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## **Conflicting Views on the Teacher’s Role as Model Citizens in Finland, 1900–1950**

The article studies the expectations placed on teachers’ exemplariness in Finland in the first half of the twentieth century. Finnish elementary school teachers have traditionally been described as model citizens, embodying the qualities of loyalty, diligence, impeccability, and piety. Those who lose their model status have been ignored in research. As a consequence, the parameters of permissible teacher conduct have remained unclear. By observing teachers who were guilty of infringements and errors, we are able to define the type of behaviour that the local communities deemed to be unsuitable for teachers. This also shows the parameters of acceptable behaviour, which could be seen as the determinants of model citizenship at the local level. This article reveals how the parameters of model citizens were defined much more strictly on the local level than on the national level.

Keywords: schoolteacher; school boards; teachers’ improper behaviour; teachers’ dismissals

### **Introduction**

According to court decisions in Canada at the turn of the millennium, teachers are to be held to a higher standard due to their position of trust and influence. At that time, teachers were expected to maintain a high standard of conduct and be positive role models for their students, both inside and outside the classroom.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon is common in many countries. Teachers’ improper behaviour, substance abuse, or misguided religious or political opinions have labelled them as unfit to educate children.<sup>2</sup> Currently, people are debating whether it is proper behaviour for teachers to

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<sup>1</sup> Jack H. Berryman, “Canada’s Courts Say Teachers Must Be Role Models,” *Professionally Speaking*, June 1998, [https://professionallyspeaking.oct.ca/june\\_1998/role.htm](https://professionallyspeaking.oct.ca/june_1998/role.htm) (accessed February 7, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Padraic Flanagan, “Drug taking teachers can return to class,” *The Telegraph*, January 24, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10596502/Drug-taking-teachers-can-return-to-class.html> (accessed February 7, 2020); Billy Hallowell, “You’re ‘Not Allowed to Talk About the Bible’: Teacher Reportedly Cuts Off First-Grader’s Classroom Speech,” *Blaze*, January 14, 2014, <https://www.theblaze.com/news/2014/01/14/youre-not-allowed-to-talk-about-the-bible-teacher-reportedly-cuts-off-first-graders-classroom-speech> (accessed February 7, 2020); and Nikole Hannah-Jones, “A Principal Is Accused of Being a Communist, Rattling a

encourage pupils to join the Global Climate Strike.<sup>3</sup>

According to legislation, today's teachers in Finland are not expected to behave immaculately outside the school. Yet a great stir occurred a couple of years ago when an elementary teacher behaved improperly on the Big Brother television show. It revealed that parents' expectations of teachers are stricter than official expectations based on the law. Peoples' expectations are rooted in an era when teachers had to show their exemplariness both inside and outside school.

In the first half of the twentieth century, teachers in Finland were expected to be model citizens. Also at that time, however, people had stricter expectations of teachers than they did of governmental officials. People in many parishes tried to get rid of teachers they considered unsuitable to educate children. This phenomenon has been neglected in research so far. The image of teachers as model citizens has been formed by the help of acts, statutes and committee texts, which reveal only the expectations of those in authority. Scholars have not focused on the definition of model citizenship of teachers at the local level. In this study, I will take a closer look at the insistence on teachers' impeccability at the local level.

The idea of a good teacher has shifted historically. Today, model citizenship is only a historical concept but the teacher's role as educators of the state's citizens was significant in the era when nation states were being formed. Teachers were expected to be loyal to the authorities, of impeccable reputation and industrious. In some countries, teachers' piety was also vital.<sup>4</sup>

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Brooklyn School," *The New York Times*, May 4, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/nyregion/a-principal-is-accused-of-being-a-communist-rattling-a-brooklyn-school.html> (accessed February 7, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Anon., "Teachers support students in their fight against climate change," *Education International*, February 22, 2019, <https://ei-ie.org/en/detail/16165/teachers-support-students-in-their-fight-against-climate-change> (accessed February 7, 2020); Hayley Dixon and Lizzie Roberts, "Teachers warned not to let children walk out on 'climate strike'," *The Telegraph*, September 19, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/09/19/teachers-warned-not-let-children-walk-climate-strike/> (accessed February 7, 2020); and Alexander Robertson and Martin Robinson, "First Global Strike arrests in London as teachers encourage pupils to take to the streets and join mass protest inspired by eco-activist Greta Thunberg," *Mail Online*, September 20, 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7485615/First-Global-Climate-Strike-arrests-London-teachers-encourage-pupils-streets.html> (accessed February 7, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Raewyn Connell, "Good teachers on dangerous ground: towards a new view of teacher quality and professionalism," *Critical Studies in Education* 50, no. 3 (2009); E. Thomas Ewing, *Teachers of Stalinism. Policy, Practice, and Power in Soviet Schools of the 1930s* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Andy Green, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); Richard M. Ingersoll, *Who Controls Teachers' Work? Power and Accountability in America's Schools* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Charles B. Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism: German Schoolteachers under Two Dictatorships*

In this article I will scrutinize the expectations placed on teachers' immaculateness in the first half of the twentieth century, when teachers had a key role in uniting Finns. The article is based on my previous works, where I have studied the teacher's role in Finnish society.<sup>5</sup> The aim of this article is to synthesise my previous research and examine how the model citizenship of teachers was defined differently at the national and local levels.

Firstly, I will address the demand for model citizenship in Finland. Secondly, I will demonstrate with a case study how parish people had stricter expectations for a teacher than governmental officials. Subsequently, I will reveal a broader picture about those differences by using political loyalty as an example of one parameter of expectations directed towards teachers. I finish this article with an explanation why the exemplariness of teachers was in the first part of the twentieth century defined more loosely on the national level.

### **The Concept of Model Citizenship in the Finnish Context**

Finnish elementary school teachers were expected to exhibit exemplary behaviour. Beginning in 1863, teacher training institutes accepted only those applicants who fulfilled certain expectations. The suitability of these applicants was ensured by requiring them to submit certificates of good behaviour and reliability to the admissions board. Those selected included the sons of landholding peasants, and middle- and upper-class young women, and they were all expected to subscribe to Christian, patriotic ethics. In the course of their four to five years at the institute, they would internalise a middle-class lifestyle and acquire the attitude of model citizens. A founding father of the Finnish elementary school, Uno Cygnaeus, who also was the director of the first teacher training seminar in Jyväskylä, demanded that teacher training should emphasise qualities such as moderation and hard work, as well as order and discipline.<sup>6</sup> In other words, teachers should be exemplary in every respect.

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(Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2010); and Theodore Zeldin, *A History of French Passions 1848–1945. Volume II: Intellect, Taste and Anxiety* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Jukka Rantala, *Sopimaton lasten kasvattajaksi! Opettajiin kohdistuneet poliittiset puhdistuspyrkimykset Suomessa 1944–48* [Unsuited to Educate Children! Attempted political purges of teachers in Finland from 1944–1948] (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1997); Jukka Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina. Vuoden 1918 punaisuussytökset ja opettajan asema paikallisyhteisössä* [Elementary school teacher and the rebellion: Accusations of Red sympathies and the position of teachers in local communities in 1918] (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002); and Jukka Rantala, *Suomalaisen opettajan poliittinen orientaatio* [The political orientation of Finnish teachers] (Helsinki: Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Uno Cygnaeus, *Kirjoitukset Suomen kansakoulun perustamisesta ja järjestämisestä* [Writings on the founding and organisation of the Finnish elementary school] (Helsinki: Society for Popular Enlightenment, 1910); for more about Cygnaeus, see Kustaa H. J. Vilkkunen

According to Cygnaeus, by demonstrating moral behaviour and impeccable living habits, teachers would earn the respect of their pupils and their parents.

In her research on the control of female teacher students in Finnish teacher training seminars from the 1860s to the 1960s, Aikio found that a female teacher was expected to be not only a model citizen but also a humble, docile and submissive model of true womanhood. Female and male teacher students breaching the rules and norms were thus treated differently. The offences of female students were generally seen as a form of illness or a lack of morals whereas male infringements were treated as crimes.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of different expectations for male and female teachers, all teachers were expected to behave immaculately.

The moral impeccability of teachers was especially important in the countryside, where opposition to general compulsory education was still strong at the turn of the twentieth century. In areas where people's attitudes to the expansion of elementary education were less than welcoming, teachers' tasks were to convince parents to send their children to school. Some peasants and tenant farmers saw elementary school as both secular and costly. They considered that peripatetic church schools, which cost less than elementary schools, were sufficient for providing the Christian catechism and the basics of reading and writing. They also thought that apart from learning to read and write, their children's lengthy elementary education was unnecessary because it did not prepare them for farm work.

As an elementary school had to combat such negative attitudes towards schooling, it was crucially important that opponents would not be provided with opportunities for criticising the teacher and his or her actions. The impeccability of teachers can thus be seen as an essential prerequisite for the progress made by the ideal of elementary education. In fact, the demands that society placed upon the elementary school teacher were severe when compared with those for other civil servants.<sup>8</sup> A

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“Cygnaeus and his reputation,” in *In the Spirit of Uno Cygnaeus – Pedagogical Questions of Today and Tomorrow*, eds. Aki Rasinen & Timo Rissanen (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, Department of Teacher Education, 2010), 7–16.

<sup>7</sup> Lilja Aikio, *Opettajattareksi sopimaton? Diskurssianalyysi seminaarien naisoppilaiden poikkeavuuden tulkinnasta ja kontrollista Suomessa 1860–1960-luvuilla* [An unsuitable woman for a teacher? A discourse analysis of the interpretations of deviance and control of female teacher students in Finland from the 1860s to the 1960s] (Turku: University of Turku, Department of Education, 2016). On different expectations for male and female teachers, see Hanne Rimmen Nielsen, “Teacher Dismissals and Local Conflicts in Danish Schools, 1908–1933,” in *Discipline, Moral Regulation and Schooling*, eds. Kate Rousmaniere, Kari Dehli & Ning de Coninck-Smith (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 135–59.

<sup>8</sup> Olavi Rytkölä, *Virkamiesoikeus* [Civil service law] (Helsinki: Association of Finnish Lawyers, 1978); Olavi Rytkölä, *Valtion virkamieslaki ja siihen liittyvä lainsäädäntö* [The national civil service law and associated legislation] (Helsinki: Association of Finnish Lawyers, 1987).

teacher was expected to behave absolutely impeccably not only in the school context, but also outside of school.<sup>9</sup>

The Compulsory Education Act came into force in 1921, three years after the Civil War, a conflict which divided Finns. In a nation which had just become independent, elementary education was used to strengthen nationalistic values and unite people. During the interwar period elementary school teachers were expected to be paragons of virtue – that is to say models of Finnishness.

The ideal of the elementary school teacher as a model citizen persisted until the 1950s, when rapid modernisation and urbanisation began to change the conception of the teacher's vocation.<sup>10</sup> The demands for a teacher's loyalty, diligence, impeccability and piety decreased considerably. Thus, the professional profile of the teacher changed, as old pressures placed on activities outside of school hours lost their impetus. As a result, it was now easier for teachers to separate the private and public spheres of their lives. It was not until the early 1990s, however, that the statutes that sanctioned improper behaviour outside of school hours were removed.<sup>11</sup> By that time, the model citizenship of the teacher had long since become a thing of the past.

### **Contradictory Views on the Exemplariness of Teachers**

The elementary school teacher as a model citizen has been examined previously on the basis of acts, statutes and committee texts.<sup>12</sup> Scholars have mainly used official sources,

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<sup>9</sup> Demands on the strict codes of conduct and morality of teachers both during school hours and during their free time has been a quite universal phenomenon. See e.g. Harry Smaller, "Regulating the Regulators: The Disciplining of Teachers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," in *Discipline, Moral Regulation and Schooling*, eds. Kate Rousmaniere, Kari Dehli & Ning de Coninck-Smith (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 97–116; Rimmen Nielsen, "Teacher Dismissals."

<sup>10</sup> Risto Rinne, *Mistä opettajat tulevat? Suomalaisen kansanopettajiston yhteiskunnallinen tausta sekä kulttuurinen että sosiaalinen pääoma 1800-luvun puolivälistä 1980-luvun lopulle* [The social background and the cultural and social capital of Finnish elementary school teachers from the mid-1800s to the end of 1980s] (Turku: University of Turku, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Hannu Simola, Sakari Heikkinen, and Jussi Silvonen, "The birth of the modern Finnish teacher: A Foucauldian exercise," in *Finnish Education Mystery: Historical and Sociological Essays on Schooling in Finland*, ed. Hannu Simola (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 95–114.

<sup>12</sup> Risto Rinne, *Kansanopettaja mallikansalaisena. Opettajuuden laajeneminen ja opettajuuteen rekrytoitumismekanismi Suomessa 1981–1986 virallisen kuvausaineiston ilmaisemana* [The teacher of the common people as the model citizen: The expansion of teacherhood and recruitment to teacherhood in Finland from 1851 to 1986, as expressed in official documents] (Turku: University of Turku, 1986); and Hannu Simola, *Paljon vartijat. Suomalainen kansanopettaja valtiollisessa kouludiskurssissa 1860-luvulta 1990-luvulle*

which do not necessarily reveal the true reality. The reports of teacher training institutes that directed the work of trainee teachers, for example, reveal the demands placed on teachers. As a consequence, scholars have looked for data on the definition of model citizenship by examining documents on teacher trainee applications and on register information about institute graduates. Thus, they have focused on the positive outer appearances of model citizenship. Applicants for teacher training needed to have achieved full marks for behaviour in their elementary school reports. In addition to their certificates of good behaviour and reliability, these applicants had to submit other testimonials of exemplary behaviour. For instance, the teacher registers spoke of excellent results for work performance and extra-curricular activities. This, however, does not tell anything about model citizenship manifested at the local level.

Although writings on the ideal of model citizenship point to the parameters of permissible behaviour, these realisations have not been studied. Authoritative sources offer no explicit picture how exemplariness was monitored and controlled, nor do they show how the ideal of model citizenship was implemented in practice. What makes the search for these parameters so important is that the behaviour expected of teachers is shown to be different when studied at the local level.

When studying actualised model citizenship, issues that need to be analysed are, for example, whether or not a teacher was permitted to be an atheist or politically active or whether he or she had to avoid activity in local associations. Although in principle the teacher had the right to make up his or her mind about such matters, in many cases the local community would ultimately regard those beliefs and activities as infringements. The expectations of what constituted suitable behaviour for teachers seem to be different at the national and local level. This demands an explanation.

It becomes necessary to look for a definition of model citizenship in terms of what is referred to as the “exceptional typical”.<sup>13</sup> By studying an individual teacher’s errors and infringements with the local source material, we can find out exactly what the local community considered to be improper for a teacher. Thus, exceptionality illustrates typicality, i.e. the parameters of model citizenship.

In the following, I shall study the determinants of model citizenship with the help of a case study. I will aim to show how the concept was defined more strictly on the local level than on the national level. After the case study I will place it within a larger picture. I will scrutinize loyalty as one of the parameters of model citizenship expected of Finnish teachers. In the politically turbulent eras after the Civil War and the

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[The guards of plenty: The Finnish schoolteacher in educational state discourse from the 1860s to the 1990s] (Helsinki: University of Helsinki 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, “The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace,” in *Microhistory & the Lost Peoples of Europe*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 1–10; and Matti Peltonen, “Clues, Margins and Monads: The Micro-Link in Historical Research,” *History and Theory* 40, no. 3 (2001): 347–359.

Second World War there were over two hundred cases where local communities tried to dismiss but received opposition to their plans from governmental officials.

When an elementary school teacher was accused, the process was commonly initiated by the local school board, which was appointed by local government councils and consisted primarily of parents. The school board, however, could not dismiss the accused teacher without the approval of the National Board of Education.<sup>14</sup> The elementary school inspector, working under the National Board, played an important role in investigating the accusations, and had the power to pronounce punitive measures. Often the inspector and the school board could not agree on how to go about these investigations; usually the board pursued a judgement of unsuitability, whereas the inspector aimed at a neutral enquiry.

The punishments meted out to culpable teachers would depend on the nature of their infringements. Smaller crimes such as negligence (diligence) or lack of proper religious instruction (piety) often resulted in nothing more than a formal or informal word of caution from the school board. More serious infringements, such as participation in a rebellion (loyalty) or an immoral lifestyle (immorality), could lead to the teacher being dismissed.

Very often, however, the investigations would result in an acquittal because the charges were trumped up and were a means of settling old scores.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the acquittals made by the National Board of Education illustrate that this administrative body was less strict in interpreting what kind of behaviour was permissible for teachers than those at the local level. Similar conclusions can be made with another profession that is subject to the demand of exemplariness, namely the priesthood. Eeva-Kaarina Nurmiraanta has studied accusations made against priests in Finland, and has noticed that the majority of charges did not lead to official charges or were dropped due to lack of evidence.<sup>16</sup> In time, the people in the communities became aware of such differences. As a consequence, in school matters, an inspector was not always summoned to the scene, and instead the locals themselves pressured their teacher to resign. The locals did this because the supposition was that the accusations would not hold up in an official investigation. What usually happened was that the teacher's life was then made difficult, and malicious gossip would be spread about. In addition, a school board that wanted to get rid of a teacher could even give him or her a good certificate of office so

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<sup>14</sup> In this respect, Finland differed for example Denmark, where between 1908 and 1933 teachers could be dismissed by the local authorities. Rimmen Nielsen, "Teacher Dismissals," 137–8.

<sup>15</sup> Rantala, *Sopimaton lasten kasvattajaksi*; Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina*. Cf. Rimmen Nielsen, "Teacher Dismissals," 150.

<sup>16</sup> Nurmiraanta, *Pappi tuomiolla. Julkisoikeudellinen tutkimus papin opin, virkatoiminnan ja elämän valvonnasta vuosina 1940–1989* [Passing judgement on a Lutheran priest] (Helsinki: Finnish Lawyers' Association, 1998).



that the teacher would find employment elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the teacher in question could retain the outer appearance of model citizenship, move away, and avoid additional unpleasant accusations.<sup>18</sup>

The following is a case in which a seemingly exemplary teacher was found to be unsuitable in the local community. This personification of the “exceptional typical” reveals the parameters of model citizenship when constructed on the local level.

### **An Unsuitable Teacher – Arrogant, Defiant and Quarrelsome**

When the elementary school teacher Frans Nummi is studied only by analysing documents about him from his training institute and register as a teacher, he appears to be the ideal elementary school teacher.<sup>19</sup> He was a successful student, took an active part in various associations, participated in local government, and organised healthy leisure pursuits for the local people. However, a closer inspection of his life changes this impression, as he was involved in disagreements throughout his career.

In his first post, on the eve of the Finnish Civil War in 1918, he ran for the council as a workers’ candidate, thus putting himself at odds with the school board.<sup>20</sup> He was, moreover, absolute in his commitment to the temperance movement; not only did he smash the moonshine stills of the peasants – including members of the school board – but he was also openly contemptuous of drinkers and their children. Consequently, it did not take long before Nummi acquired enemies who wanted to get rid of him by any means possible. His adversaries even attempted to put him before a firing squad during the Civil War, accusing him of being a “Red”. After the war, local fury simmered down, but did not disappear. Tired of the hostile atmosphere, Nummi eventually moved to another community in 1922.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See e.g. the cases of three teachers, Jalmari Saarinen, Kaarlo Isomäki and Toivo Luukola, in Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina*, 72, 112–3; Rantala, *Sopimaton lasten kasvattajaksi*, 222–3.

<sup>18</sup> Rantala, *Sopimaton lasten kasvattajaksi*; Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina*.

<sup>19</sup> The official documents where this conclusion can be reached are the application documents for teacher training (The Archive of Teacher Training College in Rauma, Provincial Archives of Turku) and the published register of the careers of teachers: Onni Kurvinen and Santeri Liikanen, eds, *Rauman seminaari 1896–1946* [The teacher training college in Rauma from 1896 to 1946] (Helsinki: Valistus, 1947).

<sup>20</sup> Nummi was an exception among elementary school teachers, who generally drew away from the Labour Movement because of its radical idea of a class struggle and negative attitudes towards religion. See Jukka Rantala, “The Political Ethos of a Model Citizen: Ensuring the Correct Political Attitude of the Elementary School Teacher during the First Decades of Finland’s Independence,” in *Nordic Lights: Education for Nation and Civic Society in the Nordic Countries, 1850–2000*, eds. Sirkka Ahonen and Jukka Rantala (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2001), 153–72.

<sup>21</sup> Nummi’s life story in the parishes of Mouhijärvi, Eurajoki and Kalaholma has been studied from the following sources: the Labour Memory Data Commissions collections (the

However, his troubles did not end there. Once ensconced in his new environment, he again began to preach against the evils of alcohol. He considered it his duty to lead the local populace to sobriety, by force if necessary. His paternalistic and overbearing attitude towards the producers and consumers of alcohol was once again found to be intolerable. His ideals and his style of communicating them led to open conflict with the locals. After a brawl with his enemies, he decided to teach them all a lesson in court. Most elementary school teachers would probably have not taken this course of action. After all, a teacher was meant to be a constructive force in the community, not a destructive one, and a model citizen was not expected to quarrel in public. If a teacher had the misfortune of getting involved in some scuffle, he or she needed to handle the matter quietly, for the work of the school and the exemplariness of the teacher were not to be compromised. But Nummi was a special case, and he held fast to his rights.

During the legal process, the parties involved cast sullen glances at each other. Soon Nummi was involved in a new dispute, this time with his colleagues. According to the chairman of the school board, the children's schoolwork was being seriously hindered by these teacher quarrels, as both parties attempted to use the children in their battles against each other. Teachers would put pressure on each other's students, accuse them of snitching, or use them as their own witnesses. Thus, they engaged in their mutual disputes at the expense of the children and their education. Moreover, in that particular community, the elementary school was not yet firmly established, and these quarrels tarnished the reputation of the school. In the end, after many quarrelsome years, Nummi in 1937 once again moved to another community. It is not known whether he was actually pressured to make this decision, but it is clear that many villagers rejoiced at his leaving.

Even though an elementary school teacher was expected to be a humble and grateful servant of the community, this humility was not one of Frans Nummi's virtues.

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Labour Archives, Helsinki); interviews with Frans Nummi's former pupils (made by the author); the minutes of the workers' association in Tupurla (the People's Archives, Helsinki); the history of the Mouhijärvi civil guard (the War Archives, Helsinki); the registers of Vesunti elementary school, the minutes of Mouhijärvi town meetings and the Mouhijärvi parish board (the Parish Archives of Mouhijärvi); the registers of Vesunti elementary school and the minutes of the school board of Vesunti elementary school (the Archives of Tervämäki Elementary School, Mouhijärvi); the minutes of the school board of Kalaholma elementary school (the Archives of Kalaholma Elementary School, Pori); the Archives of the Rural Police Chief of Mouhijärvi and the Archives of the Elementary Schools Inspector of the southern district of Pori (the Provincial Archives of Turku); the Court on Crimes against the State and the reports of elementary school inspectors (the National Archives, Helsinki). The following chapter is based on Jukka Rantala, "Läraren Frans Nummi och inbördeskriget. Förhållandet mellan folkskolläraren och direktionen" [The Teacher Frans Nummi and the Civil War: The Relation between an Elementary School Teacher and the School Board], *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 85, no. 3 (2000): 285–308; and Rantala, *Suomalaisen opettajan poliittinen orientaatio*.

Instead, he held on to his own values, and tried to impose them on others. Despising the “weak-willed” villagers, he refused to budge when he felt he was in the right, his arrogance not surprisingly provoking a reaction. Nummi’s in fact was not an isolated case, as the same phenomenon also occurred elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to their own exemplariness, teachers were expected to contribute to the spread of civilising influences, but at the same time they were also expected to tolerate others’ weaknesses. Other good teacher qualities were their readiness to conciliate and harmonise with others. This is because teachers represented a kind of mediating middle class between the land-owning classes and the common folk. In fact, in many cases, teachers represented a balancing and constructive force in the countryside since they had to use their social skills and flexibility in challenging situations. This was facilitated by the fact that they worked with all classes of society and learned to understand their different ways of thinking. Although Nummi’s working-class sympathies might have contributed to his downfall, this was not the major cause of his problems. The main reason he fell out with his colleagues and neighbours was that he did not pursue a conciliatory path, and instead opted for legal wrangling. This soon led him to an impasse.

At the beginning of his career, Nummi had to change jobs twice. In his first post, he was considered to have violated the virtue of loyalty, while in the second community he was the target of accusations that undermined his exemplariness as a diligent and impeccable model citizen. Although Nummi did not overstep the parameters set for teachers by officials – the National Board of Education, for example, never accused him of inappropriate actions – at the local level he was judged to have violated the demands of exemplary behaviour.

Earlier studies on model citizenship have examined the qualities demanded of teachers at that time. Based on these studies, a teacher like Frans Nummi can be defined as a model citizen, as he was never guilty of infringing these qualities. Although his opponents called the elementary school inspector to the scene, Nummi remained without reproach in the eyes of the National Board of Education.

Model citizenship can be simplified as having the ideal attributes of loyalty, diligence, impeccability and piety.<sup>23</sup> The further away from these ideals the teacher drifted, the greater the likelihood of official sanctions and a subsequent loss of model citizenship. The emphasis on the different determinants would vary from place to place. For instance, some communities demanded absolute political loyalty for their teachers, whereas others considered religious commitment to be crucial. The biggest differences, however, seemed to be between the national and the local level. At the local level, the parameters of permissible behaviour were interpreted more strictly.

If we return to the case of Frans Nummi, he can be seen as an example of the “exceptional typical”. In other words, he was no means a run-of-the-mill elementary school teacher, and was an exception among his colleagues. Indeed, the disputes he

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<sup>22</sup> Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina*.

<sup>23</sup> Rinne, *Kansanopettaja mallikansalaisena*.

became embroiled in were also exceptional. Although he represented positive issues such as temperance, his ways of going about things created opposition. One problem was that Nummi sided with the working class, which was unacceptable to the local elite. Furthermore, when he interfered in the peasants' production of alcohol and behaved arrogantly towards them, he became a nuisance. In short, his temper and his lack of humility were insufficiently compensated for by his virtues.

In order to obtain information on the expectations placed on teachers, and on the community's methods for controlling teachers, we must familiarise ourselves with the actual events lived and experienced by the community. Since more transgressions are recorded than instances of exemplary behaviour, those teachers who found themselves in trouble provide a much more fruitful field of study than those who adhered impeccably to the rules. In order to discover what was really expected of elementary school teachers, we need to study those teachers who infringed model citizenship, whether by their immoral behaviour, insufficient piety or negligence. In the next section, I will present the results of my previous studies about teachers' infringements of loyalty. The studies are based on work both in authoritative and numerous local archives.<sup>24</sup>

### **Politically Turbulent Times as a Measure of a Teacher's Loyalty**

During the time of Finnish Independence, elementary school teachers' political behaviour adhered to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist credo, according to which the nation was to be unified and the state was to be made more powerful. Teachers therefore viewed themselves as nation-builders and avoided ideas that undermined national unity. This is illustrated by the actions of teachers during the Civil War of 1918. Teachers at that time adopted the bourgeois role that teacher training institutes had prepared them for. When the socialist "Reds" were in control of southern Finland, they failed to mould the attitudes of teachers. Hence, teachers working in the towns refused to work under the "Reds", and the teachers that continued to work in the countryside refused to change the contents of their teaching.

Only eight teachers on the "Red" side were killed or executed in the bloody aftermath of the Civil War. As the elementary teacher population was barely six thousand, it is safe to say that teachers were hardly the spearhead of the socialist revolution. However, the post-war documents of the National Board of Education show

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<sup>24</sup> The archives concerning political accusations against teachers in 1918 and from 1944 to 1948 are: the city/town/parish archives of Helsinki, Jaala, Jämsä, Jämsänkoski, Kotka, Lahti, Lappeenranta, Mouhijärvi, Nastola, Pielavesi, Ristijärvi, Ruovesi, Valkeala, Vampula and Vihti. The provincial archives of Hämeenlinna, Jyväskylä, Mikkeli, Oulu and Turku. Other archives are: the Archives of the National Board of Education, Helsinki; the Archives of Salaried Employees, Helsinki; the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki; the National Archives, Helsinki; the Labour Archives, Helsinki; the People's Archives, Helsinki; the War Archives, Helsinki.

that there are several references to “participation in the rebellion”, and school boards were setting about removing politically unsavoury teachers. Ninety-two teachers who were accused of either participation in the rebellion or of harbouring “Red” sympathies were reported to the National Board of Education. Such transgressions, or if they continued to work under the “Reds”, were seen as proof of unsuitability. The status of teachers as model citizens made this error even graver; when a teacher was involved, issues that in other circumstances might have been dropped by officials, were instead brought up for investigation and trial.

Somewhat surprisingly, almost all of the teachers who were charged over their “Red” sympathies at the local level were not condemned, governmental officials basing their decisions on legal premises. A total of ninety-two elementary school teachers faced indictments but only thirty of them faced the court for crimes against the state, and fifteen were sentenced. However, only three had their careers destroyed by these sentences, with the rest returned to teaching.<sup>25</sup> A plausible explanation is that in the eyes of the centre-liberal leadership of the National Board of Education, such lapsed revolutionaries could serve as good examples to the losing side, whose reintegration into mainstream society was a top priority for elementary schooling. However, the actions of officials clashed with the will of the local communities where “compromised” model citizens were not accepted. The locals press-ganged many teachers into resignations but only five of those teachers left teaching. Others found a new post in another parish with the help of school inspectors.<sup>26</sup>

The work of the Finnish elementary school teacher was essentially bolstered by the ideal of civic education. In addition to civilising young people, schools were expected to transmit proper values. When the post-Civil War National Board of Education attempted to unify the nation through education, teachers were expected to personify unifying values. As a consequence, the school boards in some communities opposed integration, and they demanded stern measures against teachers who were sympathetic to the “Reds”. According to these boards, only those committed to the values of the right-wing “White” Finland could take care of the values of future generations.

Regardless of the veracity of the accusations, teachers whose names had been publicly tarnished found it very difficult to continue with their jobs. This meant that the National Board of Education found it necessary to relocate these ostracised teachers to other communities. In fact, to prevent the school boards from rejecting accused teachers, the National Board even tried to cover up the teachers’ pasts. Thus, loyalty was defined much more strictly locally than on the national level.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina*, 20–2.

<sup>26</sup> Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina*, 147–55.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Britain, where teachers in the state sector were employed by local authorities. As a consequence of that, some Communist teachers were dismissed in Conservative-controlled areas in the 1920s. Steve Parsons, “British Communist Party School Teachers in the 1940s and 1950s,” *Science & Society* 61, no. 1 (1997): 46–67, 48.

The same was true after the Second World War when local people tried to get overly right-wing teachers dismissed. After the war, the Finnish far left came into power. The members of left-wing parties had a majority in many parishes and extreme left-wing movements had figureheads in the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education. However, there were no changes among other authorities in the field of education.

In many communities the members of the far left listed teachers for dismissal. A total of 128 elementary teachers were subjected to these pressures but none of them could be dismissed for political reasons.<sup>28</sup> However, the efforts of getting rid of teachers had extensive effects on the local level. The entire profession was influenced, as teachers minded their words and deeds for fear of accusations of biased teaching.<sup>29</sup>

At the local level, demands for dismissing unsuitable teachers were strong. Locals thought that teachers still stood for an overly right-wing, Christian and patriotic outlook. The school boards accused teachers of spreading fascist values and mistreating workers' children. When the school inspectors, however, prevented dismissals, teachers were accused with other allegations. Those who were not pleased with a teacher's political attitude accused him or her of unsuitable behaviour. Accusers, for example, blamed a teacher for drunkenness or abdicating his or her responsibilities. When political allegations proved to be unsuccessful, teachers' opponents tried to get rid of them by challenging the model citizenship of the teacher in question. Elementary school teachers were, however, supported by inspectors, who prevented the dismissals demanded by school boards.<sup>30</sup>

After the Civil War and the Second World War, the attempts to purge the teaching profession were blocked by educational officials in the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education, who resisted the dismissal of teachers. In such cases the expectation that teachers would be model citizens was more permissive at the national level than at the local level, as can be seen in the following table.

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<sup>28</sup> Rantala, *Sopimaton lasten kasvattajaksi*.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ewing, *Teachers of Stalinism*.

<sup>30</sup> Rantala, *Sopimaton lasten kasvattajaksi*, 263.

Table 1. The fate of elementary school teachers accused of “Red” or fascist sympathies.

	Accusations of “Red” sympathies after the Civil War (1918)	Accusations of fascist sympathies in the years after the Second World War (1944–1948)	Total
Faced indictments originated at the local level	92	128	220
Killed	8	0	8
Career destroyed by the sentence of crimes against the state	3	0	3
Career destroyed by the sentence of improper behaviour	2	0	2
Press-ganged into resigning	4	18	22
Returned to teaching by the acceptance of governmental officials	75	110	185

## Conclusions

In the previous section, I have demonstrated with the help of concept loyalty how the model citizenship of teachers is defined differently among governmental authorities and at the local level. Elementary school inspectors checked to see whether teachers behaved contrary to the idea of a model citizen but they did not uncover malpractice as much as the locals. The periods of political crisis in Finnish history are fertile grounds for research because they reveal what kind of political behaviour was expected of teachers. Uncovering that, however, presumes using local sources.

In Finland, after two politically turbulent eras which lasted only a short time, a total of 220 elementary school teachers were accused of unsuitable behaviour according to local communities. After the Civil War, the local school boards considered that teachers who had shown sympathy towards the “Reds” were unfit role models for people. After the Second World War, again the communities with a left-wing majority accused teachers of fascist values. The number of teachers who were dismissed from their posts on legal grounds was, however, small. In most cases, governmental officials protected those teachers who were considered to have contravened model citizenship.

The National Board of Education and its elementary school inspectors noticed that local school boards tried to get unwanted teachers dismissed by presenting exaggerated or even fully fabricated allegations. In many cases, the political accusations originated from reasons which were connected with local communities’ expectations of teachers. In these cases, local people expected the teachers to be devout Christians, diligent in their communal tasks or to behave irreproachably. Concerning teachers, the

standards of the community were stricter those of the National Board of Education or of Finnish law.

The National Board of Education was much more broad-minded in defining teacher piety than local communities. In spite of early twentieth century attempts at introducing ethics, religious education remained confessional (Lutheran). While teachers were expected to transmit Christian values, it was also important that the religious views of the teacher and the local community did not clash. Although the notion religious freedom, reinforced in 1919, was meant to include teachers as well as ordinary citizens, teachers who were atheist or Free-Church affiliated faced difficulties in their local communities.<sup>31</sup> Even so, the suitable degree of piety was defined differently from place to place. Insufficient commitment to Christianity could spell trouble for teachers. A teacher might also get into trouble for teaching the theory of evolution.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to loyalty and piety, other definitions of model citizenship were interpreted differently on the local and national levels. Another great matter of concern in a local community was a teacher's diligence. Teachers who were unwilling to take part in activities outside the usual duties of a teacher, for instance, were accused of negligence. The community thus expected a teacher to participate in everything, and to assume the duty of taking part in the running of local associations. Teachers also had to write villagers' letters, give legal advice, and offer spiritual comfort. Refusal to serve the community in these ways could be interpreted as negligence at the local level. However, the National Board of Education did not take action in these types of cases.

Government officials tried to ensure that local conflicts of interest would not jeopardise the ongoing process of building national unity. General compulsory education is considered to have unified the Finns by putting all children in common school education. While trying to prevent school from turning into an institution that divided society, governmental officials tried to control the activities of local school boards. In those cases where pressure against teachers was too hard, elementary school inspectors helped them to find a new workplace elsewhere. Among other things, this shows that local demands for model citizenship differed from national requirements.

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<sup>31</sup> Rantala, *Kansakoulunopettajat ja kapina*; and *Opettajain Lehti* [Finnish Teacher Magazine] 1918.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. the records of letters and appeals AD 699/100 1918, The Archives of the National Board of Education (National Archives, Helsinki); *Opettajain Lehti* [Finnish Teachers' Magazine] 1918, 368–9, 430–1.