



From Tropical Roots to Nordic Branches: Indonesian-born Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity Negotiation in Finland

Muchammad Tholchah^{1*}, Sari Hernawati², Devi Prasad Bhattarai³

¹Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia, Indonesia

²Teacher Education and Training Program (PPG), Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Wahid Hasyim, Indonesia

³Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

*Correspondence to: muchammad.tholchah@unusia.ac.id

Abstract: Transnational teacher mobility has reshaped how teachers construct professional identities across borders, yet little is known about overseas-born teachers in Nordic systems. This qualitative case study explores how four Indonesian-born teachers working in early childhood education and care (ECEC) institutions negotiate their professional identities within a high-autonomy, high-trust context like Finland. Drawing on professional identity development theory, we conducted semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis. Four interrelated themes were identified: learning new routines and institutional expectations, working within multidisciplinary teams and distributed expertise, negotiating child autonomy and professional boundaries, and navigating language, qualifications and professional recognition. The findings show that identity negotiation is not a linear transition from one national model to another, but an ongoing, situated process in which prior professional selves are expanded, challenged and partially reconstituted. Teachers learn to align themselves with documentation-rich, child-centred and multi-professional practices while at the same time managing reductions in unilateral authority, strict norms around privacy and the gatekeeping effects of Finnish language proficiency and nationally recognized credentials. The study contributes to international scholarship by theorizing transnational teacher identity negotiation as a relational and structurally mediated process, and by offering a fine-grained account of how host-country policies and institutional arrangements in Finnish ECEC shape the conditions under which overseas-born teachers can exercise agency and be recognized as full members of the professional community.

Keywords: case study; finland; indonesian-born teachers; professional identity development theory; professional adjustment

Recommended citation: Tholchah, M., Hernawati, S., & Bhattarai, D. P. (2026). From Tropical Roots to Nordic Branches: Indonesian-born Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity Negotiation in Finland. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*, 7(4), 812-823.

INTRODUCTION

Persistent structural and pedagogical challenges within the Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector have drawn increasing scholarly attention. Recent research demonstrates that Finnish ECEC teachers operate under intensifying job demands, including large group sizes, administrative responsibilities, and heightened expectations for pedagogical documentation, often without commensurate increases in professional autonomy or material resources (Lindh & Mansikka, 2023). These conditions contribute to elevated levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, which in turn shape teachers' intentions to leave the profession. National-level studies indicate that turnover intentions remain a significant concern, with many teachers citing workload pressures, low salary levels, and limited societal recognition as key factors influencing their desire to exit the field (Heilala et al., 2024). At the systemic level, municipalities continue to face chronic recruitment and retention difficulties, resulting in unstable staffing patterns and increased strain on existing personnel, particularly in urban regions with limited pools of qualified applicants (Karila & Kupila, 2023; Mankki & Sintonen, 2025). These pressures are further compounded by the growing pedagogical demands associated with supporting multilingual, migrant, and socioeconomically disadvantaged children, which require teachers to navigate increasingly complex learning environments (Bergroth et al., 2024; Repo et al., 2024). As a result, these dynamics illustrate a sector marked by high demands, constrained resources, and evolving expectations, which together constitute the central problems confronting Finnish ECEC teachers today.

Within this situation, the structural pressures facing the Finnish ECEC workforce have inadvertently created new entry points for internationally educated and overseas-born professionals who are interested in applying for a teaching position in Finland. As municipalities seek to address persistent shortages of qualified personnel and to meet the needs of increasingly diverse child populations, Finland has become more receptive to recruiting teachers trained outside its borders (Karila & Kupila, 2023). This emerging openness aligns with broader global patterns in which teacher mobility has become a defining feature of contemporary education systems. Teachers are increasingly relocating across national borders to work in pedagogical and institutional

contexts that differ markedly from those in which they were originally trained, requiring them to negotiate unfamiliar sociocultural norms, regulatory frameworks, and professional expectations (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Schmidt, 2010). Research on internationally educated teachers consistently shows that such transitions do not involve a straightforward transfer of existing pedagogical practices. Rather, teachers should reinterpret and recontextualize their prior professional repertoires in relation to new curricular mandates, workplace cultures, and accountability structures, often under conditions of heightened scrutiny and professional vulnerability (Peeler & Jane, 2005; Schmidt & Block, 2010). In the Finnish case, the combination of workforce shortages, diversification of child populations, and policy interest in strengthening ECEC quality has created a context in which internationally trained teachers may find both opportunities and challenges as they navigate the demands of a rapidly evolving professional landscape.

Entering a new education system frequently disrupts taken-for-granted assumptions about authority, assessment, teacher–student relations, appropriate classroom conduct, and certain expectations (Flores & Day, 2006). Successful adjustment therefore involves both technical learning and discursive work, in which teachers negotiate legitimacy and belonging within unfamiliar professional communities (Schmidt & Block, 2010; Soodak & Podell, 1996). This dual process is particularly prominent in Finland, whose education system is widely recognized for its distinctive combination of high teacher professionalism, extensive pedagogical autonomy and strong institutional trust (Niemi, 2016; Sahlberg, 2015). Finnish teachers typically complete rigorous academic and practicum-based preparation, and are granted considerable autonomy to interpret curricula, design learning activities and make assessment decisions in response to students’ needs (Niemi, 2016; Välijärvi & Sulkunen, 2016). At the same time, accountability relies less on high-stakes testing and more on teachers’ professional judgment, collaborative work and formative assessment (Sahlberg, 2011). For overseas-born teachers, entering such a system might entail substantial shifts in how they play the role, such as understanding their responsibilities, how they relate to colleagues and parents, and what it means to be regarded as a competent teacher.

Existing research in Nordic and Anglophone contexts has begun to document how overseas-trained teachers negotiate legitimacy and belonging in host systems. Studies report that these teachers often confront divergent pedagogical expectations, unfamiliar classroom management norms and different communication styles with students and parents (Peeler & Jane, 2005; Schmidt & Block, 2010). Professional authority is frequently negotiated in informal spaces such as staffrooms and mentoring relationships, where discourses of language proficiency, cultural fit and “appropriate” pedagogy can be mobilized to position overseas-born teachers as either insiders or outsiders (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Santoro, 2013). Narrative and identity-focused work highlights how these teachers actively reconstruct their professional selves through storytelling, positioning and reflection on tensions between prior and current practices (Flores & Day, 2006; Trent, 2010).

In Finland, a small but growing body of research has explored the experiences of internationally educated or foreign-born teachers, focusing on issues such as credential recognition, language demands, and participation in local professional communities (Gautam, 2023; Heikkola et al., 2024; Kopani, 2025; Tornberg et al., 2025). However, much of this work has concentrated on teachers from European or Russian-speaking backgrounds, or has examined overseas-born teachers in general rather than specific national groups (Enns-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2023; Stikhin & Rynkänen, 2017). At the same time, research on Finnish–Indonesian educational exchange has largely taken a different angle, documenting Indonesian teachers’ short-term study visits to Finland and their subsequent efforts to translate Finnish pedagogical ideas back into Indonesian schools, as conducted by Rytivaara et al. (2019) and Zen (2023). These return-oriented studies generate valuable comparative insights, but they do not address the sustained realities of Indonesian teachers who relocate to Finland and build long-term careers within Finnish ECEC institutions.

The academic interest in Finnish education has generated a substantial body of literature examining Finland’s strong performance in international large-scale assessments such as PISA, which is frequently cited as a benchmark for educational reform (Adiputri, 2021). Another study also highlights distinctive features of the Finnish system, including teachers’ dual role as practitioners and researchers, supported by a research-based teacher education model that requires a master’s degree (Chung, 2023). This literature further draws attention to Finnish teachers’ generous professional time allocation for collaborative planning and curriculum work, their high level of curricular autonomy, and the institutionalized structures that facilitate strong school–parent collaboration (Itkonen et al., 2017; Jahnukainen & Itkonen, 2010; Niemi et al., 2012; Sahlberg, 2011; Tirri, 2014). While this work has expanded understanding of Finnish schooling, it generally treats Finland as a model to be learned from or adapted, rather than as a workplace in which Indonesian teachers themselves have to secure employment, meet language and qualification requirements, and demonstrate competence daily. As a result, we know much more about how Finnish practices are described, idealized, or borrowed than about how Indonesian-born teachers in Finland actually navigate institutional expectations, labor market conditions, and everyday classroom interactions.

Two interrelated gaps emerge from this literature. First, there is a notable lack of empirical studies that follow Indonesian teachers who are employed in Finland and examine how they adjust their professional practices within Finnish ECEC settings. Little is known about how these teachers interpret Finnish curricular and assessment expectations, how they respond to the high levels of teacher autonomy and trust that characterize the system, or how they experience processes such as documentation, multidisciplinary collaboration and child-centred pedagogy in their daily work. In addition, there is limited analysis of the interactional and narrative processes through which Indonesian-born teachers establish and sustain professional legitimacy in Finnish schools and ECEC centers. We have scant evidence of how they position themselves in staffroom talk, explain or justify their pedagogical choices to colleagues and parents, or reframe prior professional repertoires so that these become intelligible and acceptable within Finnish professional norms.

This study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on Indonesian-born early childhood teachers who have secured teaching positions in Finland. It examines how they interpret, adjust, and integrate their professional practices in a context characterized by high teacher autonomy, strong institutional trust, and child-centred pedagogical ideals. Guided by professional identity development theory, the study explores how these teachers make sense of who they are as professionals, how they perceive their tasks and responsibilities, and how they experience agency and vulnerability as they navigate the Finnish ECEC system. The research question guiding the study is: *How do Indonesian-born early childhood teachers working in Finland negotiate their professional identities within a new educational and cultural context?*

METHODS

Professional identity development was employed as the theoretical foundation. This theory examines how teachers' understandings of who they are as professionals evolve in response to changing personal, institutional and sociocultural conditions (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006; Flores & Day, 2006). Within this perspective, professional identity is conceptualized as a dynamic, continually reconstructed sense of self that integrates beliefs, values, emotions and practices rather than a fixed role or trait (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2009). In this study, identity is understood to develop through narrative meaning-making, as teachers interpret past experiences and make sense of new professional demands (Flores & Day, 2006; Sford & Prusak, 2005).

Negotiating a professional system in a new context, for overseas-trained teachers, involves navigating tensions between prior beliefs they constructed in their country of origin and the expectations of the new system about legitimate knowledge, appropriate pedagogy, and competent practice (Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006). Accordingly, professional adjustment refers to how the participating teachers recognize, negotiate and recalibrate their self-understanding and task perception in relation to the roles, expectations and demands of Finnish ECEC institutions. Therefore, we use this theoretical lens to examine how Indonesian-born teachers actively interpret what it means to blend into the Finnish educational system and how they align and respond to their practices accordingly. The study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore how Indonesian-born early childhood teachers working in Finland negotiate their professional identities within a new educational and cultural context. A qualitative case study is well suited to investigating contemporary phenomena in depth within their real-life settings, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are blurred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). In this study, the case is defined as Indonesian-born teachers who have secured long-term positions in Finnish ECEC settings. The case is instrumental rather than intrinsic (Stake, 1995, 2013), which means it is examined not only for its own sake, but also to illuminate broader questions about overseas-born teachers' professional adjustment in a high-autonomy, high-trust Nordic system.

We treated the teachers' interview accounts as narrative descriptions of their professional journeys; however, our analytic approach followed reflexive thematic analysis rather than a full narrative inquiry. Reflexive thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2023), focuses on identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across a dataset, rather than examining the structural or linguistic features of individual stories. Accordingly, our analysis sought to generate themes that captured shared meanings across participants' accounts in relation to the three identity dimensions described earlier. This approach differs from narrative inquiry, which typically involves a detailed examination of narrative form, plot, temporality, and the ways individuals construct coherence in their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). In this study, our interest lay not in analyzing the narrative structure itself, but in understanding the recurring meanings embedded within teachers' accounts of becoming and being early childhood teachers.

The study recruited four Indonesian-born teachers who were currently working in Finnish ECEC in different municipalities to share their story. All held formal teaching positions, had completed at least an upper-secondary qualification before migration, and had between 4 and 13 years of teaching experience in Finland at the time of interview. All were women, reflecting the gendered composition of both Finnish and Indonesian ECEC workforces. The participants were born and educated to at least upper-secondary level in Indonesia. In addition, they are currently employed as a teacher or pedagogical staff member in Finnish ECEC; a minimum of 3 years' teaching experience in Finland (to ensure sufficient exposure to the system). Recruitment

proceeded through community networks. Initial contacts were made via Indonesian diaspora associations and personal connections in Finland. Potential participants were informed about the study aims and inclusion criteria and invited to contact the first author directly if interested. This strategy reflects the relatively small pool of Indonesian-born ECEC teachers in Finland. In addition to the limited number of teachers from Indonesia, several teachers declined due to time constraints, resulting in a final information-rich sample of four.

Data were gathered through semi-structured individual interviews, a method well suited to eliciting participants' own perspectives in their own words (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2019), lasting between 35 and 65 minutes. Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by participants (such as a cafe and/or public library) to support comfort and openness. The interview time was agreed with and communicated clearly to all participants, with some rescheduling. Regarding the language used, all interviews were conducted in Indonesian, English, or a mixture of both, depending on the participant's preference. Sometimes participants mentioned certain terms in Finnish. The interview covered some topics such as professional trajectories (education in Indonesia, migration to Finland, employment history), experiences of entering Finnish ECEC (hiring, induction, language), and everyday pedagogical practices. Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of all participants, and the researcher repeatedly ensured that all data would be used exclusively for academic purposes such as publication or academic conference. With participants' permission, a mobile phone was also employed as a secondary recording device to safeguard against potential technical failures of the primary audio recorder. All interview sessions were subsequently transcribed verbatim in their original languages to preserve the authenticity of participants' expressions.

Interview transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023), informed by the dimensions of professional identity development. We approached the data as narrative accounts of professional life but analyzed them primarily for patterns of meaning across participants rather than for narrative form. The analysis proceeded in several systematic stages. First, we familiarized ourselves with the data, with both authors reading each transcript multiple times and making initial notes on striking phrases, emotions, and references to self-understanding, task perception, and agency. The next step is initial coding. Transcripts were coded line-by-line using descriptive and interpretive codes. For example, when a teacher described allowing children to refuse instructions. *"Here, children are allowed to say no to the teacher... And we are not allowed to force them."* This segment was coded as "children can say no," "teacher cannot force," and "learning to accept child refusal." Then, the authors developed potential themes. Codes were then grouped within each participant's data into provisional within-case categories, such as "learning new documentation routines," "sharing responsibility in multidisciplinary teams," "respecting child autonomy," and "adjusting to privacy norms." At this stage, we asked how these categories related to the three identity dimensions (e.g., how "respecting child autonomy" reshaped self-understanding as a teacher and perceived tasks).

After that, we reviewed and refined themes. We compared categories across participants to identify cross-case patterns and differences. Related categories were consolidated into broader themes. For instance, codes such as "children can say no," "cannot force child," and "children choose activities" were combined into a subtheme "learning to respect child autonomy," which formed part of the broader theme "Embracing child autonomy." Finally, we defined and named themes. In this step, themes were defined and named to capture both their content and their relevance to professional identity development (e.g., how learning new routines or working in multidisciplinary teams affected self-understanding, task perception and agency). All prospective participants received an information sheet (in Indonesian) explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of involvement, the use of audio-recording, and how the data would be used. The participants signed informed consent before interviews began. Researchers reminded participants that they could decline any question, pause the interview, or withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. After transcription, they were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts and request clarifications or removal of specific passages. Strict measures were taken to protect confidentiality, especially given the small number of Indonesian-born ECEC teachers in Finland. Pseudonyms (e.g., "Ana", "Binti", "Caca", "Diana") were used in all transcripts, memos and publications, and potentially identifying details (such as municipalities, specific institutions and unique biographical combinations) were omitted to reduce the risk of deductive disclosure. Audio files were stored on encrypted, password-protected devices and deleted after transcription; de-identified transcripts are held securely in accordance with data-protection regulations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examined how Indonesian-born early childhood teachers in Finland negotiate their professional identities within a new educational and cultural environment. The analysis identified four interconnected themes that show how the participants adjusted their self-understanding, views of their work, and sense of agency in response to the conditions of Finnish ECEC. All teachers described encountering professional routines that were largely unfamiliar from their work in Indonesia, especially around documentation, planning and communication with parents. Ana, who had been teaching in Finland for about eight years, explained:

Every day we have to write a short note called kulumisen. It is basically a little summary of what the child did at daycare, such as what they ate, how long they slept, things like that. In the afternoon, we share it with the parents when they come to pick up their child. (Ana)

Diana elaborated on longer-term planning and assessment:

Teachers are supposed to keep detailed notes about each child's overall development. Every six months, or sometimes once a year, we have a meeting with the parents called Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelma. It is basically a chance where we talk about how the child is doing, hear the parents' perspective, and figure out together what to do if there is anything that needs attention. (Diana)

Similarly, Binti described the expectation to prepare individual plans at the start of the year, particularly for children who were not yet fluent in Finnish:

The teacher must create an individual plan at the beginning of the year. Children's background and situation are the main points to consider. If a child is not fluent in Finnish, we need to make a plan that fits their needs. (Binti)

These narratives show teachers moving from more general, group-based planning traditions in Indonesia towards fine-grained documentation and personalized planning in Finland. In identity terms, this involves a shift in task perception: being a "good teacher" now includes producing systematic written records, co-constructing plans with parents and tailoring learning trajectories to individual children. This aligns with descriptions of Finnish ECEC as documentation-rich and strongly oriented to child-centred planning and partnerships with families (Niemi, 2016; Sahlberg, 2015), but requires Indonesian-born teachers to "add" new administrative and reflective competencies to their professional repertoires. This transition can be emotionally demanding, as teachers have to navigate differences between their previous and current pedagogical beliefs and practices, which may influence their sense of belonging and confidence in their professional roles (Pappa & Hökkä, 2021; Yip & Saito, 2024, 2025). Research by Yip and Saito (2024) on overseas-born teachers in Australia highlights that tension experienced in the adaptation process, along with professional identity and sense of belonging, are critical constructs shaping differential adaptation trajectories. More specifically, studies indicate that teachers from culturally different educational backgrounds frequently experience renegotiation of their professional self-concept, for example: from familiar, relationally embedded teaching practices toward institutionally prescribed, documentation-oriented roles, a process theorized as identity repositioning within new figured worlds of practice (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Holland, 1998; Yip et al., 2024). This repositioning is rarely straightforward; it involves what Pappa et al. (2019) describe as simultaneous processes of identity expansion and identity threat, whereby teachers integrate new professional competencies while managing the psychological costs of departing from previously held professional beliefs. In addition, qualification and language requirements further shaped how participants understood what counts as legitimate teaching in Finland. Ana captured this clearly:

To be a teacher here, we must be a graduate of a Finnish university... even if you have a master's degree from outside Finland, it is not enough. You must enroll in a certain program. Otherwise, you cannot occupy a teaching position. (Ana)

Caca emphasized the centrality of language:

Here you have to be able to speak Finnish... if you can speak Finnish, the chances of getting jobs are much better. (Caca)

In Finland, self-understanding and agency are negotiated against structural conditions: prior Indonesian degrees and experience do not automatically translate into recognized teacher status, and Finnish language proficiency operates as a gatekeeper to employment and advancement. This resonates with research on internationally educated teachers whose qualifications and expertise are often partially devalued until they obtain local credentials and linguistic capital (Santoro, 2013; Schmidt & Block, 2010). At the same time, participants' decisions to pursue additional study and language learning indicate active efforts to reconstruct themselves as "fully qualified" Finnish ECEC professionals rather than accepting marginal positions. This finding shows identity negotiation as a process of recalibrating what it means to be a competent teacher as they mastered new practice and planning routines, responded to linguistic diversity, and aligned their professional trajectory with Finnish standards and language demands. Participants also described a shift from relatively

self-contained teaching roles in Indonesia towards working in multidisciplinary teams with differentiated responsibilities. Binti contrasted her previous experience with the structure of Finnish ECEC institutions:

In Finland, daycare has a really diverse team, not just teachers. There are teachers, assistants, childcare workers, counselors, and sometimes even nurses. We all have to understand our own roles. If something is not part of our responsibility, we hand it over to the person who has the right expertise. (Binti)

She illustrated this with the example of a child with possible speech delay:

... if a child shows signs of delayed speech, our job is only to observe and take notes, then report it to the director, who usually passes it on to the municipality. If the parents agree, the child will normally be referred to a speech therapist. However, the main point is that the decision is not in our hands. In Indonesia, I never came across this kind of process because most children speak the same language. (Binti)

In Finland, task perception changes from being the primary problem-solver to being a specialist among other specialists. The teacher's responsibility is to observe, document and communicate concerns, while other professionals make diagnostic and therapeutic decisions. This redistribution of expertise is consistent with descriptions of Finnish ECEC as relying on multi-professional collaboration and shared responsibility for children's well-being (Jokinen & Välijärvi, 2017; Niemi, 2016; Välijärvi & Sulkunen, 2016). It also represents Finnish ECEC characteristics as structurally organized around multi-professional collaboration, in which teachers, childcare workers, assistants, and specialist professionals share differentiated but complementary responsibilities for children's well-being (Karila & Kupila, 2023). Within such teams, the teacher's role is specifically defined around observation, documentation, and pedagogical communication, while diagnostic and intervention decisions are delegated to appropriate specialists, a division of labor that is institutionally embedded and legally regulated in Finland (Karila & Kupila, 2023). This stands in notable contrast to the Indonesian ECEC context, where teachers typically work only with other teachers and rarely engage with external specialists as part of structured multi-professional processes (Widiarti et al., 2023). In the Finnish system, teachers are strongly encouraged to "add" new collaborative competencies, "transform" their understanding of professional boundaries, and at times "defend" their pedagogical insights while integrating them into a shared, multi-professional framework (Varis et al., 2023). These experiences also highlight the challenges teachers face when supporting children with language-related needs, indicating the importance of professional agency within the staff community to ensure effective and coordinated support for children's integration (Manninen et al., 2022).

The above narrative also implies a reconfiguration of both agency and vulnerability. Participants found they are encouraged to simultaneously relinquish certain decision-making powers and assert their observations within a network of professionals. Binti's comment that "the decision is not in our hands" suggests a potential loss of unilateral authority, but also relief that complex cases are not borne by the teacher alone. This interpretation resonates with recent Finnish ECEC research showing that professional identity and agency are increasingly constructed in multiprofessional constellations, where responsibility and expertise are distributed across the team rather than located in a single teacher (Hanhikosi et al., 2026; Melasalmi, 2018). In studies of interprofessional support, teachers describe collaboration with specialists as both reducing the burden of "going it alone" and reshaping how they can influence decisions, as responsibility for children's support needs becomes a shared, negotiated endeavor (Äikäs et al., 2023; Kovanen et al., 2025). At the same time, ecological analyses of teacher agency in demanding ECEC contexts demonstrate how intensified collaboration and high support needs can constrain teachers' opportunities to exercise independent pedagogical judgment, even as they participate actively in joint processes (Pylkkö et al., 2026). Such agency is inherently relational and was shaped by the quality of collaborative relationships, institutional structures, and the degree to which teachers feel their professional voice is heard and respected within the team (Pappa & Hökkä, 2021).

At the same time, Binti's comparison with Indonesia ("I never came across this kind of process...") indicates that existing professional selves should be substantially reconstituted to function effectively within Finnish institutional norms. This illustrates how professional identities are reshaped through learning to recognize and respect distributed expertise while simultaneously maintaining a coherent sense of pedagogical responsibility, a process that is conceptualized as an interplay between individual identity negotiation and participation in professional communities (Moate & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2014; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). Another theme concerns the recalibration of understandings of authority within Finnish cultural norms, both in relation to children and to colleagues. Participants reflected on the extent of child autonomy. Caca recounted:

Here, children are allowed to say no to the teacher. They can disagree with us. A child might say, 'Minä en halua', 'I do not want to.' Moreover, we are not allowed to force them. So, I had to learn to understand that kind of culture, even though it took time to accept it fully. In Indonesia, I never experienced anything like this. (Caca)

Ana shared a similar moment during outdoor play:

During winter in outdoor play, children took turns with the sleds; we called it palka. Some used their own, others used the daycare's. One child wanted the red sled as there was only one red sled. When I offered him the black sled, he said no and preferred to wait until another child finished using the red one. I tried to persuade him to use the one we had. He again said no. (Ana)

The above stories show teachers confronting a pedagogical culture in which children's preferences and refusals are taken seriously, and in which "not forcing" is a professional expectation. For participants socialized in more hierarchical systems where children are expected to comply with adult instructions, this requires a significant shift in self-understanding, from authority figure to facilitator who supports children's agency. Research on Nordic education similarly highlights strong emphases on child participation, negotiation and intrinsic motivation (Virta, 2015), and our findings confirm that overseas-born teachers experience this as both challenging and transformative. Moreover, professional boundaries with adults were also experienced as markedly different. As a teacher, Ana noted:

One issue that I found different was about confidentiality. Here in Finland, it is not common, or even allowed, to ask why our colleague is absent. We are only told the teacher is not coming, without a proper explanation of the reason behind it. (Ana)

Diana, another teacher, remarked on a colleague's decision to move:

I was really surprised when my colleague told me she moved to another city for a reason that sounded unusual. She said that in this town she kept bumping into her students everywhere, such as at the grocery store, in the city center, at museums, hmm basically anywhere she went. It made her feel uncomfortable because she felt like she could never have her own space. (Diana)

For these teachers, Finnish norms around privacy and professional distance slightly contrasted with Indonesian practices of closer personal involvement with families and colleagues. Learning that it is not acceptable to inquire about absences, or that frequent encounters with students in public spaces can feel intrusive, required renegotiation of what counts as appropriate relational practice. This aspect of identity work concerns both task perception ("what is my role in colleagues' lives and in the community?") and belonging: participants should adjust their relational styles to be seen as professional in a context that values "bounded intimacy" and clear separation between work and private life. Diana's experience, where a colleague relocated due to frequent encounters with students outside school settings, further highlights the distinct professional boundaries prevalent in Finnish ECEC (Bæck & Autti, 2025; Kahila et al., 2024). This spatial mediation of professionalism, where physical proximity outside formal educational settings is perceived as a potential boundary transgression, suggests an institutional decoupling of professional identity from everyday social life (Bæck & Autti, 2025; Maaranen & Afdal, 2022). In contrast, Indonesian early childhood teachers often engage in community-based interactions with students and their families, fostering strong affective bonds through practices like home visits or participation in neighborhood events (Ahmadi, 2021; Zen et al., 2023). These relational practices are rooted in a culturally specific ethos of mutual obligation and continuity, which can create strong personal connections (Ahmadi, 2021; Zen et al., 2023). The Finnish system, however, tends to define pedagogical authority through clear structural roles and maintains a "bounded intimacy" model, where professional relationships are distinct from personal ones (Pakarinen et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021). The necessity for Indonesian teachers to adjust to these privacy norms and professional distance becomes a significant component of their identity negotiation, as they are required to align their existing relational practices with the local expectations of their new educational environment (Zen et al., 2022, 2023). This finding validates previous studies that overseas-born teachers often experience tensions around authority and relational norms when entering new systems (Santoro, 2013; Schmidt & Block, 2010). In our case, it shows how professional identities are reshaped by learning to support child autonomy and comply with Nordic privacy expectations, even when these conflict with their prior understandings of care and collegiality.

Finally, participants' narratives highlight how belonging and recognition are mediated by language and credential structures. Caca's remark that "if you can speak Finnish, the chances to get jobs are much better" indicates that Finnish language proficiency is not only a practical tool but a key marker of professional legitimacy.

Evidently, language proficiency becomes a gatekeeper to professional legitimacy, indicating a significant barrier and, simultaneously, a critical enabler for professional integration (Veliz et al., 2025). The statement by Caca, an Indonesian-born teacher, emphasizes that Finnish language skills are paramount for employability in the Finnish ECEC sector (Zen et al., 2023). This linguistic demand acts as a gatekeeper to professional legitimacy and influences career progression (Ennerberg & Economou, 2021). Research indicates that overseas-trained teachers frequently perceive language as a significant impediment to gaining recognition, a sense of belonging, and advancing their careers (Nigar & Kostogriz, 2025; Zhu & Alsup, 2024). For instance, a longitudinal study by Zhou (2024) highlighted how overseas-born teachers' perceived linguistic inadequacy can undermine their epistemic authority, even when their pedagogical competence is objectively high. This aligns with findings that non-native speakers often report lower self-efficacy in curriculum implementation, particularly in documentation and parent communication, areas heavily reliant on culturally embedded linguistic conventions. The ability to effectively support Finnish language learners in basic education remains a developing area, further revealing the linguistic challenges faced by teachers in multilingual classrooms (Harju-Autti & Sinkkonen, 2020). However, the Finnish education system, characterized by its constitutional bilingualism and increasing linguistic diversity due to migration, stresses the importance of supporting pupils' language awareness and linguistic identities (Björklund & Björklund, 2021; Repo, 2020). Teachers' beliefs regarding language choice in immigrant students' homes also vary, reflecting different orientations in language planning, from supporting first language use to promoting only Finnish at home (Alisaari et al., 2021).

In addition, Ana's observation that *"even if you have a master's degree from outside Finland it is not enough"* further emphasizes how recognition is linked to nationally specific qualifications. Prior degrees and years of teaching in Indonesia do not automatically translate into recognized teacher status in Finland. Instead, participants described enrolling in Finnish programs and undertaking additional studies to meet national requirements. Moreover, Ana's statement illustrates the complex interplay of academic qualifications, linguistic proficiency, and national pedagogical ideologies in shaping professional identity (Enner-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2023; Zen et al., 2021). This experience aligns with theoretical perspectives that emphasize identity as co-constructed through situated practice, institutional recognition, and discursive positioning (Zen et al., 2021, 2022, 2023). Indonesian teachers participating in Finnish international teacher education programs frequently engage in a continuous process of identity reconstruction as they navigate new pedagogical approaches and cultural contexts (Zen et al., 2021, 2022, 2023). The Finnish early childhood education system, guided by the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care, explicitly links pedagogical agency to nationally accredited qualifications, reflecting a commitment to equity and collective professionalism (Fjällström, 2025; Kahila et al., 2023; Repo et al., 2024). According to an identity-development perspective, these conditions create a heightened sense of vulnerability where teachers are experienced professionals yet are positioned as "not quite" teachers until they satisfy Finnish criteria. This aligns with work on internationally educated teachers in other contexts who are required to repeatedly prove their competence, often in the face of structural barriers (Schmidt & Block, 2010). At the same time, the participants' commitment to acquiring Finnish language skills and local credentials reflects active agency in reconstructing themselves as fully recognized members of the Finnish ECEC profession.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Indonesian-born early childhood teachers in Finland negotiate their professional identities within a new educational, linguistic and cultural environment, and the findings show that this negotiation is an ongoing process of re-defining competence, agency, authority and belonging in relation to Finnish ECEC structures and norms. Participants reconstructed what it means to be a competent teacher by integrating documentation-rich, child-centred and partnership-oriented practices into their task perceptions, while at the same time learning to work within multi-professional teams where responsibility and decision-making are distributed across differentiated roles. They recalibrated their understandings of authority and care in response to strong emphases on child autonomy and privacy-oriented professional boundaries, which challenged more hierarchical and relationally embedded practices familiar from Indonesia. Their narratives also revealed how Finnish language proficiency and nationally recognized qualifications function as key gatekeepers to employment, recognition and a sense of professional belonging, positioning them as "not yet" fully legitimate until local criteria are met, even when they are experienced practitioners. To sum up, these findings contribute to science by advancing theorization of teacher identity negotiation in transnational careers as a situated, relational process shaped by institutional arrangements, cultural expectations and credentialing regimes, and by foregrounding the specific affordances and constraints of Finnish ECEC as a context in which internationally educated teachers exercise agency and reconstruct themselves as members of a new professional community.

REFERENCES

- Adiputri, R. (2021). Finnish Education System as Seen From an Indonesian Perspective. *Finnish Journal of Social Research*.
- Ahmadi, A. (2021). Teachers as Ethnographers: Narrative Study of Inquiry of Indonesian Teachers Assigned to Teach in Remote Areas. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 10(1), 115–126.
- Äikäs, A., Pesonen, H., Heiskanen, N., Syrjämäki, M., Aavikko, L., & Viljamaa, E. (2023). Approaches to Collaboration and Support in Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland: Professionals' Narratives. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 38(4), 528–542.
- Akkerman, S. F., & Bakker, A. (2011). Boundary Crossing and Boundary Objects. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 132–169.
- Alisaari, J., Sissonen, S., & Heikkola, L. M. (2021). Teachers' Beliefs Related to Language Choice in Immigrant Students' Homes. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 103, 103347.
- Bæck, U.-D. K., & Autti, O. (2025). "Here Comes the Teacher": Navigating the Complexities of Being a Teacher in Rural Finland. *Education Sciences*, 15(7), 1–14.
- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding Teacher Identity: An Overview of Issues in the Literature and Implications for Teacher Education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 175–189.
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering Research on Teachers' Professional Identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 107–128.
- Bergroth, M., Harju-Autti, R., & Alisaari, J. (2024). Staff Self-Assessment of ECEC Practices in Meeting Language Diversity in Finland. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 13(1), 42–67.
- Björklund, M., & Björklund, S. (2021). Embracing Multilingualism in Teaching Practicum in Finland? DLC as a Tool for Uncovering Individual and Institutional Multilingualism. In *Dominant Language Constellations Approach in Education and Language Acquisition* (pp. 131–150). Springer International Publishing.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Thematic Analysis. In F. Maggino (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research* (pp. 7187–7193). Springer International Publishing.
- Chung, J. (2023). Research-Informed Teacher Education, Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Agency: The Example of Finland. *London Review of Education*, 21(1), 1–11.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Crossman, J. E., & Clarke, M. (2010). International Experience and Graduate Employability: Stakeholder Perceptions on the Connection. *Higher Education*, 59(5), 599–613.
- Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The Personal and Professional Selves of Teachers: Stable and Unstable Identities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(4), 601–616.
- Ennerberg, E., & Economou, C. (2021). Migrant Teachers and the Negotiation of a (New) Teaching Identity. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(4), 587–600.
- Ennser-Kananen, J., & Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2023). 'I'm a Foreign Teacher': Legitimate Positionings in the Stories of a Migrant Teacher. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 49(3), 491–506.
- Fjällström, S. (2025). Access to Universal Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland: A Relational Approach. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14639491251330299.
- Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts Which Shape and Reshape New Teachers' Identities: A Multi-Perspective Study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(2), 219–232.
- Gautam, A. (2023). *Relationship Between Finnish Teacher Training and Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Practices in Classrooms* [Master's thesis, University of Turku].
- Hanhikoski, E., Alasuutari, M., Collin, K., Liinamaa, T., & Sevón, E. (2026). Professional Identity Construction Among Early Childhood Educators: Narratives of Emotion-Laden Situations With Children. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14639491251409089.
- Harju-Autti, R., & Sinkkonen, H.-M. (2020). Supporting Finnish Language Learners in Basic Education: Teachers' Views. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 22(1), 53–75.

- Heikkola, L. M., Alisaari, J., Vigren, H., & Commings, N. (2024). Requirements Meet Reality: Finnish Teachers' Practices in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 23(4), 433–449.
- Heilala, C., Lundkvist, M., Santavirta, N., & Kalland, M. (2024). Work Demands and Work Resources in ECEC – Turnover Intentions Explored. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 32(3), 481–494.
- Holland, D. C. (Ed.). (1998). *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. Harvard University Press.
- Itkonen, T., Dervin, F., & Talib, M.-T. (2017). Finnish Education: An Ambiguous Utopia? *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education*, 2(2), 13–28.
- Jahnukainen, M., & Itkonen, T. (2010). Disability or Learning Difficulty? Politicians or Educators? Constructing Special Education in Finland and the United States. *Comparative Sociology*, 9(2), 182–201.
- Jokinen, H., & Välijärvi, J. (2017). Making Mentoring a Tool for Supporting Teachers' Professional Development. In M. K. Banja (Ed.), *Selected Readings in Education* (pp. 97–108). The University of Zambia Press.
- Kahila, S., Heikka, J., & Sajaniemi, N. (2024). Familiar and Comfortable vs. Unfamiliar and Demanding – Students' Discourses on Teachers' Responsibility and Leadership in Finnish Early Childhood Education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 140, 104495.
- Kahila, S., Kuutti, T., Heikka, J., & Sajaniemi, N. (2023). Students' Discourses on Interprofessional Collaboration in the Context of Finnish Early Childhood Education. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 41, 100736.
- Karila, K., & Kupila, P. (2023). Multi-Professional Teamwork in Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 17(1), 21.
- Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I Am in How I Teach Is the Message: Self-Understanding, Vulnerability and Reflection. *Teachers and Teaching*, 15(2), 257–272.
- Kopani, M. (2025). *Understanding Cultural Differences in School Environments: Perspectives of Foreign Teachers in Finland* [Master's thesis, Aalto University].
- Kovanen, R., Äikäs, A., Kärnä, E., & Heiskanen, N. (2025). Characteristics of Significant Interprofessional Support in Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14639491251356523.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lindh, C., & Mansikka, J.-E. (2023). Adoption of Pedagogical Documentation in Finnish ECEC Settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 51(2), 393–405.
- Maaranen, K., & Afdal, H. W. (2022). Exploring Teachers' Professional Space Using the Cases of Finland, Norway and the US. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 66(1), 134–149.
- Mankki, V., & Sintonen, S. (2025). Professional Development Opportunities and a Newly Built Daycare Center: Incentives in ECEC Teacher Job Advertisements in Finland. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 33(2), 243–257.
- Manninen, E., Hökkä, P., Tarnanen, M., & Vähäsantanen, K. (2022). Staff Members' Professional Agency Within the Staff Community and the Education Policies: Supporting Integration in Multicultural and Multilingual School Communities. *Education Sciences*, 12(12), 900.
- Melasalmi, A. (2018). *Early Childhood Educators' Professional Learning Through Shared Practices* [Doctoral dissertation, Turun Yliopisto].
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Moate, J., & Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2014). Identity, Agency and Community: Reconsidering the Pedagogic Responsibilities of Teacher Education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 62(3), 249–264.
- Niemi, H. (2016). The Societal Factors Contributing to Education and Schooling in Finland. In H. Niemi, A. Toom, & A. Kallioniemi (Eds.), *Miracle of Education: The Principles and Practices of Teaching and Learning in Finnish Schools* (pp. 23–40). Brill | Sense.
- Niemi, H., Toom, A., & Kallioniemi, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Miracle of Education: The Principles and Practices of Teaching and Learning in Finnish Schools*. Springer.

- Nigar, N., & Kostogriz, A. (2025). Unraveling Professional Identity Through Lived Experiences Over Time: Employing Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Narrative Inquiry. *SAGE Open*, 15(3), 21582440251344922.
- Pakarinen, E., Imai-Matsumura, K., Yada, A., Yada, T., Leppänen, A., & Lerkkanen, M.-K. (2024). Child-Centered and Teacher-Directed Practices in Two Different Countries: A Descriptive Case Study in Finnish and Japanese Grade 1 Classrooms. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 38(1), 30–49.
- Pappa, S., & Hökkä, P. (2021). Emotion Regulation and Identity Negotiation: A Short Story Analysis of Finnish Language Teachers' Emotional Experiences Teaching Pupils of Immigrant Background. *The Teacher Educator*, 56(1), 61–82.
- Pappa, S., Moate, J., Ruohotie-Lyhty, M., & Eteläpelto, A. (2019). Teacher Agency Within the Finnish CLIL Context: Tensions and Resources. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(5), 593–613.
- Peeler, E., & Jane, B. (2005). Mentoring: Immigrant Teachers Bridging Professional Practices. *Teaching Education*, 16(4), 325–336.
- Pylkkö, M., Kosunen, S., & Huilla, H. (2026). Ecological Perspective on Teacher Agency in Segregated Urban Early Childhood Education and Care. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14639491261421603.
- Repo, E. (2020). Discourses on Encountering Multilingual Learners in Finnish Schools. *Linguistics and Education*, 60, 100864.
- Repo, E., Aerila, J.-A., Tyrer, M., & Harju-Luukkainen, H. (2024). Multilingual Learning Environments in Early Childhood Education in Finland. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 13(1), 221–248.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. SAGE Publications.
- Ruohotie-Lyhty, M., & Moate, J. (2016). Who and How? Preservice Teachers as Active Agents Developing Professional Identities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 318–327.
- Rytivaara, A., Wallin, A., Saarivirta, T., Imre, R., Nyyssölä, N., & Eskola, J. (2019). Stories About Transnational Higher Education (TNHE): Exploring Indonesian Teachers' Imagined Experiences of Finnish Higher Education. *Higher Education*, 78(5), 783–798.
- Sahlberg, P. (2011). Paradoxes of Educational Improvement: The Finnish Experience. *Scottish Educational Review*, 43(1), 3–23.
- Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish Lessons 2.0: What Can the World Learn From Educational Change in Finland?* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Santoro, N. (2013). The Making of Teachers for the Twenty-First Century: Australian Professional Standards and the Preparation of Culturally Responsive Teachers. In X. Zhu & K. Zeichner (Eds.), *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century* (pp. 309–321). Springer.
- Schmidt, C. (2010). Systemic Discrimination as a Barrier for Immigrant Teachers. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 4(4), 235–252.
- Schmidt, C., & Block, L. A. (2010). Without and Within: The Implications of Employment and Ethnocultural Equity Policies for Internationally Educated Teachers. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 100, 1–23.
- Seidman, I. (2019). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Sfard, A., & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling Identities: In Search of an Analytic Tool for Investigating Learning as a Culturally Shaped Activity. *Educational Researcher*, 34(4), 14–22.
- Soodak, L. C., & Podell, D. M. (1996). Teacher Efficacy: Toward the Understanding of a Multi-Faceted Construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 12(4), 401–411.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Stake, R. E. (2013). Qualitative Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (4th ed., pp. 119–149). SAGE Publications.
- Stikhin, A., & Rynkänen, T. (2017). Russian-Speaking Immigrant Teachers in Finnish Classrooms: Views and Lived Experiences in Finnish Education. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 7(4), 233–242.
- Tirri, K. (2014). The Last 40 Years in Finnish Teacher Education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 40(5), 600–609.

- Tornberg, A., Alenius, P., & Korhonen, V. (2025). Foreign-Born Teachers' Experiences of Adaptation to Higher Education and Finnish Society. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*.
- Trent, J. (2010). From Rigid Dichotomy to Measured Contingency: Hong Kong Preservice Teachers' Discursive Construction of Identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(4), 906–913.
- Väljärvi, J., & Sulkunen, S. (2016). Finnish School in International Comparison. In H. Niemi, A. Toom, & A. Kallioniemi (Eds.), *Miracle of Education* (pp. 3–21). Sense Publishers.
- Varis, S., Heikkilä, M., Metsäpelto, R.-L., & Mikkilä-Erdmann, M. (2023). Finnish Pre-Service Teachers' Identity Development After a Year of Initial Teacher Education: Adding, Transforming, and Defending. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 135, 104354.
- Veliz, L., Gao, X., & Véliz-Campos, M. (2025). Racialised Identities of Multilingual Teachers: Stories, Experiences and Agentic Action of Indonesian Teachers in Australian Schools. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 46(10), 3713–3729.
- Virta, A. (2015). "In the Middle of a Pedagogical Triangle" – Native-Language Support Teachers Constructing Their Identity in a New Context. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 46, 84–93.
- Widianti, M., Saputri, M. A., & Nihwan. (2023). Konsep Peserta Didik dan Tenaga Kependidikan Kelompok Bermain. *Childhood Education: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 4(2), 13–23.
- Yang, W., Laakkonen, E., & Silvén, M. (2021). Teachers' Relationships With Children in the Finnish Early Childhood Education Context: A Validation Study. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 39(7), 848–860.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Yip, S. Y., & Saito, E. (2024). Immigrant Teachers in Australia: Experiences of Differential Adaptation. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 54(2), 239–256.
- Yip, S. Y., & Saito, E. (2025). 'I Want to Be a Part of Their Conversation': Asian Immigrant Teachers Navigating Belongingness in Australian Schools. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 33(4), 1147–1162.
- Yip, S. Y., Saito, E., & Diamond, Z. M. (2024). Professional Identity and Agency in Immigrant Teachers' Professional Transition to Work in Australia. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 51(1), 213–230.
- Zen, S. (2023). *Dynamics of Teacher Identity Construction: Indonesian Teachers in Finnish International Teacher Programme* [Doctoral dissertation, Tampere University].
- Zen, S., Ropo, E., & Kupila, P. (2021). Teacher Identity Under Reconstruction: Positional Analysis of Negotiations in an International Teacher Education Programme. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(4), 63–80.
- Zen, S., Ropo, E., & Kupila, P. (2022). International Teacher Education Programme as a Narrative Space for Teacher Identity Reconstruction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 109, 103527.
- Zen, S., Ropo, E., & Kupila, P. (2023). Constructing Inclusive Teacher Identity in a Finnish International Teacher Education Programme: Indonesian Teachers' Learning and Post-Graduation Experiences. *Heliyon*, 9(6), e16455.
- Zhou, X. (2024). *Understanding Immigrant Teacher Identity Through Literature: With a Focus on Finnish Society* [Master's thesis, University of Oulu].
- Zhu, Y., & Alsop, J. (2024). Exploring Teacher Identity Development: Asian Teaching Assistants' Experience at a U.S. University. *TESOL Journal*, 15(4), e836.