the categorization of Westheimer & Kahne (2004)



### Teacher striving to create justice-oriented citizens

The second most apparent category was the justice-oriented teacher, who strives to raise pupils to become justice-oriented citizens (see Figure 1). In all of the interviews, topics were discussed regarding the teacher as a justice and equality promoter. The justice-oriented citizen reflects

and analyses the social reality and problemizes it. (Westheimer & Kahne 2004). A justice-oriented citizen tries to point out relations and moments to stop and reflect on social, political and economic forces and where and how they impact our lives. Justice-oriented citizens promote social justice and worry about the root causes of social inequalities. In this study, we interpreted the justice-oriented teacher as one who emphasises in his/her work the reflection of social situations with their pupils and sees this as the main objective of citizenship education (see Table 2). The core of this category is pondering and reflecting on communal and social questions, which requires ethical-moral respect, as illustrated by one teacher:

This one time we had a big theme: pollution, water and the Baltic Sea. Among the pupils, [there was] raised a mutual thought that the Russians are the ones who are polluting the Baltic Sea. After, we had a long and rich debate that we are also polluting the sea with our consuming habits, stock raising, etc. Amongst the pupils, this raised a lot of self-reflection. (Teacher 3)

Many of the teachers gave eclectic reasons for why being justice-oriented teacher is important; one informant gave an illuminating answer:

Most of the pupils [can] cope with any kind of teacher (because of good circumstances at home), so from the ethical view, it is even more justifiable that, in the school, we help those who are in need. Even the best pupils will have to learn to live, respect and work with those who are not so talented. Therefore, they can practice these skills in schools. So, the talented pupils can work on other skills and take [the] environment and other pupils into account. (Teacher 3)

A justice-oriented upbringing was also considered to involve highlighting topical themes in schoolwork, such as sustainable nature and other social and global topics. According to the interviewees, a justice-oriented teacher has to be aware of the phenomena of our time. Societal-ethical pondering is a part of everyday schoolwork, and a big part of teachers' expertise is determining where, when and how to discuss these themes:

We were discussing migration, and one student stated, 'when we take migrants into our country, it will raise my parents' tax GNP (Gross National Product), and it means less money for our family'. Then I asked a counter question, 'what if [this is] so?' And [then I] answered myself, 'maybe we get a few less Christmas

presents, maybe we won't get the newest iPhone this Christmas and we'll have to wait [for] the year after. [A] major part of [why] these migrants come here [is that they are] in search of shelter and food. Are these two needs comparable?', I asked? (Teacher 6)

We discuss a lot about values, [including] what is reasonable from the global perspective, not just us here in Finland. We need to keep [the] whole planet viable [so] we need to teach our students this knowledge and also create [an] emotional connection to these issues. As a primary school teacher, I have the opportunity for this, to keep teaching [lessons that are] rich with experiences and values. (Teacher 4)

In many interviews, when discussing pedagogical goal setting, themes of rightness were structured in relation to the surrounding community. It was collectively felt that over individualized thinking should be challenged throughout pedagogical work:

I feel that, in today's environment, where individuality is overemphasised, the public school must be based on togetherness and [a] sense of community. Every day, you make choices [on] what to teach and what to talk about. (Teacher 9)

Strong pedagogical aims towards justice and a sense of community were at the core of the citizenship education thinking of several informants, who felt this task is best taken care of through dialogue about different worldviews:

School should be more [of] a forum of dialogue between views than a place where you learn rote-memory style, e.g. multiplication table[s]. I personally find that, in the future, dialogue between different standpoints, coexistence and solidarity will be the main educational aims of public schools. [The] mindset amongst teachers that these issues are not part of schools tasks must [be] withdraw[n]. (Teacher 4)

School need to deliver basic social skills in coping with each other. We have to acknowledge that we are not alone in this world. (Teacher 2)

Teacher educating pupils on developing a sense of social responsibility

Reflecting on the data as a whole, the class teacher educating pupils towards personally responsible citizenship was the most recognizable pedagogical goal; in fact, it was set by 12 of the informants (see Figure 1). Westheimer & Kahne (2004) argue that personally responsible citizens perform actions, such as paying their taxes, volunteering and giving blood. Personally, responsible citizens also look after other members of the community and are ready to help the unfortunate. In addition, personally responsible citizens emphasise self-discipline, honesty and hard work. In other words, a personally responsible citizen demands a righteous and ethical attitude from himself/herself and from others. Similar to justice-oriented pedagogical objectives, issues regarding personal responsibility were stressed in every interview and was an even more highlighted element of teachers' civic educational aiming (see Figure 1).

According to the data, at the centre of the civic education in class teacher profession are the ethical-educational obligations of the teacher-pupil relationship. In fact, ethical-educational elements were the most prevalent factor in the professional thinking of the participants. Generally, being ethical is related to acknowledged principles of helping, encountering and addressing disparity, having regard for the group and for the common good, etc. (see e.g. Hargreaves and Evans 1997, 4.) In this study, these aims appeared in statements of teachers' pedagogical objectives towards creating personally responsible pupils (see Table 2). In fact, in the discussions every informant presented aspects linked the ethical personally responsible citizen. Furthermore, the respondents stressed the importance of teachers' social responsibility and helping pupils develop common national-cultural habits and norms, work ethics and empathy. When discussing teachers' overall educational responsibilities and social objectives of the profession, typical answers were as follows:

Societally overlooking, society expects me to do my share and my mission is to ensure that so will my pupils when they grow up. (Teacher 12)

Basic element in being a teacher is being polite and, in the first place, being a trustful adult—it's not being taken for granted. (Teacher 5)

There was also an emphasis on the importance of basic life skills because many of the teachers felt that all-round education has faded behind more technical and substantial teaching content:

Our school has [a] high work ethic. I think this is important from the societal point of view. And [I] feel that, in basic knowledge, [the] pupils of this era has serious gaps. All-round education is too thin right now. (Teacher 8)

We need more calm, order and discipline in our work. Respect [for] each other and also respect for authorities. In a big school like ours, order brings peace and tranquillity. (Teacher 9)

These two categories (Teacher educating pupils on developing a sense of social responsibility and Teacher striving to create justice-oriented citizens) sum up the civic educational aims of the participants in our study. These two categories could be commonly denominated as a wide-ranging humanistic-constructivist concept of human beings and of teaching. We interpreted that the teachers of these two categories emphasized their ethical stance towards the profession and the desire to cultivate pupils towards social equality and objectivity.

Teacher emphasising the importance of action and participation

Meanwhile, one teacher emphasised the importance of action and participation:

To up bring youth with strong values and wiliness to act: be active. For instance, my third graders made a play to demonstrate a protest, and I was like, 'WAU, I have done something right'. (Teacher 1)

The least-popular category was the teacher as an active participatory citizen. Only one of the 13 respondents clearly prioritized pedagogical and educational work as developing and leading the pupils towards active and participatory citizenship. Participatory citizenship, as sketched by Westheimer & Kahne (2004), means that citizens are collectively active in every level of society and that schools must give youth the tools to accomplish this mission. Westheimer & Kahne (2004) note that personally responsible citizens provide food and other supplies for a food drive but participatory citizens are the ones who execute the food drive itself. Similarly, the respondent in our study who identified as a participatory citizen sets up demonstrations and makes petitions with pupils:

I encourage my pupils to act and this gives inspiration for myself also. For example, we collected over 1000 signatures in a petition to change some undesirable physical elements in our school. We went to city hall, and we met the education board, and the chairman received our petition. (Teacher 1)

In addition, Teacher 1, the sole teacher who emphasised active citizenship as a main outcome of the education system, highlighted this commitment during many points in the interview:

I'm trying raise citizens who are conscious about social facts and are willing to act to make things better. These kids [are] switched-on; we teacher[s] have [the] know-how to activate them and give them tools to ask the right questions. I think that I know, at least I hope, that, [in] the future, people do not value the same things we do; I mean, these bourgeoisie dreams, money, material, etc. I think more humane and more ecological values will prevail in the future. (Teacher 1)

Distinctive aspects of Teacher 1 were her dialogic educational methods and active agency inside and outside the work community. The use of dialogic and critical teaching methods were highlighted in the discussion with some teachers of other categories also, but Teacher 1 accentuated the importance of influencing outside the work community. This was evident in her dialectical attitude towards the documents directing the profession, i.e. the curriculum, and school unit level alignments. According to Teacher 1, the overall mission of a teacher is to act in a participatory manner and show pupils that society is always incomplete. She gave an example of herself as a participative and critical active citizen:

As in any other public service, also in teaching, the same process happens. [In] IT companies, lobbies, etc., first they said [the] overhead projector is old technology, [so] here is another, better innovation. Then [came] the document cameras. It's clear that the IT companies would be happy to rebuild every week the technological equipment of our school. But the question is who decides, 'what do we really need?' I have seen here in Helsinki pretty corrupt decision-making, and, for sure, the teachers themselves are not the ones to say the last word. (Teacher 1)

Table 2. Descriptions of the three citizens in our analyses

Teacher educating pupils on developing a sense of social responsibility	Good habits, work morale, normative and communal values, self-discipline
Teacher striving to create justice-oriented citizens	Teaching topics detracting from society, activating pedagogical discussion and dialogue, strong pursuit of equality

Teacher emphasising the importance of action and participation	First-hand action in and outside the work community, rebellious nature, continuous questioning, radical pedagogical methods, real-life implementation in teaching
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## Discussion

### The Finnish class teacher as a civic (activity) educator

In this article, with the help of Westheimer & Kahne's (2004) template, we have observed and grouped Finnish class teachers as civic educators. As noted above, we have used theory-driven categorization to divide our data into the three citizen categories. However, one of our main observations was that clear divisions between the categories were easy to recognize, and it was rather hard—and even inappropriate—to fit the teachers clearly into a single category. Furthermore, it is clear that drifting between the categories exists and none of our categorizations are exhaustive. Categories one (Teacher striving to create justice-oriented citizens) and two (Teacher educating pupils on developing a sense of social responsibility) were especially hard to distinguish. Clearly, educating pupils about justice goes hand-in-hand with teaching them about personal responsibility. However, some divisions between the categories occurred, and some informants' statements and prioritizations in their answers were clearly suited to certain categories.

Reflecting on the historical Finnish tradition in education, these results were not unexpected but have interesting derivatives. Like in many previous studies on the Finnish teaching profession, the prevalent question in the present study is as follows: where is the limit of the teacher as an active participation educator? (See Syrjäläinen et al. 2006, Räisänen 2014). Furthermore, is the teacher only allowed to have views on neutral, collectively accepted pedagogical issues or can the teacher share his/her viewpoint on state-level issues, such as energy policy or immigration policy? Moreover, the trickiest question in the present study is the following: can and must the teacher deliver preparedness and a willingness to engage in societal commentary and action? The resurrection of this existing problematic of teaching for active and participative citizenship was also one clear finding of this study: teachers in our study do not highlight participatory and active citizenship education as a priority in schools. Only one of the teachers in this study was placed in the participatory citizenship category. In

addition, this sole teacher who emphasised participatory citizenship inextricably linked the commitment to participation to the work for a just society; this is an example of a desirable citizenship educator with dual goals, as described by Westheimer & Kahne. (Westheimer & Kahne 2004, 246). Our meaning has not been to prioritize the three categories, but to study how Finnish teachers represent these three categories. The Finnish National Core Curriculum (2016) emphasizes all three categories and it was notable that two categories (justice-oriented, responsible) were clearly more visible than the one (participation).

The overall results of this study align with other studies, which indicate that teachers often perceive active citizenship/societal education as education for loose critical thinking, media literacy, etc. The concrete role of the school as a place to learn tools for active citizenship is often problematic, (See Suoranta & Ryyänänen 2014.) largely because activity and participation are often considered to be politically loaded (Rantala 2010).

Overall, society views the social mission of schools as social selection, all-round education and cultural socialization. In addition, nowadays, schools are expected to provide precision know-how on the rapidly changing tools required in the workforce (See Toom & Husu 2012). Furthermore, the free, nationally supervised school system has an essential role as the guarantor in the realization of an egalitarian and equal society. In this regard, the integrated social mission of the comprehensive school is somewhere in between conservative standpoints and social reformation. In the school environment, this tension between individual emancipation and socialization is always present. According to this study, teachers' prevalent social tasks are all-round education, leading pupils towards the concept of social justice and the transmission of standardized national-cultural moralities. Moreover, although the critical pondering of ethical-moral social issues was seen as important, action and participation in resolving these issues was not as important or as emphasised in the teachers' work. This outcome is interesting because ongoing studies (See e.g. Värrri 2019) argue that the school system is decontextualized and does not interact enough with the phenomena in the surrounding society. The participants of our study were conscious of social topics and brought these issues into their work and to the educational dialogue. However, they referred to many occasions that the school institutions in general might not be doing this on a large scale. This study demonstrates that the level of understanding and interest towards social and societal issues does not easily develop into preparedness or willingness to participate or act. At the very least, the teachers did not highlight the importance of this. Westheimer & Kahne (2004b) believe that efforts (programs) to



democratize teaching and school culture are too narrow and often have a conservative conception of citizenship. Therefore, the idea of citizenship reflects neither arbitrary choices nor pedagogical limitations but rather political choices with political consequences. Westheimer & Kahne 2004b, pp.241) This conservative or obedient conception of citizenship was evident amongst the participants of this study.

The most fundamental contradiction within the schooling's civic purpose is the tension between the social and individual objectives of education (Siljander 2005: 79). Continuity in society requires many things to remain unchallenged, and the role of education is to raise children to fulfil their social responsibilities in due course. Meanwhile, especially in democratic societies, education promotes the critical potential of children to be active developers of democracy in their society. In other words, strengthening children and youth to become autonomous citizens has traditionally been the basis for citizenship education in schools. (Ikonen 2006). This is a remarkable but currently unfulfilled task, as some studies estimate that only a small minority of the population actually achieves the abilities to use their democratic rights on a large scale (See e.g. Harju 2013) Learning in the informal sphere through participation and societal activities are the keys increasing citizens' capabilities to understand and take part in complex social issues, such as climate change and the global economic crisis. (See e.g. Holma & Kontinen 2015).

In the beginning of our article, we described the history of the development of the Finnish education system and how it shifted from a cohesive culture to more individualistic and market-driven system. Societal stakeholders are interested in changing schools according to their own interests (See Värri 2019) Therefore, the school as an institution is under pressure, as well as the individual teachers, who are the main actors of change at the classroom level. However, teachers as autonomous agents, have a great deal of power concerning the kind of daily citizenship education they implement.

Westheimer & Kahne (2004a, 2004b) maintain that it is not enough to argue that democratic values are as important as academic priorities. We should also ask what kinds of concepts are embedded in the varied conceptions of citizenship; for example, efforts to create personally responsible citizens can, in some cases, emphasise individual or egoistic social relations and undermine efforts to prepare participatory and collectively justice-oriented citizens. (See Westheimer & Kahne 2004b: 246.) According to our study, teachers' decision-making

concerning citizenship education has strengthened over the last 30 years. In addition, the solutions made by teachers as citizenship educators vary greatly. Accordingly, students are in an unequal and arbitrary position depending on their teacher's views of the objectives and methods in citizenship education.

Although the data used in this study is qualitative, it provides a picture of different realities within the autonomous school community, which should become more visible. The field of citizenship education at school is broad, and all approaches should become part of students' everyday life. Therefore, we recommend that this pluralism form the core of initial teacher training, as well as in-service teacher training. The latter is especially important, because, although initial teacher education constructs the foundations for the professional development of teachers, the in-service teacher training process continues over 30 years. Therefore, citizenship education should be addressed as an inseparable part of teachers' communal learning in each school. In this way, citizenship education can become not only communal but also visible. In this work, teaching communities need reflective mirrors and models, such as the triangle of Westheimer & Kahne (2004) or the 20 competences for democratic culture defined by the Council of Europe. (See e.g. Rautiainen 2019.)

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