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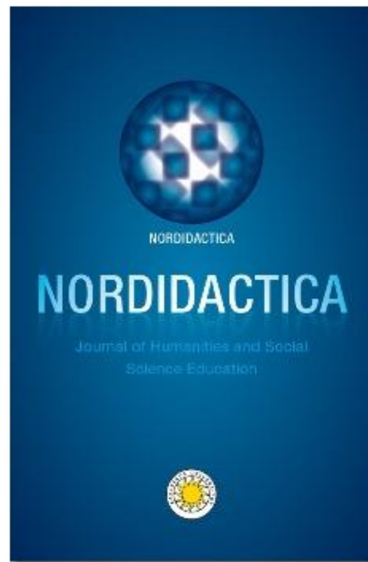

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Addressing social justice in classrooms of linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities: teacher perspective

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Abstract: Social justice is a vital part of education concerning cultural diversity, and this learning fits well to the broader goals of humanities and social sciences education. Addressing discrimination and inequality can be challenging when pupils from linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities are in the classroom. This article presents results from a survey of 76 Finnish teachers whose pupils are in a linguistic, cultural and worldview minority: What are their experiences and preferred approaches when addressing social justice in classroom, and how the preferences are shaped by their experiences, views, backgrounds and the teaching context? In their teaching, these teachers use abstract concepts of social justice and direct juxtapositions less frequently with younger pupils than with older ones. Teachers legitimate their practices through both the aims of the subjects they teach and a more general teaching mission. They use a range of teaching methods, but although activist projects are not prominent in their practice, most report that their teaching increases pupil engagement with social justice. The teachers feel that minority pupils need to understand their privilege in the global context, and need to be empowered both to face racism and discrimination and to negotiate cultural taboos in a liberal society

KEYWORDS**:** SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION, CULTURAL MINORITIES, WORLDVIEW MINORITIES, LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

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Anuleena Kimanen

Introduction

Addressing unjust social structures is an important part of education concerning cultural diversity, as has often been stressed (e.g. Dolby 2012; Gorski & Parekh 2020; Kumashiro 2000; May & Sleeter 2010). To highlight this aspect, this article will focus on social justice education in primary and secondary schools, but in the spirit of critical multiculturalism (e.g. May & Sleeter 2010) take a perspective of cultural diversity, considering how diversity of culture overlaps with linguistic and worldview diversity, domains that are specifically addressed through language and worldview (religious and ethics) education. The aim is to inform the practice about the position of linguistic, cultural and worldview minority pupils when social justice is addressed in the classroom.

Social justice education can be indirect, in the form of inclusive practices and community relationships or 'direct social justice education', i.e. teaching pupils concepts and examples of fostering social justice (Carlisle, Jackson & George 2006). The latter is the focus of this article. In any classroom, some pupils are in a disadvantaged position. How does this affect discussions of inequality and oppression? Teachers may experience these topics as 'hot lava' (Flynn 2010), and the politics of power is likely to influence the classroom (Welton, Harris, La Londe & Moyer 2015).

The research questions are: What experiences and preferred approaches do teachers of linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities in primary and secondary education have when addressing social justice in the classroom, and how are the preferences shaped by their experiences, views, backgrounds and teaching context? For these teachers, the existence of minorities in their classrooms is self-evident, so they were asked about their teaching practices generally, not just specific social justice projects. Some of these teachers are members of linguistic, cultural or worldview minorities themselves. The teachers' experiences mediate the minoritized pupils' voices, although filtered through the educator's perspective, but first and foremost they provide insights into and useful practices from classrooms where minoritized pupils are the majority to be catered for, not an exception to be careful for.

To gain the teacher perspective, teachers who teach especially linguistic, cultural and worldview diversity were invited to respond to a survey with both closed and open-ended questions. The participants were inquired about their practices but also about their conceptions about social justice education, their arguments for and experiences about social justice education and several background factors. Through theoretical concepts, the practices will be categorized as approaches. Both closed and open-ended questions will be used to answer the second question on the shaping of the preferences.

Previous research

Minorities or marginalized youth seem to benefit from developing critical consciousness both in terms of civic participation and school achievement (Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer & Rapa 2015). There are some US classroom studies of how critical consciousness develops. Morales-Doyle's (2017) study on social justice science

education for groups of ethnically minoritized students shows how organizing the science curriculum around an issue of environmental racism supported the critical consciousness of high-school students from a non-privileged area and positioned them as transformative intellectuals. Schindel Dimick (2012) argues that three types of student empowerment – social, political and academic – were intimately related when students participated in designing school projects that were relevant to their community. Flynn (2012) has observed how African American adolescents valued the chance to discuss race and racism with White peers in a combined social studies and English class. Other pupils of colour reported about racial awakening but also feelings of exclusion, as the racial discourse was shaped as binary. The teacher's pedagogical decision to address race in depth also excluded other layers of identities. Similarly, Welton, Harris, La Londe and Moyer (2015) noted that the social justice class provided a place where the experience of high-school students of colour were considered as an asset and meaningful discussions were possible, but the power dynamics still favoured the White students who were a minority in that class. Clark and Seider (2017) observed that in high schools with commitments to fostering students' engagement in social action (and with high proportions of students of colour) students found some topics relevant that were not directly linked with their lives. Furthermore, Brown's (2021) study on girls of colour in a non-profit programme committed to social justice, activism and leadership indicated the girls' need to address uncomfortable topics and to make sense of individual and shared experiences through making and taking space.

Social justice classes or projects are not available for every adolescent in a minoritized position, so including social justice in curricular subjects is an important target of study. In addition, the European, in this case Nordic, context differs from the cases described above, and classroom studies on social justice education in this context are still scarce. This article begins to fill this research gap through a survey of teachers whose pupils come from linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities.

There is some research on adolescents with privileged perspective. Kimanen's (2022b) study from a Finnish ethnic and worldview majority classroom shows that while social justice was a topic in RE class, minoritized identities were often referred to as "them", rather than as protagonists in the discussion. Informed empathy was best aroused through activities that involved presentational knowing (Kimanen 2022a), but construction of agency was often left incomplete (Kimanen 2022a, 2022b). Clouse's (2017) study of a critical literacy curriculum in the USA showed that White middle-school students grew academically and became more aware of social justice issues but were only minimally more motivated to action. These studies provide a point of comparison to the present study.

Linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities in the context of Finnish education

Cultural diversity can be addressed in many different subjects in Finnish schools, but student groups where the most cultural diversity can be found, are in two main

contexts: language and worldview education. And although not all linguistic or worldview minorities are cultural minorities, this article discusses social justice also from their perspectives. Providing worldview and language education specifically tailored for the minorities can be regarded fostering linguistic and cultural rights of those minorities, and thus part of social justice in education.

In the Finnish educational system, worldview education is provided in groups based on pupils' religious or non-religious affiliation. Those affiliated to religious communities attend religious education (RE) in groups based on their affiliation. There are both common and religion-specific goals and topics in the curricula. The majority of the pupils (87.1% in basic education in 2018) attend Lutheran RE classes, which is open to everybody, and the biggest minority RE subjects are Islamic (2.4%) and Orthodox (1.6%) RE (Vipunen 2022). The non-religious option, (elämänkatsomustieto, lit. 'worldview studies') will here be called ethics, although its content includes cultural heritage and philosophy. The ethics classes (attended by 7.7% of the basic education pupils in 2018, Vipunen 2022) are often quite diverse because separate, denomination-specific RE is compulsory only for those children who belong to the Lutheran or Orthodox churches; others, for instance Muslims and Catholics, may opt for ethics. Arranging RE in a minority religion within a municipality requires that there are three pupils who belong to a registered religious community whose parents request instruction. When these conditions are not met, for instance for Buddhists in many smaller cities, the families typically opt for ethics (Zilliacus & Kallioniemi 2016).

Language education for linguistic minorities also has two streams. Finnish as a second language (FSL) should be provided to pupils without the proficiency comparable to the native speakers in Finnish, while in Swedish-speaking schools, Swedish as a second language is available (Paulsrud, Zilliacus & Ekberg 2020). About 6% of pupils in Finnish basic education received instruction in FSL in 2018 (Vipunen 2022). Another stream is mother tongue classes in minority languages, ensuring linguistic minority pupils' linguistic rights. Apart from Swedish and Sami within the Sami region, mother tongue language education is voluntary both for municipalities to offer and to families to opt for (Paulsrud, Zilliacus & Ekberg 2020; Harju-Autti, Mäkinen & Rättyä 2021). Multilingual pupils' mother tongue classes were attended by about 18,000 pupils in 2017 although about 50,000 children in the age group 7–16 speak minority languages at home. The biggest languages were Russian, Somali, Arabic and Estonian (Tainio et al. 2019).

Different kinds of RE and ethics are sometimes taught in integrative groups (e.g. Åhs 2020), and even more frequently this is the case with FSL and Finnish or Swedish language and literature for native speakers (Tainio et al. 2019). In this study, separate FSL, RE and ethics classes along with multilingual pupils' mother tongue classes are believed to offer a special setting for addressing social justice from the minority perspective.

In addition, teachers who primarily teach linguistic and cultural minorities include teachers in preparatory classes for newly-arrived immigrant children, class and subject teachers in schools with high proportions of pupils who are in a minority in the wider society, and teachers who provide linguistic or other support for pupils either in small

groups or as co-teachers in the classroom. All of these kinds of teachers were invited to participate in this study, and some of the participants had several roles in the school community.

In the Finnish national curriculum, linguistic and cultural rights are stressed (Paulsrud, Zilliacus & Ekberg 2020). Social justice in a more general sense is present in the description of the transversal competency 7 (participation, involvement and building a sustainable future). The FSL curriculum includes instruction objectives like strengthening the pupil's linguistic and cultural identity and ability to analyse cultural diversity. Similar objectives are listed for the multilingual pupils' mother tongue education (Finnish National Agency for Education 2016). Similarly, the RE curriculum does not contain very critical approaches (Kimanen 2022a), but both RE and ethics curricula mention growth into the role of a responsible member of a democratic society and list societal issues and human rights as learning content (Finnish National Agency for Education 2016).

Social justice education and minorities – theoretical considerations

Social justice is a contested term. Some see it from a distributive perspective where equal distribution of resources represents social justice. Another view is the recognition of inequality that prevents certain groups profiting equally from equal opportunities (Boyles et al. 2009). This is the view behind most frequent forms of social justice education aiming at an analysis of the power structures and a pursuit for social change.

Mills et al. (2017) have interviewed teachers about their understandings of social justice in education and found that the educators used three metaphors. First, social justice as redistribution is concerned with compensating certain deficits with resources or opportunities. Second, social justice as recognition pays attention to the processes that produce those deficits or the unfair distribution of opportunities. Often, this approach was exemplified by good intrapersonal relationships with and between students, and thus failed to move towards social change. Third, social justice as activism filled in this gap by encouraging pupils to engage with problematic assumptions and norms. Following Amartya Sen and Nancy Fraser, the authors added a fourth metaphor, namely social justice as capability, meaning the agency, for instance in the school context, to make decisions about the content and methods of learning.

Kimanen (2022b) has introduced a classification of four approaches of social justice education. Education about social justice entails concepts and examples of social justice, inequality and action. Education into social justice aims at enhancing pupils' awareness and willingness to act for a more just society. Education with social justice fosters participation in class and education through social justice provides pupils opportunities to learn in pupil-led action. All these approaches are needed to educate future citizens who are able to both see the need for change and act for it. This fourfold classification elaborates on the rough division into indirect school policy and 'direct' social justice education mentioned earlier (Carlisle, Jackson & George 2006). In relation

to the approaches identified by Mills et al. (2017), the capability approach relates to education with social justice and activism approach to education through social justice. Similarly, Schindel Dimick's (2012) social empowerment is close to education with social justice, and political empowerment to education through social justice. Furthermore, education about and into social justice include elements that are important for Schindel Dimick's (2012) academic empowerment by giving students tools to critically review knowledge.

Thus, Kimanen's four approaches to social justice education may contribute to academic, social and political empowerment for the linguistic, cultural and worldview minority pupils. Education about social justice may give them tools to understand their situation and, together with education into social justice, inspire to defend their rights. Education with and through social justice may provide them skills to do that. However, although the African American pupils in Flynn's (2012) study were happy to educate their White peers, is there a risk, as Gorski (2012) has noted, that the minority pupils' experiences are one-sidedly used to educate the majority?

Social justice education involving minority pupils could be seen from the perspective of affirming identities or validating experiences, derived from culturally relevant pedagogies, taking an inclusive practices approach. In culturally relevant pedagogies, diverse cultural heritages are used in education both to widen all pupils' horizons and to affirm minority pupils' identities (e.g. Nieto & Bode 2012). To adjust this to social justice education, while the minority experiences (either directly from the pupils or from media or literature) may benefit the majority pupils by illustrating the mechanisms of power (Welton, Harris, La Londe & Moyer 2015); minoritized pupils can be reassured that their experiences are real and provided with language to analyse the power dynamics that affect their lives (Brown 2021). This is related to the conception of social justice as recognition, which Mills et al. (2017) see as incomplete. However, culturally relevant pedagogies see recognition as a vital step towards more structural change (see also Schindel Dimick 2012).

In other words, the four approaches to social justice education may foster minority pupils' agency. Agency is a vital concept in studies on minority perspectives because it addresses the pupils' capacity to handle injustice both mentally and actively (Gachago & al., 2014). In this context, agency means the capability and responsibility to act for a more just society (Francis & Le Roux 2011, Moore 2008). Both majorities and minorities need this agency, but this article focuses on the minority perspective.

Data and analysis

The online survey of 76 teachers contained both closed and open-ended questions. The background questions included the respondent's gender and mother tongue, and the age range of their pupils. The teachers were also asked whether they taught minorities in their own separate groups (e.g. mother tongue lessons for multilingual pupils) or in mixed groups where linguistic, cultural and worldview minority pupils form a substantial proportion (e.g. a class or subject teacher in a culturally diverse school). If

both options applied to them, the teachers were asked to pick the setting where they addressed social justice the most. As an important interest underlying the study was to understand RE, teachers were asked whether they taught RE, secular ethics or languages and other subjects for multilingual pupils.

Next, the survey adopted some variables from the social justice in education scale (Murillo & al. 2014). The items were chosen to represent all the three subscales (attitude towards social justice, attitude towards social justice in education and personal commitment) but the intention was not to conduct factor analysis in this study but rather to have a picture about the participants' perception of social justice in education from those three perspectives. The 5-point Likert scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

- We live in a deeply unjust society.
- Education has a crucial role in building a more just society.
- One of my most important tasks as a teacher is to foster pupils' self-esteem.
- One of my most important tasks as a teacher is to encourage pupils' participation.
- Values education is as important as teaching about subject contents.

To gain teachers' self-reports on addressing social justice in the classroom, ten variables were designed for this study. Some of them are based on the four approaches to social justice education (about, into, with and from, Kimanen 2022b). The fifth approach is based on culturally responsive education, especially the idea of validating minority experience (Nieto & Bode 2012; Brown 2021). The items, i.e. practices, were presented to the participants, but their relation to their theoretical approaches can be seen only in the list below. The options on the 5-point Likert scale ranged from never (1) to often (5).

Education about social justice:

- I teach concepts of justice (e.g. equality, human rights, minority, discrimination).
- I provide examples on defending justice.

Education into social justice:

- I teach my pupils to identify discrimination, stereotypes etc.
- I encourage my pupils to defend those who are in a weaker position.

Education with social justice:

- I listen to pupils' views on my instruction and take them into account.
- I encourage pupils to tell me what and how they would like to learn.

Education through social justice:

- In my classes, pupils plan and conduct activities for social justice.

Validating minority experience

- I encourage my pupils to defend their own rights.
- I bring up issues concerning the minority position of my pupils.
- If pupils bring up problems they face because of their minority position, I address them in class.

Finally, in some open-ended questions, respondents were asked to specify why they did or did not address social justice, what they did in the classroom, what reactions social justice education aroused and what kinds of justice issues pupils raised.

The online survey was bilingual with response options in Finnish and in English. The link to the online survey was shared to teachers of minority RE, secular ethics, multilingual pupils' mother tongue and Finnish as a second language. A direct e-mail was sent to e-mail addresses gained from schools' websites and a participant list of an in-service training day, altogether to 411 receivers. Additionally, the link was shared in relevant Facebook groups and mailing lists. Teachers with a substantial proportion of linguistic, cultural and worldview minority pupils in their classrooms were invited via social media to participate in the study, but the emphasis was on reaching teachers who teach those minorities in separate groups. After one reminder, the outcome was 76 responses.

The respondents reflect the gender distribution of teachers in Finland (Opetushallitus 2020), but due to the target group there were probably more multilingual teachers than the average (Table 1). In all, the participants are not a representative sample of Finnish teachers at large, but they represent those teachers who teach linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities and are somehow interested in social justice education. This interest is visible in their responses, and it probably motivated them to take the survey.

TABLE 1

Respondents' gender and mother tongue

Gender						**Mother tongue**			
Female		Male		Other/prefer not to say		Finnish/Swedish		Other	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
59	77.6	16	21.1	1	1.3	62	81.6	14	18.4

TABLE 2

Teaching pupils in separate or mixed groups?

In separate worldview/language groups		In mixed groups		No response	
n	%	n	%	n	%
49	64.5	24	31.6	3	3.9

TABLE 3

Education level at which respondents were teaching

Primary Grades 1–6		Lower Secondary Grades 7–9		Upper Secondary / Vocational	
n	%	n	%	n	%
31	40.8	31	40.8	14	18.4

The majority of the respondents taught linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities in groups separate from the majority, including multilingual pupils' own mother tongue classes, FSL classes and secular ethics classes (Table 2). About a third (31.6%) of the teachers said that in their classes, linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities form a substantial minority of their pupils. The majority of the respondents taught in basic education, grades 1–9, with even distribution into primary and lower secondary stages, but there were some teachers of upper secondary or vocational education (Table 3). Hence, the educational contexts of the participants were very diverse, but only this broad approach guaranteed even this number of responses. The last background question (Table 4) focuses on possible subject-specific differences. The participants were somewhat evenly distributed between teachers of RE in minority religions, secular ethics or other subjects like Finnish as a second language.

TABLE 4

Respondents' subjects

Minority RE		Secular ethics		Other e.g. FSL	
n	%	n	%	n	%
29	38.2	20	26.3	27	35.5

The means were calculated for each numeric variable, and then compared between different groups of participants. The statistical significance of these comparisons was tested through the Mann Whitney U test. As the background variables were very unevenly distributed, in some cases the apparently statistically significant difference may be due to another background variable: teaching level. Of the participants whose mother tongue was not Finnish or Swedish, 71.4% taught in primary education (grades 1–6). The majority of the respondents who taught subjects other than RE or ethics (63%), were also primary school teachers. To control for this effect, the data was split by the age group the respondents taught, but to prevent the groups becoming too small, upper secondary and lower secondary levels were combined. In this analysis, ethics teachers formed a very small group in the primary level, so RE and ethics teachers were also combined.

The open-ended responses were coded using qualitative content analysis (Schreier 2012). Each response was considered as a unit of analysis, but it could contain several categories – each category was coded in a single response only once. From another

perspective, all the accounts (separate practices, reasons, etc.) within the responses were labelled and accounts that did not clearly respond to the question were excluded from the analysis. The analysis was initially deductive in one question (social justice education practices), using the approaches of education about, into, with and through social justice (Kimanen 2022a), but one further category was formed inductively. In all the other questions, categories were formed inductively after reading and re-reading the responses. Besides these categories, an overarching theme was analysed in the excerpts from the responses, namely, how the pupils were positioned. These positionings add to the understanding of how the preferences are shaped, but this analysis focuses more on discourse (see e.g. Fairclough 2001) than content.

Results

Closed questions: teachers' perceptions and self-reported practices

The participants scored rather high in all items from the social justice in education scale (Table 5) except 'We live in a deeply unjust society'. The high scores probably reflect the general social justice orientation of those teachers that took the time to volunteer for the study, whereas the low score on the "injustice" item shows that not all of them had embraced a strongly critical view of society. When the means were compared based on the background variables, the only statistically significant difference was that primary education agreed more (M=4.61) than secondary teachers (M=4.38) that 'Values education is as important as teaching about subject contents' (U=534, p=.05), which probably can be attributed to the subject teacher identity of most of the secondary teachers.

TABLE 5

Respondents' perceptions on social justice and education

	N	M	SD
We live in a deeply unjust society.	76	2.95	1.0
Education has a crucial role in building a more just society.	76	4.50	0.6
One of my most important tasks as a teacher is to foster pupils' self-esteem.	75	4.48	0.6
One of my most important tasks as a teacher is to encourage pupils' participation.	76	4.46	0.7
Values education is as important as teaching about subject contents.	76	4.47	0.6

In general, the participants also reported quite high levels of social justice education practices (Table 6). The highest means were reached by 'I teach concepts of justice' (education about social justice) and 'I listen to pupils' views on my instruction and take them into account' (education with social justice). The lowest mean was for 'In my

classes, pupils plan and conduct activities for social justice' (education through social justice). This can be regarded as the most demanding form of social justice education, as it is both time-consuming and unpredictable; thus it is perhaps not surprising that it was the least reported form in this survey. Addressing minority position gained twofold scores: 'I bring up issues concerning the minority position of my pupils' had the second lowest mean whereas 'If pupils bring up problems they face because of their minority position, I address them in class' was the third highest mean. This shows the role of pupil initiative in encouraging some teachers to discuss controversial topics.

TABLE 6

Respondents' self-reported practices concerning social justice education

	N	M	SD
I teach concepts of justice (e.g. equality, human rights, minority, discrimination).	76	4.22	0.8
I provide examples on defending justice.	76	4.00	0.7
I teach my pupils to identify discrimination, stereotypes etc.	76	3.84	0.8
I encourage my pupils to defend those who are in a weaker position.	76	4.17	0.7
I listen to pupils' views on my instruction and take them into account.	76	4.21	0.7
I encourage pupils to tell me what and how they would like to learn.	76	4.07	0.8
In my classes, pupils plan and conduct activities for social justice.	76	3.33	1.0
I encourage my pupils to defend their own rights.	76	4.13	0.6
I bring up issues concerning the minority position of my pupils.	74	3.62	0.9
If pupils bring up problems they face because of their minority position, I address them in class.	74	4.20	1.0

Four of the teachers' self-reported practices varied depending on the age of their pupils with a statistically significant difference (Table 7). These included teaching concepts of justice, examples of defending justice (about social justice), teaching to identify discrimination (into social justice) and bringing up issues concerning the pupils' minority position (validating experiences). This shows that the pupils' age shaped the teachers' practices at least to some extent: teachers of younger pupils preferred to focus less on abstract concepts and direct juxtapositions.

TABLE 7

Respondents' self-reported social justice education practices with statistically significant differences according to school education level

School		I teach concepts of justice.	I provide examples on defending justice.	I teach my pupils to identify discri-mination etc.	I bring up issues concerning the minority position of my pupils.
Primary	Mean	3.81	3.74	3.48	3.30
	N	31	31	31	30
	SD	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0
Secondary	Mean	4.51	4.18	4.09	3.84
	N	45	45	45	44
	SD	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8
	U	1005.0	917.5	957.5	866.0
	Sig.	<.001	.013	.004	.017

Among primary teachers there was a statistically significant difference (U=144.5, p=.022) between those who taught RE or languages separately to specific linguistic or worldview minorities (M=3.9) and those who taught minoritized pupils as a prominent minority within mixed groups (M=4.67) concerning the item 'I listen to pupils' views on my instruction and take them into account'. This indicates that in mixed groups education with social justice was a safe approach to social justice (see also Kimanen 2022b) but it remains obscure why teachers of specific minority groups did not report using this approach as often.

Two background variables described the participants' position in the wider society, mother tongue and gender. There was a statistically significant difference between primary teachers whose mother tongue was a major national language, Finnish or Swedish (M=4.10) and those who had a different mother tongue (M=3.20) in 'I teach concepts of justice' (U=48.5, p=.015). This difference, however, is very hard to interpret. Among secondary teachers, participants who identified as men (M=3.77) were more likely than those who identified as women (M=3.29) to agree that in 'In my classes, pupils plan and conduct activities for social justice' (U=635, p=.026). These suggest certain reservations to teach about social justice to younger pupils among a socially non-privileged group of teachers (whose mother tongue was not Finnish or Swedish) and certain readiness to active participation among a socially privileged group of teachers (men). Since only about one in five of respondents were men (21.1% of respondents, see Table 1) or multilingual teachers (18.4%), these conclusions are based on a very small number of responses.

How did pedagogies vary between the teachers of different subjects? There were four statistically significant differences (Table 8), three of them on the primary level. In primary education, RE and ethics teachers reported teaching about (concepts of social justice), into (defend those who are in a weaker position) and through (activities) social justice more frequently than teachers of other subjects. However, the secondary RE and

ethics teachers reported responding to minority pupils' experiences or concerns less frequently than teachers of other subjects.

TABLE 8.

Self-reported social justice education practices with statistically significant differences according to the school education level and subject

School	**Subject**		I teach concepts of social justice.	I encourage my pupils to defend those who are in a weaker position.	In my classes, pupils plan and conduct activities for social justice.
Primary	RE/ethics	Mean	4.29	4.50	3.50
		N	14	14	14
		SD	0.5	0.5	0.8
	Other	Mean	3.41	3.88	2.82
		N	17	17	17
		SD	1.1	0.6	1.1
	Total	Mean	3.81	4.16	3.13
		N	31	31	31
		SD	0.9	0.6	1.1
		U	56	59.5	68
		Sig.	.012	.017	.044

			If pupils bring up problems they face because of their minority position, I address them in class.
Secondary	RE/ethics	Mean	4.26
		N	35
		SD	0.7
	Other	Mean	4.90
		N	10
		SD	0.3
	Total	Mean	4.4
		N	45
		SD	0.7
		U	260.5
		Sig.	.018

All in all, the data illustrates teachers' pedagogical choices. It shows that teachers' choices are guided by the age of the pupils and the subject's content and goals. In contrast, according to the data social justice education approaches do not seem to be

prominent in separate classes for pupils from linguistic and worldview minorities. Nor is there much sign that teachers in a minoritized position themselves would be explicitly committed to social justice education. The qualitative analysis will bring more details to this picture.

Open-ended questions: teachers' experiences

Reasons for social justice education

First, the participants were offered an opportunity to explain in more detail why they did or did not conduct social justice education in their classes. There were very few responses explaining the lack of social justice education because most of the respondents reported including this in their teaching practice. The reasons for not providing social justice education ranged from lack of time, age of pupils and parents' reactions to the difficulty of changing attitudes. One stated that it is better not to concentrate on bad things, and two indicated that it was not their job as a language teacher to cover such topics. As a reason to conduct social justice education, 20 respondents mentioned their own commitment to foster social justice or related principles and 19 mentioned the pupils' need to receive such education. Ten participants referred to the learning goals of their subject or the school in general, or to the role of the teacher.

The following citations illustrate these categories and express an overarching theme of the responses to several open-ended questions, namely, how the teachers position the pupils.

> *In my view, justice issues are important both on the societal and individual level. It is good for the pupils to note that not everybody is in the same position, and in a well-functioning society, perspectives of people in different positions have to be taken into account.* (Excerpt 1, ethics teacher in lower secondary education)

> *The core of my job is to support pupils to find their own identity and to integrate into the Finnish society.* (Excerpt 2, teacher of other subjects in lower secondary education)

> *I teach social justice concepts and address the topic in ethics because it is central topic in the curriculum. I also personally experience it as an important topic to cover. People in cultural and worldview minorities should know about things, because 'knowledge is power'. When they have knowledge about their rights and skills to demand them, they are able to act accordingly.* (Excerpt 3, ethics teacher in primary education)

The mission of the subject and personal commitment are here mentioned in excerpt 3, whereas excerpt 2 includes the mission of teacherhood ('core of my job'), possibly specifically as a teacher of linguistic support as indicated in a response to another question. Pupils' needs are mentioned in excerpts 1 and 3, and they come up also in excerpt 2 but the argument is based on 'my job'. However, it is worth noticing that there are three different conceptions of the pupils in the three excerpts. In excerpt 1, the pupils are defined as more or less privileged persons who need to understand their privilege

and other perspectives to the society. Excerpt 2 addresses the pupils as outsiders who have to integrate or to be integrated by the teacher whereas excerpt 3 takes a more critical stance by stressing minority rights and an active engagement of the minority pupils.

Social justice education practices

Next, the respondents were asked to explain their practices. It has to be noted that the responses to both this and the previous question were probably affected by the closed format – the questions provided ideas on which the respondents could elaborate. In the open-ended responses it was often impossible to distinguish between education about and into social justice. Together "about and into" formed the most frequent category mentioned in 35 responses. The teachers mentioned content such as equality, rights, multiculturalism, minority groups, and methods like discussion, drama and reading or watching news reports on current topics like Black Lives Matter.

Practices related to pupils' minority position were mentioned 18 times, including fostering pupils' self-esteem, listening to and bringing up topics that were relevant to the pupils themselves. Education with social justice was mentioned in 8 responses, entailing class rules against discrimination and different participatory methods. Pupil-led projects fostering social justice were not described, so education through social justice did not appear in the responses. Projects were mentioned once, stating that covid-19 has restricted opportunities for co-operation outside school. As the data was created when the covid-19 pandemic had affected schools for over a year, although not all projects require collaboration with partners outside schools, this is a natural explanation for the absence of descriptions of education through social justice.

In education about and into social justice, the teachers approached minorities in diverse ways.

> *Defending those who are in a weaker position is important because otherwise they do not have a voice. These groups include e.g. unborn children and defenceless elderly people. We talk and discuss them.* (Excerpt 4, minority RE teacher in primary education)

> *I present, define and ask [pupils] to reflect on culture and inequality faced by people of different minority groups. If possible, I invite adult representatives of minority groups to the classes.* (Excerpt 5, ethics teacher in lower secondary education)

These two excerpts address the non-privileged groups from outsider's perspective. Excerpt 4 mentions groups that certainly are not present in the classroom, so everybody in the class discussion can take a protective stance. In Excerpt 5, cultural minorities are mentioned as if they were absent from the classroom. Admittedly, in some schools, the ethics groups consist mainly of native Finns. Furthermore, even if the groups were culturally diverse, inviting adult representatives may also be a strategy to ease the burden of the minority pupils or to provide them positive role models. Overall, social justice education can and should address topics beyond the everyday experience of the pupils, and minority pupils also benefit from it (Clark & Seider 2017).

The following excerpts recognize the existence of minorities within the classroom:

> *I tried to address Black minorities about racism, but my Black students felt ashamed and very timid to engage in the discussions, I showed them videos and some news about Black Lives Matter, but it was quite challenging.* (Excerpt 6, teacher of other subjects in primary education)

> *We continuously discuss with the pupils what their multicultural background means, taking their age level into account. We often ponder how big a richness it is, and on the other hand why some people treat multicultural people unequally. I repeatedly bring up in my instruction that there is a zero tolerance for racism in my classes* (Excerpt 7, teacher of other subjects, primary education)

> *In FSL lessons we often address cultural differences, different languages and Finns' customs in addition to learning Finnish. E.g. gender equality in Finland and elsewhere is often discussed with primary pupils, on their initiative.* (Excerpt 8, FSL teacher in primary education)

In Excerpt 6, a multilingual teacher shares the minority experience of her pupils and discloses an attempt to address racism with pupils who may have lived experience of it. The intention was clearly to empower them through the news material covering an anti-racist campaign. In Excerpt 7, the teacher, representing the ethnic majority, is also committed to address and resist racism, and has succeeded to make it a clear structure in her class. Stressing zero tolerance for racism conveys that there is need to protect minoritized pupils from racism but to fight it among them just as among any children. Excerpt 8 takes the perspective that minorities need education about others' rights, being explicit about gender equality.

Pupils' concerns

The respondents were asked about what topics pupils brought up and pupils' reactions to social justice education. The most often mentioned pupils' concerns (27 times) were racism or related issues, then issues related to school like equity and bullying (20 times). Power issues concerning cultural and ethnic groups are complex, and sometimes they overlap with everyday classroom power struggles.

> *Small children's questions are concrete: [...] whose turn it is to use the interactive board etc. We have also had situations where they 'compete' about whose country is the best.* (Excerpt 9, teacher of other subjects in primary education)

> *These topics (ethnicity and worldview) raise questions and reflection, for instance on power relations, cultural appropriation and representation.* (Excerpt 10, ethics teacher in lower secondary education)

Excerpt 9 depicts well the everyday justice issues for younger pupils, and the naïve nationalism that social justice education should address. In contrast, Excerpt 10 shows how a competent teacher can expand plain questions into complex discussions.

Religious freedom was mentioned 13 times, often, but not exclusively, in minority RE teachers' responses. Issues related to sex and gender gained 12 mentions. Other, less frequently mentioned topics included children's rights, global inequality and conflicts

as well as animal rights. In some cases, religion, sex and gender appeared in interesting tension:

> *That a person identifying themselves as a trans person will never be allowed to get married in church. (*Excerpt 11, teacher of minority RE in lower secondary education)

> *Structural racism, judgemental and sexist speech, minority issues, stereotypes against religion, Uighur situation, Finnishness, exclusion, identity, [one's/culture's] own taboos.* (Excerpt 12, minority RE teacher in upper secondary education)

Excerpt 11 depicts a minority RE class discussion where the conservative rules of the church are contrasted with the rights of trans individuals. Excerpt 12 lists many types of social injustice, including gender and religion. The same participant mentions 'taboos' both here and in the following question where they give examples of sexuality and modern interpretations of religion. These accounts show that social justice entails questioning many structures in both the majority and minority communities. This is further illustrated in the following excerpt:

> *The topics are brought up by everyday matters, leisure facilities, family customs and possibilities to participate. Every subject entails an occasion to address justice. In the countries where the pupils are from, rights have been different, e.g. no access to school or children have not been listened to at school. […] Pupils' personal experiences are important, as a teacher I try to discuss without judging. I often ask: 'How do you feel?' Thus, the pupils learn to justify their responses.* (Excerpt 13, teacher of other subjects in primary education)

The excerpt highlights the need to understand and sensitively deal with the lived experiences of immigrant pupils which provide a particularly multifaceted ground for social justice discussions. Similarly to excerpt 12, social justice problems in both Finland and the former home countries are addressed equally. In addition, the teacher describes their practice to address all these issues without an ethnocentrist approach that takes the superiority of liberal values for granted.

Pupils' reactions

As pupils' reactions to social justice education, ten participants mentioned anxiety or other negative reactions, like conflicts and the majority's difficulties to accept certain perspectives. Positive reactions can be classified into positive affirmation, positive engagement and active engagement. By positive affirmation I mean feelings of having a voice and gratefulness (6 mentions). Positive engagement was the most prominent category in this question (39 mentions), and it included responses like interest, enthusiasm, growth of understanding, making questions and sharing experiences. Active engagement (only 2 mentions), means the orientation to action or change.

Again, pupils were positioned differently in the responses:

> *Feeling of being understood, consolation, courage* (Excerpt 14, minority RE teacher in lower secondary education)

> *They wonder how come not everybody is doing as well as us. They have been interested in [justice issues].* (Excerpt 15, minority RE teacher in primary education)
>
> *For some pupils it is clearly more difficult to adapt other person's perspective, especially if one belongs to a majority to some extent.* (Excerpt 16, ethics teacher in lower secondary education)
>
> *Most pupils become silent and even anxious, but they clearly consider addressing [justice issues] welcomed and important.* (Excerpt 17, ethics teacher in lower secondary education)
>
> *A new kind of bond is created along with understanding that without verbalising [the justice issues] things can't be changed.* (Excerpt 18, minority RE teacher in upper secondary education)

In Excerpt 14, containing positive affirmation, pupils are described as previously voiceless and in need of social empowerment. In contrast, Excerpt 15 mentions pupils in a privileged position who are positively engaged in learning about social justice. Negative reactions of pupils in the majority position are addressed in Excerpt 16, perhaps reflecting the fact that the ethnic majority may form the majority in an ethics classroom. It remains obscure, whether the cause of silence and anxiety in Excerpt 17 is realization of one's privilege or non-privilege, but the context of ethics makes the former more probable. According to the teacher, although the pupils feel pain they still are positively engaged in the lesson. Finally, in Excerpt 18, the pupils are positioned as future actors, maybe bound together due to the newly discovered shared non-privilege.

Overall, the qualitative content and discourse analysis shows that teachers legitimate their practices both through their subjects and a more general mission to teach. They use a range of teaching methods and address both simple and complicated questions, but activist projects are not prominent in their practice. The data also illustrates the complexities of addressing social justice with minorities, the diversity of the positions and the multifaceted nature of justice issues.

Discussion and conclusion

Teachers who teach linguistic and cultural minorities and took the time to respond a survey on social justice education do not represent the whole population of Finnish teachers or even the teachers of certain subjects. Still, their responses can show interplay between certain background factors and preferred approaches. Furthermore, they inform us on practices that the teachers have experienced as useful.

We can learn a lot from the teachers of linguistic, cultural and worldview minorities about addressing social justice with minority pupils. The data contains descriptions of deep and meaningful discussions, use of various materials and teaching methods. The approaches range from teaching concepts and phenomena (education about social justice) to fostering empathy and awareness (education into social justice) to inclusive and participatory approaches (education with social justice) and bringing up and listening to topics on pupils' minority position (validation of experiences). The range of topics brought up by the pupils was also very wide. Racism was a very prominent theme,

but another frequently mentioned concern was everyday justice at school: turn-taking, having a say, being recognized by peers and teachers. The relationship between and role of global, societal and classroom justice in social justice education could be further investigated.

Pupil-led social justice projects were not described in the responses to open-ended questions, so although some teachers claimed to include such projects in their practice in the closed questions, they probably are not very central. It is worth noting that this is despite the participants being probably more committed to social justice education than the average teacher. Previous researchers have found that although project-based learning (education through social justice) is efficient (Schindel Dimick 2012; Morales-Doyle 2017), fostering critical consciousness (education into social justice) can lead to positive outcomes, at least with minorities (e.g. Flynn 2012; Welton, Harris, La Londe and Moyer 2015; Clark & Seider 2017). However, education about, into and with social justice may empower pupils socially and academically, but only partially politically without the 'through' approach. Pupil agency was only rarely mentioned as an outcome of social justice education. More research is needed to find out how to support teachers to conduct pupil-led action and to foster agency in the classroom.

Previous studies have been mostly case studies, so this article increases understanding about teachers' choices which may help to influence them. The teachers' views and practices were to some extent influenced by the age of their pupils and the subject taught. Abstract concepts of social justice and direct juxtapositions were less frequently used with younger pupils than with older ones. For many ethics and minority RE teachers, teaching about and into social justice was a self-evidence based on the curriculum. Some language teachers did not consider it their duty to provide social justice education, but many of them conducted social justice education either in the choice of materials or by allowing time for pupil-initiated discussions. There were no strong signs that the composition of the group (mixed or minority pupils only) would have shaped the teachers' approaches. Also the impact of gender and linguistic minority position was hard to interpret. The implication for practice is that RE and ethics teachers could benefit from learning how education with social justice can enhance their teaching and other teachers might need tools to introduce social justice concepts in discussions.

Another view that shaped the teachers' practices was their conception of pupils. In many open responses, pupils were positioned as minorities who face diverse forms of structural and direct inequity. In this vein, teachers saw social justice education as providing the pupils with means to cope with injustice and a feeling of having a voice. Interestingly, this was not the only perspective. In some cases, the teachers described practices or views where their pupils were positioned as privileged individuals who needed to know about injustices in the world. There may be several reasons for this. First, ethnic majority pupils may make up the majority in some classes for minority subjects, like ethics and Orthodox RE. The teacher may have perceived this ethnic majority position as stronger than the worldview minority position. Second, addressing global injustice may have provided a safe way to foster social justice in a situation where all the pupils would be equally privileged, avoiding tensions in the classroom (cf. Kimanen 2022b). Some respondents also pointed out the minority pupils' need to

embrace other issues of social justice such as gender equity. Some of them expressed a reflective attitude towards diverse contradictions between religion and sex or gender equity. This highlights that considering linguistic and cultural minority pupils as in need of adopting liberal values was not in all cases an ethnocentric, othering attitude. The multiplicity of these positionings has not been observed in previous research.

Some of the complexities of social justice education have been recognized in previous research as obstacles for social justice education. For instance, the fact that many pupils hold both dominant and minoritized positions complicates planning classroom activities because very many layers of identities cannot all be addressed in depth at the same time, although they cannot be separated (Flynn 2012). Other obstacles identified in this research, although not emphasized by the participants, were some conflicts and a degree of anxiety created by social justice education. Maybe these obstacles discourage some educators to the point that they avoid controversial topics and pupil-led action. However, the participants of this study report that social justice education at its best can lead to increased student engagement and feelings of having a voice. Conquering the obstacles seems to take diverse approaches and a variety of activities. It also takes sensitivity, commitment and preparedness to make time for deep discussions when they arise. This is the most important implication of this article for practice: despite the obstacles, it is meaningful to deliver social justice education in classrooms with cultural and worldview minorities.

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