

Helsinki Studies in Education, number 151

**Sanna Ryökkynen**

**“They did not give up on me.”**

**Vocational students’ perceptions of the special support in their studying.**

Doctoral dissertation, to be presented for public discussion with the permission of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the University of Helsinki, in Auditorium 302, Athena Building (Siltavuorenpenger 3A), on the 20 of January 2023 at 12 o’clock.

Helsinki 2023

**Reviewed by**

Professor Tiina Itkonen, California State University Channel Islands  
Professor Kimmo Jokinen, University of Jyväskylä

**Custos**

Professor Elina Kontu, University of Helsinki

**Supervised by**

Professor Elina Kontu, University of Helsinki  
Adjunct Professor Raija Pirttimaa, University of Jyväskylä  
Dr Eija Honkanen, Haaga-Helia School of Professional Teacher Education

**Official opponent**

Adjunct Professor Tanja Äärelä, University of Lapland

**Doctoral programme**

Doctoral programme in School, Education, Society and Culture (SEDUCE)

**Cover illustration**

Joni Kopisto

The Faculty of Educational Sciences uses Ouriginal system (plagiarism recognition) to examine all doctoral dissertations.

ISBN 978-951-51-8740-6 (paperback)

ISBN 978-951-51-8741-3 (PDF)

ISSN 1798-8322 (paperback)

ISSN 2489-2297 (PDF)

Unigrafia,  
Helsinki

**Sanna Ryökkönen**

**“They did not give up on me.”**

Vocational students’ perceptions of the special support in their studying

---

**Abstract**

This dissertation investigated the elements that vocational education and training (VET) students who received intensive learning support perceived as the most relevant to enhance their studying, sense of belonging and what would create the domains for good VET. Earlier research on VET has shown that versatile, individually tailored measures of special support, teachers’ and other VET stakeholders’ understanding attitude impact both on students’ engagement in their studying, their success in their learning and comprehensive well-being. According to the Act on VET (531/2017) the aim of special support is firstly to permit equal access to vocational studying for those who have challenges in learning. Secondly, pedagogical special support is provided, if necessary, to ensure the attainment of the qualification requirements. However, these intentions do not necessarily end up embracing students’ perceptions of the aspects enhancing their studying, sense of belonging and good VET. Thus, the aim of the study was to examine students’ perceptions and to determine what elements they appreciated. The theoretical framework of the dissertation was Axel Honneth’s theory of recognition which suggests that an individual’s identity is established in social relations when one’s abilities and achievements are recognized. Social interactions shape both individuals’ identity and the normative mechanisms upon which society is founded. The other relevant concepts of the dissertation were derived from the ambition to provide an in-depth investigation on students’ needs. These multiple theories worked as pillars to verify and confirm the results of the study.

The three studies summarized in the dissertation were based on empirical interview data. The studies used multiple methods (content analysis, the narrative’s positioning and actantial analysis) to investigate the position and the needs of the vocational students who received intensive special support. Interviews (N=29) were carried out in 2018 and 2019. The first data set (n=11) consisted of interviews with students in four vocational colleges providing intensive special support. The students’ experiences of the interaction between student and class teacher were in the focus of Study 1. The results indicated that students put only modest demands on their studying and on their teachers. The interaction between a student and a teacher was study-oriented and teacher-lead. According to the students’ descriptions, the interaction situations with the teachers were comfortable but formal and distant. Study 1 concluded that as part of the

larger purpose of vocational education to support the growth of the students into autonomous, balanced and civilized citizens, it would be important to make room for the students' voice and support their interpretations during their studying. This would include both acquiring qualifications for a profession, subjectification as an empowering element and socialization of the social, cultural and political order.

Study 2 was based on the interviews with students (n=18) who were qualifying from a vocational special college. Its purpose was to elaborate on students' experiences of their VET studying and mirror these aspects with Biesta's (2010, 2020) theory on domains of good education - qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Finnish VET must be founded on inclusive principles that provide all students with the opportunity to become professionals of their fields, balanced and civilized citizens and assist them entering the world. However, the results of Study 2 summed up that instead of emphasizing individually personalized study paths to fulfil the qualification requirements even more attention should be paid to the subjective growth of the students and provide them with real encounters with the world out of college context.

Drawing on Scheff (2000, 2003), the third study reported on the dynamics of the social emotions and social bonds between students (n=11) and class teachers. In the study I observed social emotions like shame and pride as the primary emotions that are present in all communication and action. The results of Study 3 demonstrated that pride was based on the students' experiences in achieving their study objectives and thereby pleasing their teachers who had set the objectives. Pride related to the students' ability to see positive development in their studying and in their sense of social belonging. Whereas students who experienced shame could not perceive themselves as being subjects of positive development. The study claimed that social belonging and communality need more space and attention in VET system instead of emphasizing competence and effective individual study paths.

To conclude, the three studies reflected on students' perception on the elements that enhance their studying, sense of belonging and domains of good VET. On the bases of the studies, it became apparent that students with intensive special needs appreciated their opportunity to study, to gain new skills and knowledge and to be more autonomous citizens. Understanding and supportive teaching staff was a significant pillar for the success of their studying. The dissertation argues that the students struggled for recognition which means that they wanted to be depicted by significant others in a broad-minded and positive way not only as students with special needs but as human beings with valuable skills and capabilities. The dissertation calls for awareness rising: a student with special needs in one area of life can be a top expert in another.

The study suggests that VET teachers should acknowledge their role as change agents who could support both students and employers in diverse and equal employment and management. Furthermore, the dissertation claims that it is not

enough to understand the special needs of the students to change the world, but we need education policy measures and practices which are disconnected from the economic growth and efficacy. This would call an education system which practices are developed towards ecological, social and economic sustainability. A VET system which has pledged itself to responsibility, fairness and mutual recognition, to the principles of ecosocial wisdom. The dissertation suggests that processes of dialectic recognition are the heart of the process of sustainable VET.

---

*Keywords:* vocational education and training, special education, interaction, belonging, theory of recognition, qualitative content analysis, narratives positioning, actantial analysis

**Sanna Ryökkyinen**

**”He eivät luovuttaneet mun suhteen.”**

Opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä erityisestä tuesta ammatillisessa koulutuksessa.

---

**Tiivistelmä**

Väitöstutkimuksessani selvitin, mitkä elementit opiskelijoiden kokemusten mukaan vahvistavat heidän opintojensa onnistumista ja osallisuuttaan vaativaa erityistä tukea järjestävässä ammatillisessa koulutuksessa. Lisäksi tutkin opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä hyvän ammatillisen koulutuksen lähtökohdista. Aikaisemmat ammatillisen koulutuksen viitekehyksessä tehdyt tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet, että monipuolisilla, yksilöllisesti räätälöidyillä tukitoimilla sekä opetushenkilöstön ymmärtävällisellä asenteella on merkitystä opiskelijoiden opintoihin kiinnittymisen, niissä onnistumisen ja kokonaisvaltaisen hyvinvoinnin näkökulmista. Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta (531/2017) määrittelee erityisen tuen tavoitteeksi mahdollistaa ammatilliset opinnot myös niille opiskelijoille, joilla on haasteita oppimisessaan. Toisin sanoen, ammatillisen tutkinnon perusteiden mukainen osaamisen hankkiminen pyritään tarvittaessa varmistamaan erityispedagogisilla tukitoimilla. Nämä elementit eivät kuitenkaan välttämättä vastaa opiskelijoiden käsityksiä siitä, mitkä asiat tukevat heidän opintojaan, vahvistavat heidän osallisuuden kokemuksiaan ja sopivat yhteen heidän näkemyksiensä kanssa hyvästä ammatillisesta koulutuksesta. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli tarkastella opiskelijoiden odotuksia ja selvittää miten niihin voitaisiin vastata parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla. Väitöskirjan teoreettinen viitekehys oli Axel Honnethin tunnustuksen teoria, jonka mukaan yksilön identiteetti rakentuu sosiaalisessa kanssakäymisessä, jossa hän saa tunnustusta kyvyistään ja saavutuksistaan. Sosiaaliset kanssakäymiset muovaavat sekä yksilöiden identiteettiä että niitä normatiivisia mekanismeja, joiden varaan yhteiskunta on rakentunut. Lisäksi väitöskirjassa hyödynnettiin lukuisia muita käsitteitä ja teorioita, joiden tavoitteena oli tukea syvällisen ymmärryksen muodostumista opiskelijoiden tarpeista. Nämä monipuoliset teoriat vahvistivat väitöskirjan tuloksia.

Väitöskirja kokoa yhteen kolme tutkimusta, jotka rakentuivat empiirisen haastatteluaineiston varaan. Tutkimuksissa hyödynnettiin useita menetelmiä (sisällön analyysi, narratiivien positiointi ja aktanttianalyysi), joiden avulla selvitettiin vaativaa erityistä tukea ammatillisiin opintoihinsa tarvitsevien opiskelijoiden asemaa ja tarpeita. Haastattelut (N=29) toteutettiin vuosina 2018 ja 2019. Ensimmäinen aineisto hankittiin haastattelemalla opiskelijoita (n=11) neljässä eri vaativaa erityistä tukea järjestävässä ammatillisessa oppilaitoksessa.

Tutkimuksen 1 keskiössä oli opiskelijoiden kokemukset vuorovaikutuksesta vastuupettajan kanssa. Tulokset osoittivat, että opiskelijoilla oli vaatimattomia toiveita opintojaan ja opettajiaan kohtaan. Vuorovaikutus opiskelijan ja opettajan välillä oli opiskelukeskeistä ja opettajajohtoista. Opiskelijat kuvasivat vuorovaikutustilanteita opettajan kanssa mukaviksi, mutta kuitenkin muodollisiksi ja etäisiksi. Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella tulisi osana koulutuksen laajempaa tavoitetta tukea opiskelijoiden kasvua autonomisiksi, tasapainoisiksi ja sivistyneiksi kansalaisiksi, huomioida opiskelijoiden mahdollisuus käyttää omaa ääntään ja tukea heidän tekemiään tulkintojaan koulutuksen aikana. Tämä koskee paitsi ammatillisen pätevyyden hankkimista niin myös omakohtaista kasvua sekä sosiaalisen, kulttuurisen että poliittisen järjestyksen omaksumista.

Tutkimus 2 perustui kahdeksantoista valmistumassa olevan opiskelijan haastatteluun vaativaa erityistä tukea järjestävässä oppilaitoksessa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä hyvästä ammatillisesta koulutuksesta ja peilata näitä näkemyksiä Biestan (2010, 2020) teorian mukaisesti hyvän koulutuksen lähtökohtiin – pätevytyymiseen, sosiaaliseen ja omakohtaiseen kasvuun. Suomalaisen ammatillisen koulutuksen tulisi rakentua inklusiivisten periaatteiden varaan, jotka mahdollistavat kaikkien opiskelijoiden kasvun alansa ammattilaisiksi, tasapainoisiksi ja sivistyneiksi kansalaisiksi ja jotka auttavat opiskelijoita löytämään paikkansa maailmassa. Tutkimuksen tuloksien perusteella yksilöllisten opintopolkujen ja tutkinnon perusteiden mukaisen osaamisen painottamisen sijaan tulisi kuitenkin entistä enemmän kiinnittää huomiota opiskelijoiden omakohtaiseen ja sosiaaliseen kasvuun ja järjestää aitoja kohtaamisia koulun ulkopuolisen maailman kanssa.

Scheffin (2000, 2003) tutkimustuloksiin nojaten tutkimus 3 esittää, että häpeä ja ylpeys ovat sosiaalisia primaaritunteita, jotka ovat läsnä kaikessa vuorovaikutuksessa ja toiminnassamme. Tarkastelin tutkimuksessa 3 sosiaalisten tunteiden ja sosiaalisten suhteiden dynamiikkaa opiskelijoiden ja opettajien välisessä vuorovaikutuksessa. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että opiskelijat kokivat ylpeyttä, kun he saavuttivat tavoitteensa ja pystyivät näin vastaamaan opettajien heille asettamiin haasteisiin. Ylpeys kytkeytyi myös opiskelijan kykyyn nähdä itsensä positiivisen kehityksen vyöhykkeellä suhteessa omiin opintoihinsa ja sosiaalisiin suhteisiinsa. Kun taas opiskelijat, jotka kokivat häpeän tunteita eivät nähneet positiivista kehitystä itselleen mahdollisena. Kolmannen tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella ammatillisessa koulutuksessa on tarpeen antaa tilaa osallisuuden ja yhteisöllisyyden kysymysten käsittelyyn osaamiskeskustelun ja tehokkaiden yksilöllisten opintopolkujen rakentamisen rinnalla.

Yhteenvedona voin todeta, että nämä kolme tutkimusta kuvasivat elementtejä, jotka opiskelijat kokivat vahvistavan heidän opintojensa onnistumista, osallisuuden kokemuksiin ja olevan hyvän ammatillisen koulutuksen lähtökohtia. Tutkimukset osoittivat, että vaativaa erityistä tukea saaneet

opiskelijat arvostivat mahdollisuuttaan opiskella, oppia uusia taitoja ja tietoja sekä kasvaa itsenäisemmiksi kansalaisiksi. Ymmärrystä ja tukea tarjoava opetushenkilöstö oli merkittävä tukipilari heidän opintojensa onnistumisessa. Väitöstutkimus esittää, että opiskelijat ponnistelivat saadakseen tunnustusta. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että opiskelijoille merkitykselliset ihmiset kuvaavat heitä avarakatseisella ja myönteisellä tavalla ja etteivät he tule kohdatuksi vain erityistä tukea tarvitsevinä opiskelijoina vaan ihmisinä, joilla on arvokasta osaamista ja toimintakykyä. Väitöstutkimukseni peräänkuuluttaa tietoisuuden lisäämistä: opiskelija, jolla on jollain elämänalueella erityisen tuen tarpeita voi olla ammatillinen huippuosaaja.

Tutkimukseni rohkaisee opettajia toimimaan muutosagentteina, jotka voisivat tukea opiskelijan lisäksi myös työelämää monimuotoisessa ja yhdenvertaisessa työllistymisessä ja johtamisessa. Pelkkä ymmärtäminen ei riitä maailman muuttamiseksi, vaan tarvitaan taloudellisen kasvun päämääristä ja tehokkuudesta irrallaan olevia koulutuspoliittisia toimenpiteitä ja käytänteitä. Tämä tarkoittaa koulujärjestelmää, joka tavoittelee ekologista, sosiaalista ja taloudellista kestävyyttä ja ammatillista koulutusta, joka on sitoutunut vastuullisuuteen, oikeudenmukaisuuteen ja vastavuoroiseen tunnustamiseen eli ekososiaaliseen sivistykseen. Väitöstutkimus esittää, että kestävä kehityksen mukainen ammatillisen koulutuksen sydämessä ovat dialektisen tunnustuksen prosessit.

---

*Avainsanat:* Ammatillinen koulutus, erityisopetus, vuorovaikutus, osallisuus, tunnustuksen teoria, laadullinen sisällönanalyysi, narratiivien positiointi, aktanttianalyysi

# Acknowledgements

I have been lucky to have received broad recognition of my capabilities when studying for my doctorate which has enhanced my growth as a researcher. I have never been lonely though I have spent significant hours all alone with my writings. I express my gratitude to the people and institutions that have supported me in various ways in conducting this research journey.

First, I wish to thank my supervisors, Professor Elina Kontu, Adjunct Professor Raija Pirttimaa and Dr Eija Honkanen. You have travelled with me from the beginning of this process through so many happy and some unexpected turns, as life contains. You have always nourished my ideas and provided me with time and space to grow as a researcher. I admire Elina's kindness, helpfulness, dependability and her competence as a scholar and as an academic leader. You have always had time for me. I would like to thank Raija for sharing your rich expertise with me and providing me with clear guidelines and answers to my endless questions. You have devoted to the task with heart-warming intensity. My journey with Eija started when I was studying to be a special needs teacher when I expressed to her the idea that I would like to write a research plan as my development task. Thank you Eija, for recognizing my potential and supporting me from the very beginning.

I am extremely grateful to the pre-examiners Professor Kaija Collin, Professor Tiina Itkonen, Professor Kimmo Jokinen and Associate Professor Mira Kalalahti. I was able to improve the summary of the dissertation significantly with your valuable comments, notions and suggestions. I would also like to express my great appreciation to Adjunct Professor Tanja Äärelä for kindly agreeing to act as my opponent. Thank you also Adjunct Professor Lotta Uusitalo for acting as a faculty representative on the examination committee. Furthermore, thank you so much Professor Emerita Anja Heikkinen and Dr Kaisa Rätty for your efforts as the members of my Thesis Committee.

During these years of working on this dissertation, I have had many marvellous academic encounters. I sincerely thank Professor Sami Gazi who gave me invaluable instructions and encouraged me when I started this doctorate. I sincerely thank Professor Sampsa Puttonen for his helpful guidance in the early stages of writing this summary. I also wish to thank Adjunct Professor Antti Maunu for co-authoring the articles and for our motivating and inspiring discussions. Many thanks also to Dr Ian Dobson for proofreading my articles and the thesis. I would like to express my warmest gratitude to my fellow Doctoral Researcher Niklas Rosenblad. I have received endless recognition of my capabilities from you which has meant so much to me. Thank you also Sami

Löfgren, Laura Kortesoja, Penni Pietilä, Riikka Suhonen and Antti Seitamaa for your sharing and caring in our ‘Amis-tutkijat’ collaboration.

My growth as a researcher has emerged in close connection with my previous work as a special needs teacher in a vocational special education college. I warmly thank everyone that I’ve been privileged to work with, especially the VALMA-team and the students with whom I have grown as a special needs teacher, as a researcher and as a human being. You have taught me the most. Thank you Principal Tiina Meriläinen, Service Director Tiina Mäki-Gaetz, Pedagogical Director Päivi Laalo-Hokkanen and Pedagogical Manager Petri Vanhalakka for your support and encouragement in combing my work and research. Particularly, I would like to thank my colleague Päivi Laine-Sievers. In addition, that you offered me unconditional support and guidance while we shared our office and everyday work, you have inspired me a lot with your engagement to your work for the students, to listen to their voice, to recognize their capabilities and to trust them.

I would like to thank my current workplace, Häme University of Applied Sciences for recognizing me and my capabilities. I found myself privileged to work within this community of expertise and vision. Among many others I would like to thank Director/Principal Anu Raudasoja, Director Martti Majuri and Director Seija Mahlamäki-Kultanen for their support and interest in my research. Special thanks to my brilliant friends and colleagues Päivi Pynnönen, Sanna Heino, Katja Maetoloa, Ida-Maria Raudasoja, Riikka Tuominen, Antti Viiman and Mikko Kekki. We have something ‘Giveen kirjoitettuna’. To continue I would like to express my gratitude to Tomi Raitanen, Orvokki Joki-Pesola, Satu Aarnio, Simo Uusinoka and Kirsi Korkealehto for guiding me gently and trustfully with my new work tasks and making me feel at home. I thank The Häme Foundation for Professional Higher Education and Research for its financial support for my study.

Thank you, my dear friends Marjo Ruuskanen and Rita Hintsala, for your love and support. Maybe we will now have more time for Nordic walking and for some glasses of sparkling which we have passed on lately. Johanna Lahtinen, Sanna Häkkilä, Riitta Seire, Tanja Linnavalli, Katja Leppäkoski, Mari Mattila, Hanna Leppimäki, Susanne Källman, Eija Jaako, Kirsi Tero, Terhi Simola, Hannele Puumalainen and Taru Sarjovaara – thank you for being there for me.

It is obvious that the dissertation was completed with the help and support of so many people. My warmest thoughts belong to my family. My father Jukka, you have supported me throughout my life. I am also grateful to have such a loving godmother as Henna-Maija who has always supported me in so many ways that I can’t even describe. Also, my little sister Satu and her family. Thank you so much for being our American connection. My late grandparents Kaija and Pentti and Mikko, you would have been so proud of me, I miss you. Thanks to my extended

family, Sanni, Alma, Elsa and particularly little Taavi who has brought so much joy to our family.

Finally, the brightest light of my life, Emil. I know that you will find your place in the world with your imagination, perseverance, sense of humour and skills. I love you to the moon and back. Thank you also Pasi, you are my connection to the earth, my compass and outrigger. Your support and presence mean so much to me.

The last person I would like to thank is my mother, Anni Tuomela. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to her to recognize how much she has done for me and how important she is to me. Kiitos Äiti.

Vantaa, October 2022

*Sanna Ryökkynen*



# Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	9
1 INTRODUCTION .....	17
1.1 VET in Finland.....	19
1.1.1 General VET in Finland .....	19
1.1.2 VET providing intensive special support as research site .....	20
1.2 Theoretical framework .....	22
1.2.1 Theory of recognition.....	22
1.2.2 Understanding and voice .....	25
1.2.3 Sense of belonging .....	26
1.2.4 Shame and pride .....	28
1.2.5 Student-teacher interaction and speakers' competence .....	29
1.2.6 Good education .....	32
2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	35
3 METHODOLOGY .....	38
3.1 General methodological approach.....	40
3.2 Participants .....	44
3.3 Data collection .....	45
3.4 Data analysis .....	46
3.4.1 Study 1 .....	46
3.4.2 Study 2 .....	48
3.4.3 Study 3 .....	50
4 RESULTS .....	54
4.1 Elements enhancing studying.....	54
4.2 Elements enhancing sense of belonging.....	55
4.3 Elements of good VET .....	57
5 DISCUSSION .....	60
5.1 Results in the light of the literature .....	60
5.1.1 Emotional support .....	61

5.1.2 Cognitive respect .....	63
5.1.3 Social esteem .....	64
5.2 Educational findings .....	66
5.3 Methodological reflections .....	67
5.4 Ethical considerations.....	70
5.5 Limitations of the study .....	72
5.6 Directions for future research .....	73
REFERENCES .....	75
APPENDICES .....	96
ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS .....	99

## TABLES AND FIGURES

### TABLES

<b>Table 1.</b>	Honneth's theory of recognition
<b>Table 2.</b>	Summary of overarching research questions and research questions of the Studies 1, 2 and 3
<b>Table 3.</b>	A summary of the focus, keywords, data and data collection, methods of the analysis and research questions in Studies 1-3
<b>Table 4.</b>	Overview of the participants
<b>Table 5.</b>	Example of Study 1 analysis
<b>Table 6.</b>	Example of Study 2 analysis
<b>Table 7.</b>	Example of Study 3 analysis

### FIGURES

<b>Figure 1.</b>	Dimensions of education (Biesta 2010, 2020)
<b>Figure 2.</b>	Overall dissertation process
<b>Figure 3.</b>	Analytical process of Study 3 in outline
<b>Figure 4.</b>	Actantial model (Greimas, 1983)
<b>Figure 5.</b>	Elements of good VET
<b>Figure 6.</b>	Triangulation design

## List of original articles

This thesis is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Arabic numerals (Studies 1–3):

- 1 Ryökkynen, S., Pirttimaa, R., & Kontu, E. (2020). Interaction between students and class teachers in vocational education and training: ‘Safety distance is needed’. *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 9(2), 156-174. <https://doi.org/10.3384/njvet.2242-458X.1992156>
- 2 Ryökkynen, S., Maunu, A., Pirttimaa, R., & Kontu, E. (2022). Learning about students’ receiving special educational support experiences of qualification, socialization and subjectification in Finnish vocational education and training: A narrative approach. *Education Sciences*, 12(2): 66, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12020066>
- 3 Ryökkynen, S., Maunu, A., Pirttimaa, R., & Kontu, E. (2022). From the shade into the sun: Exploring pride and shame in students with special needs in Finnish VET. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 37(4), 648-662. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1940006>

### Author’s contribution

Sanna Ryökkynen served as a first author in all three articles and took the main responsibility for the research process as a whole. She planned the research design, collected the data, did the data analyses, and took the main responsibility of writing, submitting, and revising the articles. Maunu, Pirttimaa and Kontu contributed by providing comments and modification.

# 1 Introduction

This study addresses the needs of marginalisation (two per cent) of all vocational students in Finland. The study participants are students who have serious learning difficulties, disabilities, or serious health problems and thus need intensive special support for their vocational studying. The study seeks to give the voice to them to understand what elements would support their studying, sense of belonging and would be in the core of good vocational education and training VET. People with learning difficulties are in a different social and educational position from the rest of the Finnish population though the main objective of international and national policies has been to improve their position (Kauppila et al., 2020). These measures have systematically focused on education and based on the view that improving educational opportunities will make disabled people more independent and employable (Kauppila et al., 2018). Even so, the employment rate and social participation of disabled people is still low (Sjöblom, 2016). People with special needs or partial work ability are also in the most vulnerable position in the labour market which should be noticed as the number of persons who have some chronic disease or disability which has subjective effects on their working ability is about 600 000 in Finland (Mäkinen, 2021). Thus, it is increasingly important to figure out what elements enhance their studying and sense of belonging.

Neoliberal ideas have influenced political processes in recent decades which has shifted the distribution of wealth and balance of power in societies (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberal reasoning is also re-shaping ideas about what the desired aims and goals of education are (e.g., Holm, 2018; Komulainen et al., 2011; Lundahl, 2016; Nylund et al., 2017; Reay, 2016). Education is identified as an important cornerstone of our society's competitiveness and its purpose is intensively connected with the provision of employees according to the needs of the economy (Kiilakoski & Oravakangas, 2010). Laukia and Karjalainen (2019) assert that this has also had an influence on the implementation of VET in Finland. Personalisation is one of the key concepts of reformed Finnish VET system (Act on VET 531/2017, 44-49§). It has been introduced to enable and support individuals to acquire competence according to qualification requirements or labour market needs. It means flexible and agile individual learning pathways along which education providers serve their students and workplaces as their customers and offer services that meet their needs. This customer-orientation is closely intertwined with a competence-based approach. Students can achieve competence in accordance with the vocational skills requirements and learning outcomes in several ways and in varying learning environments. However, the implementation of a high-quality individual study path requires the student's active agency. Individual factors like motivation, self-efficacy, cooperation skills

and holistic well-being, with the clarity of the objective set for the studying and for the future create the basis for the successful personalisation. Most of the students who study at a vocational college mandated to provide intensive special support for the students (so called vocational special education colleges), have had an intensively supported study path already at comprehensive school and they have studied full-time or part-time in special education (Niemi & Mietola, 2017). It is noteworthy that the demand for rapid resilience and adaptability in VET studying might be too challenging for those students who have grown accustomed to intensive support and guidance and who need more time and help for their learning and readjustment (Niemi & Jahnukainen, 2020).

In Finland as in other countries little research has been undertaken on the vocational student's experiences, needs and preferences and even less on students who need intensive special learning support to attain the initial vocational qualification (Billett, 2014; Wheelahan, 2020). Äikäs (2012) has explored the experiences of young adults with severe disabilities in upper secondary education, employment and the transition phase after upper secondary graduation. Hermanoff's (2016), Niemi's (2015) and Raudasoja's (2006) studies focused on vocational and on pre-vocational education after compulsory education, among youths with severe disabilities. Selkivuori (2015) and Rätty (2016) have examined vocational adult education and training in the light of inclusive principles. Karusaari (2020) studied the customer orientation of the reformed Finnish VET. The research by Pylväs (2018) focused on examining the influence of individual and environmental factors on vocational talent development. Rintala's (2020) dissertation provided knowledge and understanding of workplace learning. General vocational education students' perspective on the daily life of VET was highlighted in Niittylahti's (2021) research and Salmi (2022) explored how the various motivation profiles and learning difficulties separately and together are associated with graduation from general VET and what perceptions students had about themselves as learners. This study contributes to the emerging research area VET and to discussions about what creates the conditions for learning, belonging and good VET for students who need intensive special support in their studying, i.e. having actual opportunities doing things with other people and experiencing meaningfulness in one's life (Korhonen et al., 2017; Mertanen, 2020).

In the following subchapters, I introduce the Finnish VET system which creates the context of the dissertation. Then, I present the theoretical framework of the study. I start with the theory of recognition, which creates the theoretical core of the dissertation. After that I introduce the concepts of voice and understanding. Then I will explore the essence of sense of belonging, shame and pride which is followed by my considerations of student-teacher interaction and speakers' competence. Finally, I will discuss domains of good education.

## **1.1 VET in Finland**

The context of the research is in Finnish VET system mandated to provide intensive special support for the students. First, I will provide an overview of general vocational education system in Finland and then I will describe in detail the VET system providing intensive special support, so called vocational special colleges.

### **1.1.1 General VET in Finland**

VET has a long tradition in Finland. The first vocational school was established in 1899, which was a new type of school at which studying included both theory and practical skills (Laukia, 2013; Tiilikkala, 2004). Teachers were the masters who taught young students and teachers had an autonomous position as pedagogical actors in vocational schools but also in education policy more broadly (Tiilikkala, 2004). During its history Finnish VET has undergone many reforms which have changed the roles of various stakeholders and funding. The most recent reform started at the beginning of 2018 when the competence-based approach was substituted for the previous supply-oriented approach and close cooperation with the labour force became crucial. A new funding model was also introduced, the purpose of which was to improve effectiveness and quality of education and training. The model encourages education providers to adopt measures to reduce discontinuation of studying and to recognize previously acquired skills more efficiently. It is strongly based on performance and the effectiveness of education, which are instrumental values founded on outcomes in qualification requirements and employment. The present system allows students to show previously acquired competence, which is assessed and credited, and they can only acquire the missing competence during their VET studies. The aim of the VET system is to allow students to be flexible in utilizing the units of the qualifications and smaller parts corresponding to their own or employers' needs. (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland & Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019.)

At same time with the latest reform implementation, the Finnish government reduced the funding of VET by € 200 mill., which is over 12 per cent of the total budget (AMKE, 2017). This induced pressures for cost cutting in the teaching resources of vocational institutions. It is obvious that this performance-based system with reduced teaching resources has particularly challenged those vocational students who have difficulties in learning or who are linguistically challenged. They are at risk of being bypassed during the enrolment process because they need more time and support for their studying and working. Neither does the funding system encourage vocational institutions to provide short-term

education corresponding to the needs of employers and students (Goman et al., 2021; Owal Group, 2021; State Auditor's Office, 2021). Though it seems that vocational teachers have adopted the student centred approach well, special support practices are unequally accessible in Finnish general vocational colleges (Goman et al., 2021; Maunu, 2020; Owal Group 2021; State Auditor's Office, 2021).

Currently the explicit aim of VET in Finland and the rest of Europe generally seems to be to provide skills and knowledge needed in work but at the same time 'to include the socially disadvantaged as well as high potentials (e.g. migrants, refugees, low-skilled and unemployed, inactive groups, including women), so as to enable them to stay and/or (re-)enter the labour market and to move freely and in a self-determined manner through their educational and professional careers' (Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, 2018; Council of European Union, 2020). However, the Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government (2021) in line with the study of Niemi and Jahnukainen (2018) indicated that the reformed VET system which emphasizes individuality and self-direction had set challenges for some students. It seems that traditional school and group-based learning is still important in terms of learning and sense of belonging at least for some vocational students (Niemi & Jahnukainen, 2018). Some education providers have also had challenges in implementing the personalized education to the full but the students working weeks have been fragmented (Finnish Government, 2021). This might have diluted the learning results which might lead to the polarization of students' competence. It should be acknowledged in upper secondary education that some students need more adult support and peer learning for decision-making and proceeding in their study path than others.

The report of the Finnish Government (2021) encourages education providers to develop further the means of personalisation and positive special treatment correspondingly to secure an individually sufficient amount of teaching, guidance and support. The report also highlights the small proportion (25 per cent) of vocational students continuing their studying at universities of applied sciences and even less, under one per cent, at university level. The placement rate in the labour market directly after studying is relatively high in Finland. In 2018 sixty-nine per cent of vocational students were employed after their qualification (Official Statistics of Finland, 2020).

### **1.1.2 VET providing intensive special support as research site**

Equality and associated principles are central to Nordic welfare states and to their educational systems, but still they seem to face the same problems of low throughput, high youth unemployment and frequent social exclusion (e.g., Holm,

2018; Jahnukainen & Itkonen, 2021; Mattila, 2020; Nylund & Rosvall, 2019). The purpose of Finnish VET is to provide education for all. Namely, according to the Act on VET (531/2017, 61§) students are entitled to receive teaching and guidance to be able to achieve professional skills and expertise consistent with the qualification requirements. Furthermore, students in vocational education are entitled to special and intensive special support (Act on VET 531/2017, 64§; 65§) if they have learning difficulties, disabilities or serious health problems and therefore need long-term and regular special support. The aim of special support is to permit equal access to education for all. Intensive special support is intended for those students who have serious learning difficulties, disabilities, or serious health problems. It is provided in vocational institutions, that is so called vocational special education colleges, mandated for this: five Finnish- and one Swedish-language vocational college. Six general vocational colleges have a restricted mandate to provide intensive special support for their students. Thirteen per cent of all vocational students needed special support and two per cent intensive special support for their studying during 2018-2020 (Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland, n.d.). Most of the students who have participated in special needs education in comprehensive school have continued their studies in VET, mainly because at the upper secondary level special support has until August 2021 existed for the most part only in general VET colleges and in vocational special needs education colleges (Herranen & Souto, 2016; Kauppila et al., 2020). From the beginning of 2021, the Act on General Upper Secondary Education (10.8.2018/217) has also forced general secondary education providers to organize special education for their students.

In addition to providing skills and knowledge needed in work, the purpose of Finnish VET is to support lifelong learning of students and their development as human beings and members of society. The performance funding of Finnish VET acknowledges students' qualifications and employment. However, the employment rate of the students qualifying from vocational special education colleges is thought-provoking. During the years 2009-2020 only a quarter of the students were doing paid work and nearly one-third were unemployed one year after their qualification (Vipunen – Education statistics Finland, n.d.). The number of paid workers included both those who were working in their own field or some other field, and also those who were employed with a pay subsidy. In addition, the supply of services was extensive. Students were engaged with rehabilitative exemplary employment, vocational rehabilitation, work try-out etc. A pension was main source of livelihood for a quarter of the students one year after completing their studying. In addition, other sources of livelihood were either an earnings-related unemployment allowance or basic unemployment allowance, depending on the form of the work or activity the student was engaged in. This illustrates clearly that though students with serious learning difficulties have fewer

opportunities for paid employment after qualification there seems to be wide-ranging services available for the students.

Finnish vocational special education colleges form a partnership network (AMEO) and among its objectives are influencing legislation and practices in vocational special education. The aim of the network is to provide vocational special education equally throughout Finland and develop the implementation of vocational special education generally. The AMEO network has used the Quality of Life Impact Services (QOLIS) questionnaire which is designed to assess how certain service/s improve students' quality of life. This questionnaire provided a specific perspective to recognize, identify and highlight vocational special colleges' excellence through the changes in students' quality of life which is significant to anyone but specifically to those tackling with multiple challenges in life and employment (Huttunen, 2013). This questionnaire was in active use during 2012-2018 but currently the AMEO network is demonstrating its productivity and efficacy through a national final survey [Amispalaute].

As depicted earlier, the VET funding system rewards education providers for their outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness. The focus of the funding is on completed units and qualifications, employment or placement in further education after the VET (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.). However, the Finnish state has also acknowledged the different status of vocational special education colleges and the funding is boosted with additional grants. In conclusion, it seems that the Finnish state and education policy support equal opportunities to study, but some people will have limited prospects in getting into the labour market. The desired outcomes of VET are not individually adaptable, but the most desired end is to qualify for paid employment. In light of the statistics, an emphasis on education as a preparation for employment and independent living thus may be inappropriate and it is imperative to consider how VET can support students with intensive special needs to determine their own aspirations for life (Black & Lawson, 2017; Ågren, 2021).

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

### **1.2.1 Theory of recognition**

When we are talking about how others see us, how others treat us or how we should treat others or how we should acknowledge each other in everyday life, we are talking about recognition which is the core concept of the study. According to Hegel, the founding father of theories of recognition, recognition is not merely a phenomenon that has psychological, social and political importance but it is also an ontologically important phenomenon in that it is part of what constitutes human

persons and their social and institutional world (Ikäheimo & Laitinen, 2011). According to Axel Honneth (1995) who follows in the footprints of Hegel, the prime mover for us as human beings is our need for recognition which we seek from others. It is a 'vital need' as Charles Taylor has emphasized (Anderson, 1995). A positive circle of reciprocal recognition establishes a strong sense of solidarity and allows individuals to feel that they are important and respected members of their community (Huttunen & Heikkinen, 2004). If recognition is denied to us, we develop psychological and social problems. The study is engaged with the view that if you recognize a student regarding a certain feature, as a student with special needs, you not only admit that a student has this feature, but you embrace a positive or negative attitude towards his or her for having this feature. Such recognition implies being obliged to treat the student in a certain way which means that you recognize a specific normative status of the other person (Iser, 2019). But except for this normative dimension recognition is also of psychological importance as Ikäheimo (2002) understands it in conceptual space of personhood and interpersonal relations. To develop a practical identity, people fundamentally depend on the feedback of other subjects. Those who fail to experience adequate recognition which means that they are depicted by the significant others in a one-sided or negative way, will find it much harder to embrace themselves and their skills as valuable. According to Taylor (1994) our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by misrecognition of others. Misrecognition hinders or destroys people's successful relationship with themselves (Iser, 2019). However, the way in which students create their world and the reasons they use is embedded in holistic webs of meanings which they jointly reproduce and redo. The crucial feature of human life is its dialogical character where language is in a broad sense a vehicle for defining ourselves through interaction with significant others.

Honneth (1995) has stated that whole of human life is a struggle for recognition. Human agency is constituted in and through relationships with others, when one's formation as an ethical subject and agent is dependent on the responsiveness of others with respect to care for one's needs and emotions (*emotional support*), respect for one's moral and legal dignity (*cognitive respect*), and esteem for one's social achievements (*social esteem*) (Honneth, 1995; van den Brink & Owen, 2007). Honneth (1995) claims that the three principles of recognition express the normative core of an adequate recognition. Furthermore, Honneth (1995) categorizes forms of recognition into three distinct spheres, into recognitive attitudes which are (1) *Love*; (2) *Rights*; (3) *Solidarity*. *Love*, both friendship and parental love, as an element of recognition refers to an emotional concern for the well-being and needs of a person. Without the assurance that is felt if this care continues even after the subject has become independent, it would become impossible for the loving subject to recognize that independence. Therefore, recognition is here characterized by a double process, in which the

other is released and, at the same time, emotionally tied to the loving subject. As for *respect*, it stands for the recognition of the equal moral accountability. This element refers to the right to shape one's own life without being hindered by the state, institutions, or other persons. To respect a student as an autonomous person implies leaving certain decisions to himself or herself. Finally, *solidarity* which is linked to social esteem. It means the evaluation of particular traits and abilities against the background of implicit standards. Characteristic of solidarity is that people esteem each other's contributions to a shared goal, to the horizon of values that makes it possible to experience each other's uniqueness as meaningful for shared praxis (Honneth, 1995).

According to Honneth (1995) these spheres of recognition are coupled with three aspects of practical self-relation: (1) *Self-confidence*; (2) *Self-respect*; (3) *Self-esteem*. Self-confidence depends on love and care, self-respect on respect and self-esteem on social esteem (Laitinen, 2003). (1) *Basic self-confidence* is constructed between a child and the primary carer in which subject gains basic confidence in themselves. Basic self-confidence comes before every other form of reciprocal recognition. (2) *Self-respect* refers to the personal ability to express one's own needs and desires, as a result of the awareness of being surrounded by a sphere of unconditional love and emotional concern. Self-respect is mediated by the sense of being a bearer of equal rights, and thus being publicly recognized as a person with an equal degree of moral accountability; and self-esteem is the positive self-evaluation of one's own particular capacities and achievements (Honneth, 1995; van Leeuwen, 2007). Honneth (1995) concludes that legal recognition enables a person to understand himself or herself as someone who possesses the capabilities that make him or her to appear as a full member of society. (3) *Self-esteem* is a practical relation-to-self in which one's distinct traits and abilities are valued though they are not shared by all (Honneth, 1995; van den Brink & Owen, 2007). According to Honneth (1995) this practical relation-to-self is formed through relationships of solidarity in which individuals or groups share a common project or horizon of value. The general form of mutual recognition means that two recognizers mutually take each other as recognizers and accept the normative implications of such takings (Laitinen, 2003).

Honneth (2012) argues that individuals' dependency on experiences of social recognition explains why they seek membership in various forms of social associations. The experience that one's own needs, judgement and skills are regarded as valuable is one that students must constantly renew and re-affirm so that they do not lose their strength and vitality. Feeling that one's skills are valuable to others requires lifelong affirmation. After a student has entered vocational college and a career, the number of people upon whose esteem one's own self-esteem depends on grows considerably. Thus, students have a very normal and natural need to be recognized as members in social groups in which they can receive constant affirmation of their needs, judgement and various skills

in direct interaction with others. Honneth (2012) claims that the esteem of one's peers is the central motive behind group formation. The axes of Honneth's (1995, 2012) theory of recognition applied in the dissertation are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Honneth's theory of recognition

<b>Mode of recognition</b>	Emotional support	Cognitive respect	Social esteem
<b>Dimension of personality</b>	Needs and emotions	Moral responsibility	Traits and abilities
<b>Forms of recognition</b>	Primary relationships (love, friendship)	Legal relations (rights)	Community of value (Solidarity)
<b>Practical relation to self</b>	Basic self-confidence	Self-respect	Self-esteem

Honneth (1995) argues that denial of recognition is a form of disrespect that can be harmful for the sense of belonging. Lack of recognition affects individuals first at the level of physical integrity, second at the level of moral self-respect, and finally if the individual's way of life is seen as inferior or deficient.

### 1.2.2 Understanding and voice

In the study, students' voice is defined as being socially grounded, performed through exchange, reflexive and embodied. These elements connect it to Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition. The main purpose of the study is to give a voice to vocational students with special educational needs and to pursue and understand the elements that would enhance their studying and their sense of belonging. When speaking about understanding we can distinguish between epistemologically relevant usages referring to understanding as a faculty, as a process or as a result of a process (Baumberger, 2014; Baumberger et al., 2017). The aim of the study was to address the voice of the students to understand *what* the elements are which students perceive as enhancing their studying and sense of belonging and thus, creating domains for good VET. This ascription employing the "what" clause ascribes interrogative understanding, which is both the process and the result of the study (Grimm et al., 2016; Pritchard, 2010). The process of coming to understand consists various general cognitive abilities, like reason, plan, think abstractly, solve problems, comprehend complex ideas, learn from experience (Plomin, 1999). Understanding is also the result of a cognitive process. Consequently, I propose that to understand is a verb of success.

Voice could be equated with the sound of a person speaking or with the expression of a person's opinion which would be a political use of the word voice. A promise to give voice to minority and under-represented groups is part of the emancipatory agenda of educational research and practice to which this study

contributes (e.g., Barton, 2005; Freire, 1970; Wenham, 2021). Voice is crucial to the legitimacy of modern democracies while across economic and cultural life voice has been offered in various ways (Couldry, 2010). But voice is not just about voicing or speaking, it is about listening and hearing. It is in the ways that the listener reacts, accepts or rejects what has been put out into the social environment that reveals the impact of that voice (Lawy, 2017). This opens us up to an understanding of the struggles of recognition of the non-dominant minority of vocational students who might have a different way of speaking, reasoning or experiencing their vocational studying than majority of students. Students' voice researchers had reinforced our understanding of the various ways students elect to express themselves, what students say about how they learn, what enhances their learning, how they want to be treated by others etc. (Pazey, 2020). Students generally possess a strong sense of what is fair and right regarding how they are treated (Smyth, 2006). However, according to Billet (2014) sentiments of powerful others have shaped the standing of VET and its proposes and practices though to realize its purposes VET system necessarily requires to be informed by and directed by the interests of students.

### **1.2.3 Sense of belonging**

Many studies have demonstrated that individuals cannot flourish nor function alone, but social interactions are an essential part of human life (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2006; Pirskanen et al., 2020; Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014; Stewart, 2013; Sun et al., 2020). Social relations have a powerful effect on our happiness and other aspects of well-being (Honneth, 1995; Ikäheimo & Laitinen, 2011; Laitinen, 2003; Taylor, 1994). Our fundamental needs are to belong and to be recognized by significant others. When it comes to the VET context, Jauhola and Kortelainen (2018) reported that to promote students' sense of belonging in Finnish VET, pedagogical management and student welfare services hold the key which will ensure a quality personalisation process, structures supporting individual choices, guidance, support, and an accessible college community. Students prefer achievements that are validated, valued and recognized by other people, by their teachers, employers, families and peers (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Students' sense of belonging is composed individually in many ways and relates to many different objects of attachments through different situations in different learning environments and in everyday life (May, 2013). These complex interactions between environmental and personal factors either hinder or promote a student's sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The feelings of external connectedness are grounded in the context or referent group to whom the student chooses, wants, and feels permission to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Honneth, 1995; Leary, 2001; Mahar et al., 2013).

Notably those students who must compete with underrepresentation, with negative stereotypes and who struggle for recognition are attentive to indications that could communicate that they do not belong or are not fully included in these settings (Honneth, 1995; Walton & Carr, 2012a, 2012b; Walton & Cohen, 2007, 2011). In school contexts, performance and behaviour in an educational environment can be deeply affected by the way students feel they are seen and judged; that is, how they are recognized by others (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011). Negatively stigmatized groups, like students with special educational needs, report more often about rejection and exclusion than others (Kaiser & Miller, 2003; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Furthermore, it seems that the negative images and stigma connected to special education and students with special educational needs dominate the sense-making (Mietola, 2014; Niemi, 2015). The division between special and ordinary is steepest in the student culture, the exception being when we are talking about students with special talents (Mietola, 2014). But not all belongings and recognitions are important to students in the same way and to the same extent, but the more threatened and less secure they feel, the more central the emotional components of their constructions of themselves and their identities become.

As with sense of belonging, issues related to equality are often connected to social relationships, and with the deference given to all people and groups of people in society. Thus, it is also a matter of mutual recognition, that is how we meet, treat and value each other (Honneth, 1995). The questions of inequality should not only discover the upliftment of those in a less competitive position like students with special needs, but to acknowledge the uneven distribution of opportunities (Mattila, 2020). If inequalities in belonging in society are considered to be social constructions which are developed in social interaction and not as universal or institutional social facts, it is also possible to deconstruct them, find alternatives and strive towards building alternative futures for all (Therborn, 2013). That is to consider, what those social institutions and practices are which aim to assess each student's progress, to identify and recognize the conditions for their flourishing (Honneth, 1995; Stewart, 2013). Foucault (1982) suggests that freedom and power are intrinsically linked with each other. Every education system including VET is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with knowledge and power they bring with them. In Finland social exclusion of young people has become an important issue in the political debate, where social exclusion has been viewed particularly in terms of accumulation of factors which lead to an underprivileged status, primarily as a combination of low levels of education, long-term unemployment, life management problems, health problems and social passivity (Hämäläinen & Matikainen, 2018). Exclusion is defined as an enforced lack of participation, where social isolation occurs for reasons that are beyond the control of those

subject to it (Barry, 1998; Davey & Gordon, 2017). Thus, the processes of including and excluding are organized through systems of habits, rights, and entitlements that give priority to some people over others and coordinate the activities required (Reimer, 2004). Therefore it is not enough to capture the cases of inclusion and exclusion but it is necessary to include an explicit focus on the social norms themselves, on the structures and practices and the often-hidden conditions they impose (Davey & Gordon, 2017). This means a positive circle of mutual recognition which establishes a strong sense of solidarity and allows students to feel that they are important and respected members of their VET community and the workforce (Huttunen & Heikkinen, 2004).

#### **1.2.4 Shame and pride**

Shame and pride as social emotions are closely related to the social bonds and sense of belonging of the students. Honneth (1995, 2012) has stated that all human life is a struggle for recognition which means that human agency is constituted in and through relations with others and that lack of social approval might open up a psychological gap within one's personality, into which negative reactions such as shame and rage could step. For Cooley (1992) shame and pride are both aroused from self-monitoring, seeing oneself from the point of view of the other. Retzinger (1995) has elaborated on shame and has proposed that if the others are viewed as caring less about the relationship than a student himself or herself, then self is evaluated negatively or there might be indications of alienation from significant others which creates an explicit connection with Honneth's theory recognition. If a student experiences shame, it might also cause comparisons between the student and others in which the student appears inferior, or the student might simply wonder if he or she is sufficient (Honneth, 1995; Retzinger, 1995). Shame and pride are deeply embedded in the social context in which they occur and therefore are complex to understand (Retzinger, 1995; Scheff, 2000, 2003). Ahmed (2014) suggests that emotions create the boundaries and surfaces that allow us to distinguish between an inside and outside. Emotions become a form of social presence rather than self-presence through which we respond to objects and others. Furthermore, according to Ahmed (2014) shame requires a witness: even if a subject is alone, it is an imagined view of the other that is taken on by a subject in relation to herself or himself. This dissertation draws on Scheff's (2000, 2003) sociological definition of shame and pride. By shame I mean a large family of emotions like embarrassment, humiliation, shyness that involve reactions to rejection, feelings of failure or inadequacy. Thus, according to this view, shame includes many cognates and variants, but they are united by the feeling of threat to the social bond which give rise to shame whereas pride refers to a strong and safe involvement in interaction (Scheff, 2000, 2003). The sense that a student has

failed to live up to his or her own standards or standards set by others like teachers, parents or peers would signal a threat to his or her social relationships and thus, shame. I argue that by exploring shame and pride in vocational students' experiences, we might receive a better understanding of their needs.

In the school context, emotions are both experiences and are instrumental for academic achievement and personal growth (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). Experiencing excessive anxiety about school assignments and social relationships can hamper a student's academic performance and have a negative influence on his or her psychological and physical health (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). Hence, students' motivational and goal-related processes could be associated with triggering a shame reaction, but on the other hand they also can contribute to shame resiliency (Turner et al., 2002). This means that experiencing enjoyment and success while working on a challenging assignment can contribute to growing self-direction and goal setting (Bach et al., 2014). Students with special educational needs are subjected to even more shame in the classroom than others, as they might encounter minimal opportunities for positive educational experiences or personal relationships (Jenson et al., 2004). Furthermore, socioemotional, behavioural, and learning problems might have remarkable long-term effects on these students' educational careers (Hakkarainen et al., 2016). It is crucial not only to understand the causes of these emotional events but also to recognize better how these events influence students' and teachers' success in different learning environments and in everyday life (Pekrun & Schutz, 2007). According to earlier studies, positive teacher-student relationships become particularly important for students' academic development and engagement (Martin & Collie, 2019; Oades-Sese et al., 2014). One important dimension of teacher-student relationship is provisions of instrumental help, but in addition, the relative role of emotional support is to be acknowledged (Wentzel, 2012). It is important to acknowledge that teachers' emotional intelligence or social competence might sometimes relate to the difficulties in working with certain types of special educational needs students. Therefore the soft skills might unfold crucial in the teachers' work, which means that teachers' abilities should include self-awareness of one's own feelings and empathy, understanding the situations and emotional states of others (Skura & Świdarska, 2021)

### **1.2.5 Student-teacher interaction and speakers' competence**

The core of the education is the interaction between a student and a teacher. According to Bahktin (1981, p. 293) 'verbal discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning.' This encapsulates the premise

of the study which approaches the interaction between students and class teachers as a social phenomenon in which talk is interactionally constructed and negotiated for particular purposes (Bakhtin, 1981; Goffman, 1981). Hence, in the study the notion of communication is perceived as goal-directed strategies or manifest behaviours of individuals instead conceiving it as an emergent process between interlocutors (Baxter, 2004).

Extensive previous research has indicated that the quality of student-teacher interaction impacts on cognitive performance, motivation and well-being of the students and teachers. Results from Tyler et al. (2016) showed that students' perceptions of teachers are a significant predictor of school attachment. Elffers et al. (2012) and Niittyalahti (2021) claimed that school experiences, sense of belonging and positive relationships matter for students, to feel connected to their study. According to Äärelä (2012), more attention should be paid to teacher-student relationships and to aspects enhancing positive interaction which would support young students studying and lifeworld generally. Korthagen et al. (2014) defined a student-teacher contact as a two way interactive process in which both participants influence each other's cognitive, emotional, motivational and behavioural responses. Whereas Spilt et al. (2011) demonstrated that individual teacher-student relationship might also affect the personal and professional self-esteem of teachers and on their wellbeing in the long run. Studies linking the students' perceptions of teacher interpersonal behaviour and learning outcome in VET are few. The results of the study by van Uden et al. (2014) showed that perceived interpersonal teacher behaviour was the most important predictor of all types of student engagement in pre-vocational and vocational studying. Vocational teachers' pivotal role was also highlighted in the study of Henderson and Fisher (2008).

Interaction competence is about the knowledge and abilities needed by a student to be able to interact with a teacher. It is a multidimensional and cross-disciplinary concept that forms a basis of human behaviour. According to Hymes (1972) communicative competence is about the knowledge and usage of language in a way that is suitable for the communicative situation. In other words, competence means to be aware that different situations demand different types of language use. Thus, speakers' competence in interaction can be evaluated from two perspectives: speaking effectively and speaking meaningfully (Hymes, 1972; Sanders, 2015). The first one means that a speaker acquires knowledge of rules, customs, practices, and norms, that delimit the utterances fit and cohere to the purposes within the current interaction. The latter perspective is that people acquire knowledge of meaning relations and structural relations between utterances by which they combine to form a whole. In the dissertation I was interested in the students' speaker competence involved in being an effective speaker in student-teacher interaction. To speak effectively in that interaction is a

matter of contribution to it in a way that leads gradually to the achievement of the speaker's goal. An interest in the basis of speaking effectively arises from presumption that students are not equally able to speak effectively. The particulars that make speaking competent from this perspective are most identified in terms of its prosocial qualities such as openness, directness and cooperativeness, rather than any linguistic and vocal details (Sanders, 2015). The knowledge and cognitive processing that are required in interaction involve empathy and perspective-taking. Because verbal discourse is a social phenomenon, each speaker in an interaction has an influence over the interaction and the meaningfulness of what is said (Bakhtin, 1981; Goffman, 1981). Even if the interaction proceeds exactly as one speaker wants it to, it still depends on how the other participates for that to happen. As I depicted earlier, not all students are equally capable or willing in social interactions. A student might interact meaningfully while being ineffective, having adopted means and ends that a more experienced and effective participants might have rejected. According to Sanders (2003), training and practice in participating in such activities would work as a remedy, often something accomplished through the process of socialization which takes time.

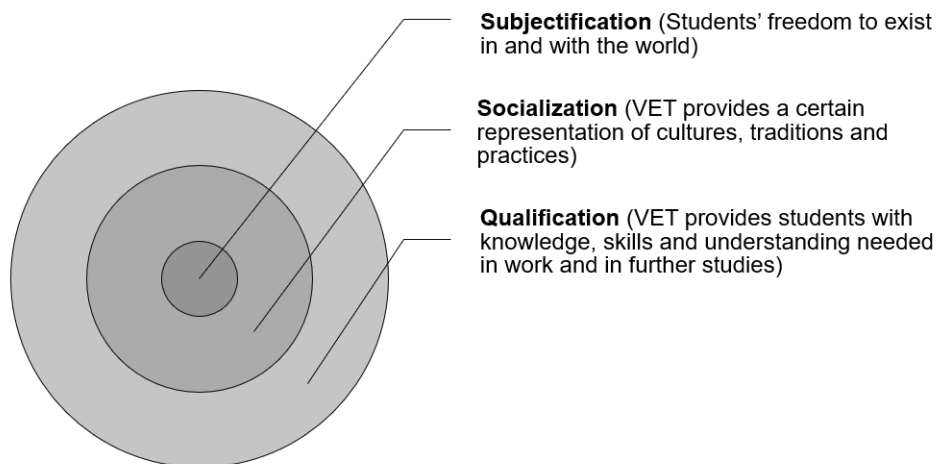
However, the Finnish VET system which emphasizes 'market relevance' by reducing the time required for studying and speeding up students' transitions into the workforce sets certain expectations for the students' speaking competence. The system allows students to construct individual study paths corresponding to their own and employers' needs (Act on Vocational Education and Training 531/2017; Ministry of Education and Culture & Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). Thus, an ideal student in the Finnish VET system is a self-governing and autonomous person who sets their own career goals and is engaged with the principles of life-long learning (Niemi & Jahnukainen, 2020; Nylund et al., 2017). According to Niemi and Jahnukainen (2020) the emphasis on self-guidance and initiative in learning tasks does not offer a safe, stable learning space for all students of VET. In their study, Niemi and Jahnukainen (2020) showed that teachers' responsibility in learning tasks advanced students' opportunities to participate in learning processes. This is in line with the results of the latest Amisbarometri (2022) which reports that two-thirds of Finnish vocational students found the number of teachers' teaching hours suitable for them but 28% would have appreciated more time and presence from their teachers. The Amisbarometri report (2022) indicates also that students lack support from their vocational colleges.

### **1.2.6 Good education**

VET has had a long tradition in Finland, and it has a significant social standing. The excellence of education is often defined by the measurements of outcomes, and the funding of Finnish VET rewards vocational colleges when students complete qualifications and gain employment (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.). It seems that national and international comparisons, league tables, accountability, evidence-based education and effective schooling rule in the present educational discussions (Biesta, 2010; Kiilakoski & Oravakangas, 2010; Power, 2012; Wallenius et al., 2018). Students, teachers, schools and even entire education systems work under the pressure to perform and to pursue excellence which forgets the fundamental fact of human freedom and the fact that education has to engage with this (Biesta, 2021; Simola, 2015). Biesta (2015a, 2021) states that there is a range of ways in which human beings exist and the task of education should rather be about opening up these options than only providing students with the position of the learner or the worker on the labour market.

This study follows the considerations of Biesta (2010, 2015b, 2020, 2022) and argues that in education the question of purpose is multidimensional and suggests that three domains can be found: qualification, socialization and subjectification. Biesta (2020) proposes that domains of education could be represented as concentric circles with subjectification either as the inner or outer of the circles. In the study I have positioned subjectification at the centre because subjects, students, and their experiences and needs, are on the focus of my research (see Figure 1). However, this does not mean that I have disregarded vocational qualifications, knowledge, skills, and traditions, but I believe that in the domain of education, we are always connected with the students to the practices that are pursued and transformed (Biesta, 2020; Dewey, 1949; Kemmis et al., 2013; Schatzki, 2012). The qualification domain of VET provides students with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed in work and for further study. VET is implemented through the practical realisation of curriculum through its local variations and individual teachers' interpretations and emphases. Therefore, I propose that it constitutes the frames for VET. In Finland VET has an explicit connection to work which makes the socialization dimension of education specific. Firstly, training agreements and a competence-based approach provide students with opportunities for individual study paths to gain only missing skills and knowledge to fulfil workforce needs and to be employed. Secondly, VET provides a certain representation of cultures, traditions and practices which is its socialization function. Socialization also allows students to come to terms with the expectations that provide structure to a particular social system (Luhmann, 1995). To define the constitution of good education necessitates acknowledging all these domains of education, because when we engage with one dimension, we

always have an impact on the others (Biesta, 2010, 2020). Thus, if we engage with the socialization domain of VET and scrutinize the transmission of norms and values for the purpose of professional socialization, we do so in a particular content which is linked to qualification function. On the other hand, engaging with subjectification in VET is done under certain curricular content which is connected with the socialization and qualification functions of VET. It is crucial that having skills and knowledge cannot occur without a subject, a student. Without a strong connection to the subject and subjectification, vocational qualification becomes training which is something we do *to* others not *with* them (Biesta, 2020).



**Figure 1.** Dimensions of education (Biesta 2010, 2020)

The agility and efficiency of the Finnish VET process are highly acclaimed, but there is very little explicit attention to what constitutes a good education and what the ultimate values and aims of VET are, and for whom. The question of purpose is the most important question: What is it that we are seeking to achieve through VET for students who have serious learning difficulties or disorders and what is the appropriate content students should engage with and why (Biesta, 2015b). Education could paradoxically be situated as not only the solution to inequalities in society but also as one of the main causes of these very same inequalities because of their complexity and fragility and incomplete nature of strategies to address them (Power, 2012). Finnish VET policy seeks to tackle the inequalities as its purpose is to provide equal opportunities for all to study and to acquire the competence needed in the workforce. Vocational students who have special educational needs are entitled to special support for their studying to be able to fulfil the qualification requirements and to pursue their place on the labour market, even though there are no equal job markets for them. Hence, it is not enough to look only at paid employment as the only practice of VET that will add

Sanna Ryökkynen

wealth, inclusion, and social belonging in society, but we should look at the purpose from another viewpoint: creating capabilities and supporting students' subjective and social well-being among other people (Gorz, 1999)

## 2 Aim of the research and research questions

The aim of this dissertation is to gain deeper understanding about the elements of support that vocational students who receive intensive learning support perceive as the most relevant for enhancing their studying, sense of belonging and what would create the domains for good VET. The significance of the dissertation derives from the importance of investigating the needs and the experiences of the students who represent the 2% minority of Finnish vocational students and whose experiences might not be heard, are marginalized or shunted off. Because the students' study paths have been intensively supported and guided since the basic education years, it is important to listen to their voice (Hakala et al., 2013; Niemi, 2014; Niemi & Kurki, 2014). Secondly, though Finnish VET is closely connected with the workforce and even though many employers have a lack of skilled workers, students with intensive special needs have difficulties in finding their place in the labour market: Only a quarter of the students with initial vocational qualification do paid work after their VET studying (Vipunen -Education Statistics Finland, n.d.). Finland promotes justice through education for all but it seems that the labour market is not equal but those who belong to less competitive groups like the partially disabled are often excluded from the labour market (Kuptsch & Charest, 2021; Mäkinen, 2021). Thirdly, there is a lack of scholarly knowledge of the VET system providing intensive special support as national and international VET research has tended to focus on the practices of the general vocational education system (Wheelahan, 2020). The study provides students' perspectives on the issues.

To achieve the aim of the dissertation, the focus of Study 1 was directed towards the interaction between a class teacher and a student. In the study, the interaction was appraised as the core of education because according earlier studies, a positive interaction between a teacher and a student is a leading factor promoting school attachment, motivation, academic success and well-being of students (Roorda et al., 2011; van Uden et al., 2014; Äärelä, 2012). Study 1 confirms that a teacher-planned orientation in which students act with an accommodating and humble attitude but with an emotionally charged way is needed. That is, a safe distance to their teachers is needed. To deepen my understanding of the students' needs and preferences, Study 2 reflects the students' experiences on the Biesta's domains of good education, qualification, socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2010, 2020). The study contributes to the discussion about what constitutes good VET and proposes that this question be answered by acknowledging all three domains of education rather than emphasizing the measurable outcomes like the number of units completed, qualifications and employment rates. To complement and sharpen the results of

the dissertation, Study 3 investigates the dynamics of social emotions and social bonds between students and class teachers. According to earlier studies emotions are a significant part of schooling and positive emotional experience promotes increased personal involvement in learning and in social interaction generally (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Naude et al., 2014; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). Thus, to reach the aim of the dissertation, the third article advocates social belonging in VET institutions and contributes to the discussion about students' needs and about communality, about social and subjective domains of VET, which are to be acknowledged with system-level questions about qualifications, competence and labour market needs.

As depicted in Table 2, the individual studies propose more nuanced questions to further explore the overarching research questions:

RQ1) Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support, which elements do they perceive as enhancing their studying?

RQ2) Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support, which elements do they perceive as enhancing their sense of belonging?

RQ3) What are the students' perceptions of what constitutes the elements of good VET?

**Table 2.** Summary of overarching research questions and research questions of the Studies 1, 2 and 3

Study and Article	Overarching research questions	Research questions
Study and Article 1	<p>RQ1) Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support, which elements do they perceive as enhancing their studying?</p> <p>RQ2) Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support which elements do they perceive as enhancing their sense of belonging?</p> <p>RQ3) What are the students' perceptions of what constitutes the elements of good VET?</p>	<p>RQ1) How do VET students receiving intensive special support describe the interaction with their class teacher?</p> <p>RQ2) What is the purpose and orientation of the interaction according to students?</p> <p>RQ3) What guidance is provided in the interaction between students and class teachers?</p>
Study and Article 2	<p>RQ3) What are the students' perceptions of what constitutes the elements of good VET?</p>	<p>RQ) To what extent are Biesta's dimensions of good education - qualification, socialization, and subjectification - audible in the narratives of Finland's VET special educational needs students?</p>
Study and Article 3	<p>RQ1) Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support, which elements do they perceive as enhancing their studying?</p> <p>RQ2) Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support which elements do they perceive as enhancing their sense of belonging?</p> <p>RQ3) What are the students' perceptions of what constitutes the elements of good VET?</p>	<p>RQ1) What experiences related to the dynamics of pride and shame did students narrate in their social bonds with their class teachers?</p> <p>RQ2) What do these experiences tell us about participants' and about their activity and needs?</p>

### 3 Methodology

The dissertation aims to address the experiences and preferences of students with intensive special educational needs and to investigate the elements of support that they perceive as being the most important. It is qualitative research, which is hermeneutic, interpretative and practical in nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The emancipatory knowledge interest covers the nuances of the VET system providing intensive special support which provides opportunities to reflect and interpret its social relevancies, practices and constructions from the students' perspective. Interpretative studies like this take a stand on culture, social group or the community in which the subjects of the study live and act. In this case this can be particularized into a VET system providing intensive special support. Interpretative study is more than an interpreter of single subject's experiences, but it is a window onto shared experiences which form an entity (Risjord, 2014, p. 60). Moreover, though students have different experiences, they must suppose that there is a stable and uniform social world on which different students have a perspective.

Because the participants in the study were students who represent the minority of vocational students and whose study paths are intensively guided and supported, this study was not only interpretative by nature but also emancipatory and critical. It means that VET was considered to be much more than vocational qualifications and measurable outcomes. VET was seen as a starting point for social equality and democracy though it can also being among the main causes of inequality (Beach & Sernhede, 2011; Kalalahti et al., 2020; Power, 2012). Most educational policies can be seen as attempts to make education equal, but the solutions made embody different assumptions about what counts as a socially-just education system and the obstacles that prevent this from being realized. VET may have important inclusive functions in providing alternative learning careers for young people, supporting their study motivation and vocational identities (Larsen & Thunqvist, 2018). Nevertheless, it seems that the expansion of education does not have a significant impact on relative social class disadvantages, for reasons arising from the dynamic relationship between the structures of a capitalist economy and formal education (Lynch, 2019). Disabled people, like other less competitive groups, have challenges in both employment and social participation (Kuptsch & Charest, 2021; Mäkinen, 2021; Sjöblom, 2016).

The study paradigm is grounded on social constructionism according to which truth is constructed through social interaction as students engage with the world and with each other (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The ontological dimension of social constructionism assumes that reality itself is a social construct generated

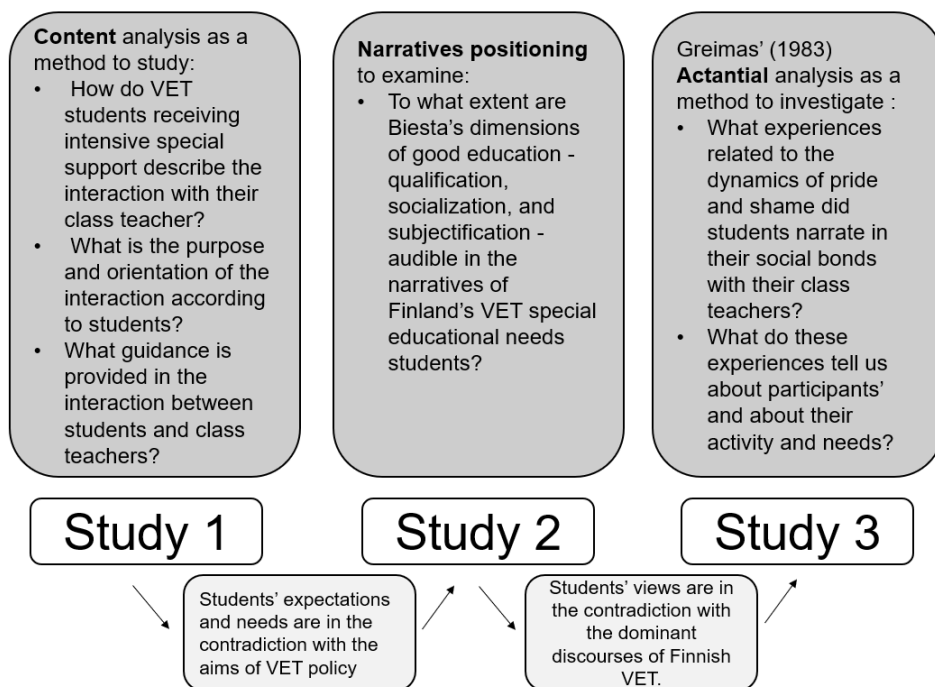
from multiple negotiations of interpretations that people give the world (Sandu, 2016). ‘Social constructionism holds that individuals seek to make meaning of their lives and that the researcher has to examine the question through multiple lenses of the individuals involved, to obtain the definition of the situation, to see how they make sense of their situation and to focus on interactions, contexts, environments and biographies’ (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 23). According to Sandu (2016) social reality is constructed around the communicative interactions within the negotiation processes of the interpretations that continuously occur between the actors of communication. Burr (2015) summarizes that social constructionist approach accepts a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge. A critical relationship with educational phenomena is an important epistemological premise for the dissertation. This means that the study has adopted a critical stance about norms and presumed behavioural patterns and it strives to understand the elements in education that would be the most important and relevant for the vocational students with special needs (Kiilakoski & Oravakangas, 2010). VET is not only an autonomous cultural phenomenon or pedagogical relationship between students and teachers but it is also an activity which constructs or dismantles social dominance and class distinctions (Siljander, 2014). To change the world, to change Finnish VET, to respond to the students’ needs and expectations, it is essential to understand the implicit elements underlying the explicit (Heikkinen & Kukkonen, 2019). Therefore, the critical-emancipatory knowledge of the dissertation is based on hermeneutic knowledge of the society and good life (Heikkinen et al., 2018). The hermeneutic understanding of the study leads to the presumption that the needs experienced by students with special needs refer to the cultural historical tradition, the language and the traditions the students have adopted (Backman, 2018). The hermeneutic understanding of the study connects it with the view that interpretation is circular. The hermeneutic circle not only helps in reflectively interpreting students’ expressions but it also enables people to understand themselves and their own lived experiences (Kerdeman, 2015).

The starting point for the dissertation is my own pre-understanding, which was constructed through the philosophical and theoretical choices and through my work experience as a vocational special needs teacher with the students who need intensive support for their learning. According to Tökkäri (2018) a researcher who is interested in the experiences of the participants should carry out research free from assumptions, though a researcher can never adopt a role of a fully objective observer, because her or his experiences are developed in the context of the subject of the study. According to Gadamer (1989) understanding which always contains prejudices and assumptions is a dialogue between a researcher’s own prejudices and the subject of interpretation. However, understanding is not only a method, but also a way to exist in the world. The better we understand the details the better

we can understand the wider picture and vice versa. The emphasis of the dissertation is not to understand the causal relationships but to understand better the needs and experiences of students. Although I must be aware of the causality, students' earlier experiences and their short-term and long-term plans affect this moment. Furthermore, the knowledge the dissertation provides is not unconditional, but it has been constructed through the theories and methods applied which emphasize the education's multiple domains of purpose.

### **3.1 General methodological approach**

The articles summarized in the dissertation have used a wide range of methodologies (content analysis, narrative's positioning and actantial analysis). The overall dissertation process has been iterative which means that it has been ongoing, and I have been led by the data to ask another set of questions and to use another type of method (see Figure 2). Therefore, the research frame for the dissertation is multimethod: what is learned from one particular data and method is integrated in the application of another method (Axinn & Pearce, 2006; Brewer & Hunter, 2006). Anyhow, the addition of multiple methods has served as a supplementary function: they have answered different questions but their primary aim has been to support the core qualitative driven approach and the overarching research questions and the aim of the dissertation (Hesse-Biber et al., 2015). I argue that by combining multiple methods, it is possible to elicit important new insights into the position and needs of the students who receive intensive special support. Social life phenomena are too complex to be studied using a one dimensional statistical method (Flick, 2018). Each qualitative method reveals only part of reality. Therefore, by combining several research methods, that is using multiple methods, I strived for a holistic understanding of the students' needs and expectations (Morse & Chung, 2003). The term 'multiple-methods research' is used to describe research which covers mixed-method research that combines quantitative and qualitative research, as well as qualitative multiple methods, which also include the concept of triangulation (Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Flick, 2018). Triangulated measurements were used in the dissertation to pinpoint the dimensions of students' needs and expectations more accurately by observing them from several methodological viewpoints (Brewer & Hunter, 2006).



**Figure 2.** Overall dissertation process

The research consisted of three distinct studies in which the students' experiences created the core of the study. The dissertation is engaged with a constructionist approach and appraises social interaction, belonging and social emotions as fundamental phenomena which might have had remarkable effects on vocational students by increasing their engagement with learning and constructing their pathways through learning and work (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014; Roorda et al., 2011; Äärelä, 2012). Therefore, the focus of Study 1 was directed at students' experiences of the interaction with their teachers and on the guidance they received. I used semi-structured interviews and content analysis as methods to drill into the students' experiences of the interaction with their teachers. The study concluded that though Finnish VET system provides its students with an opportunity for self-guiding and individual study paths the participants had traditional expectations for the guidance of the teachers. Teachers' presence, understanding, support and time would enhance their learning and social belonging in school and in workplace learning. This is in contradiction with the present policy of VET system where agile, efficient, competence-based and self-regulated study paths are emphasized and where teachers are seen as coaches who facilitate students individual progress. Which connects the first study with the second one which aim was to deepen my understanding of students' perceptions for good VET.

Study 2 concentrated in the students' definitions of good VET by reflecting on their narratives with Biesta's (2010, 2020) domains of good education: qualification, socialization and subjectification. As an analytical tool for Study 2, I chose narratives positioning analysis because I wanted to examine and interpret the participants' narratives as social actions in the VET context where they have been told (Bamberg, 1997; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). According to De Fina (2013) the locus where positioning needs to be studied is interaction because it is in interaction where people display a local understanding of their positions. This connects the study to its ontological premise: students construct their knowledge through social interaction as they engage with the vocational institutions, with their teachers, with the world of work and with each other. The narratives positioning as an analytical tool gave light to the positions of Biesta's parameters available in students' narratives and reflected in students' positions in the normative discourse of a worker citizen. The study revealed a contradiction between students' views and the dominant discourses of Finnish VET which advocates competence, self-regulation and labour market cooperation.

The third study focused on the dynamics of social emotions and social bonds between students and teachers. In Studies 1 and 2 the participants' interaction with their teachers and labour market representatives and their prospects depicted compliant but emotionally charged which evoked a need to examine the first interview data from another perspective. To deepen my understanding of the elements enhancing students studying and social belonging I wrote a case story of each student interview. I used Greimas' actantial model as an analysis tool to recognize the actors in the case stories and to scrutinize the thematics of pride and shame between these actors (Greimas, 1983; Schleifer & Harré, 1987). According to Greimas (1983) the narratives can be split into six actants in which the subject, a student, is the central actor of the narrative. The sender is one who motivates the subject to obtain the object and the receiver is the destination of the narrative or process. The helper supports the subject in achieving the object and the villain prevents realisation of the subject's aims. The use of the actantial model enabled investigation of the relationships between actants and analysis of the emerging social emotions shame and pride. Table 3 presents a summary of Studies 1-3: Focus, keywords, data and data collection, methods of the analysis and research questions.

**Table 3.** A summary of the focus, keywords, data and data collection, methods of the analysis and research questions in Studies 1-3

Study	Focus	Keywords	Data & data collection	Methods of the analysis	Research questions
<b>Study 1</b> Interaction between students and class teachers in vocational education and training: 'Safety distance is needed'	The experiences of students with special educational need. Interaction between a student and a class teacher. The guidance provided.	VET; interaction; critical pedagogy; guidance; power; social justice; content analysis.	Semi-structured interviews (N=11) as mp3 format 11h, transcribed.	Content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980; Schreier, 2012)	RQ1) How do VET students receiving intensive special support describe the interaction with their class teacher? RQ2) What is the purpose and orientation of the interaction according to students? RQ3) What guidance is provided in the interaction between students and class teachers?
<b>Study 2</b> Learning about special educational needs students' experiences of qualification, socialization and subjectification in Finnish vocational education and training: A narrative approach.	Students' experiences of good VET: qualification, socialization and subjectification (Biesta 2010, 2020).	VET; intensive special support; qualification; socialization; subjectification	Semi-structured interviews (N=18) as mp3 format 5.5 h, transcribed	Deductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Narratives' positioning (Bamberg, 1997, 2004a, 2004b; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008)	RQ) To what extent are Biesta's dimensions of good education - qualification, socialization, and subjectification - audible in the narratives of Finland's VET special educational needs students?
<b>Study 3</b> From the shade into the sun: Exploring pride and shame in students with special needs in Finnish VET.	Social belonging and emotions of shame and pride in students' descriptions.	VET; special educational needs; social emotions; social belonging; student voices	Semi-structured interviews (N=11) as mp3 format 11h, transcribed.	Abductive content analysis (Brinkmann, 2014; Rinehart, 2021; Timmermans & Tavori, 2012); Greimas' actantial model (1983)	RQ1) What experiences related to the dynamics of pride and shame did students narrate in their social bonds with their class teachers? RQ2) What do these experiences tell us about participants and about their activity and needs?
<b>Overall research questions</b>	<b>RQ1)</b> Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support, which elements do they perceive as enhancing their studying?; <b>RQ2)</b> Of vocational students receiving intensive special learning support, which elements do they perceive as enhancing their sense of belonging?; <b>RQ3)</b> What are the students' perceptions of what constitutes the elements of good VET?				

### 3.2 Participants

In this dissertation the participants were students who had serious learning difficulties, disabilities, or serious health problems and therefore needed intensive special support for their vocational studying. Though all participants received intensive support for their studying they could act and use their voice independently and autonomously in the interviews which was one of the key ethical commitments of the study (Mietola et al., 2017). The participants in the first and third studies were from four vocational institutes but to get a deeper view of one college’s practices and students’ experiences correspondingly the second interview data was collected from one vocational special education college.

The vocational fields of the students participating to the first data collection were business and administration and ICT. Five of the participants were in the middle of their three-year study programme, and four of them were completing their VET study in spring 2018. There were also two students who were in the first year at vocational college. The ages of the participants varied from 17-34. Most of them were under 20 years old. The second interview data was collected in May 2019. All participants were completing their three years of study at one vocational college providing intensive special support for the students. The vocational institution was selected because it is one the biggest in Finland and has a long tradition in organising intensive special support. The students represented six fields on the campus of the institution I examined. Table 4. represents an overview of the participants.

**Table 4.** Overview of the participants

Study	Vocational fields					
1 & 3	Business and administration			Information and communication technology (ICT)		
N=11	n=8			n=3		
Age	17-34, with most of the students under 20.					
Study	Vocational fields					
2	Business and administration	ICT	Cleaning and property services	Mechanical engineering and production	Media and visual expression	Logistics
N=18	n=2	n=3	n=5	n=3	n=3	n=2
Age	19-39, with most of the students under 23.					

### **3.3 Data collection**

The studies that make up this dissertation used semi-structured interviews. Interviewing was central to this research as I wanted to listen and understand the students' experiences. Interviews created an opportunity to pause and reflect with participants about what they remembered, valued, liked, and disliked about their interaction with their teachers and their vocational studying. I considered semi-structured interviews to be an appropriate way to collect data, because they allowed participating students to voice issues salient to them and they would also be able to feel free to express themselves in their own words. Furthermore, it allowed me to probe underlying values, beliefs and assumptions of participants shaping their interpretations of VET practices (Yauch & Steudel, 2003). The semi-structured interviews also enabled real dialogues between me and students, as together we shaped the interaction and reality (Qu & Dumay, 2011). When collecting the first interview data, the participants could choose whether they wanted to participate face-to-face or via Skype, but Skype was used also for reasons of scheduling and distance. During the second data collection the interviews were organized only face to face. The interviews were audio recorded. I undertook the data analysis for Study 1 manually by using Excel but used Atlas.ti software in the analytical processes of Studies 2 and 3.

At the beginning of the data collection processes, I sought permission from the school principals and/or development directors for the research. Then according to their suggestions, I contacted the class teachers in the vocational fields. Class teachers then asked the students from their groups if they would participate. Class teachers also helped with the schedules for the interviews. At the beginning of each interview the students were further informed about the study: the anonymity issues, recording and reporting of the interview data was discussed. I informed the parents of underaged students and signed consent was obtained from the participants prior to completing the interviews. The concept of informed consent was approached holistically, which means that voluntary participation and anonymity were repeatedly discussed with the students (Mietola et al., 2017).

Regarding the first data collection the interview protocol was thematically organized. These themes were examined through 26 questions. The interviews contained questions about the bond between a student and a class teacher (see Appendix 1). Participants were asked to describe the interaction with their class teacher and the practices and guidance used in those encounters. There were also general questions about their social relationships and about their anxiety in these situations. They were also encouraged to describe the actions that helped them in their studying and about their own initiatives. Furthermore, the interviews unravelled students' experiences of class teachers' comprehension and listening.

The second interview comprised ten open questions about students' experiences of the most important things and practices during their studying (see Appendix 2). Students were also asked to prefigure their future after 1, 5 and 10 years completing their three-year study period and qualifying for a profession at a vocational special college. The interview protocol also included pictures which were used to inspire the discussions. However, the pictures were not necessary for improving the flow of the stories, and the participants preferred discussion. For the analysis, the audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by a research assistant who was acquainted with the practices.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The analytical processes of Studies 1-3 followed the principles of qualitative content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 1980; Schreier, 2012). Qualitative content analysis is interpretative, situational, reflexive, flexible and case-oriented in nature, which supported the constructionist epistemological stance of the dissertation (Cohen et al., 2018; Schreier, 2012). The stance holds that individuals seek to make meaning of their lives and that the researcher has to examine the question through the multiple lenses of the individuals involved, to obtain the definition of the situation, to see how they make sense of their situation and to focus on interactions, contexts, environments and biographies (Cohen et al., 2018). Correspondingly, Schreier (2012, p. 2) asserts that 'data never speaks for itself, but the meaning is something that a researcher attributes to the data'. Meaning is never a given one, but we construct meaning through our individual background and experiences. Analysis is about representation or reconstruction of social phenomena (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

In Study 1, the aim of the qualitative content analysis was to describe and understand the experiences and needs of the vocational students who received intensive special support for their studying. In Study 2, I applied narratives positioning (Bamberg, 1997, 2004a, 2004b; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) as a methodological tool to look closer, to understand and to interpret the results of qualitative content analysis from a different angle. Whereas Greimas' (1983) actantial theory created the lens for the content analysis in study 3. Next, I will describe the pertinent analytical processes of each of the studies.

#### **3.4.1 Study 1**

I transcribed Study 1 data verbatim myself, so I had already become closely acquainted with the data during the transcription. However, to get an intensive outline and deeper understanding of the data, I read the transcribed data several times (Basit, 2003; Hinchman & Moore, 2013). After this close reading, I

identified meaningful units in the data and coded them according to following themes: (1) A student's perceptions of the interaction with a class teacher; (2) Orientation of the interaction; (3) What guidance is provided. The purpose of the coding was to link all data fragments under a particular theme (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). These themes emerged during the design phase of Study 1. They created the starting point for the interview protocol. Therefore, the analytical approach of Study 1 could be described as a summative one according to which the researcher identifies the codes and the keywords before and during the data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). After coding, the text excerpts coded under the same theme were reduced. This means that if a student described the interaction with the class teacher and said that s/he did not know what to talk about with the teacher, it was reduced to reserved interaction. After this, the reduced expressions were grouped and compared to find the similarities and differences and to gain a deeper understanding and specification on students' experiences.

In line with Coffey and Atkinson (1996) I used concept reduction to describe the phase of the analytical process which purpose was to identify special units in the coded text excerpts. The purpose of data reduction was to clarify the key points within the interview text, to expand on the data rather than reduce or lose something in it. My goal was to identify and highlight the most relevant and meaningful passages in the interviews. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10) 'data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions.' However, in-line with their later publication (Miles et al., 2014) I claim that the flow the activity could be named also as data condensation which aims at making the data stronger not weakening or losing something during the process as reduction might imply (Miles et al., 2014). I argue that the anticipatory data condensation occurred even before I started the data collection as I decided on a conceptual framework, interview questions and data collection approaches. Therefore, I consider data reduction to refer to the continuous process throughout the study. Table 5 introduces an example of the data analysis in Study 3.

**Table 5.** Example of Study 1 analysis

Meaning unit	Code /Specific theme	Reduction of the content	Grouping and comparing
<i>“He is a good teacher, he is kind [...] it is the way he helps me to understand the exercises.”</i> (Interviewee 4)	Students’ perceptions of the interaction with the class teacher	Student has a positive experience of the interaction with the teacher	Adaptative and modest expectations.
<i>“It is mainly my teacher who is talking about the plans and so on and I just see if they are acceptable or not, and I mainly accept them.”</i> (Interviewee 7)	Orientation of the interaction	Student has an adaptive attitude about the teacher’s initiatives.	Adaptative and modest expectations.
<i>“The uppermost issue [in guidance] is always about how I get my studying running.”</i> (Interviewee 9)	What guidance is provided	Concentration on studying issues.	Formal and distant interaction.

### 3.4.2 Study 2

In the second study, narratives positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997, 2004a, 2004b; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) created a lens through which I took a closer look at the results of deductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). A deductive analytical approach was applicable because I drew on Biesta’s (2010, 2020) domains of good education as a starting point and as a theoretical frame for the study. I started the analysis process with Atlas.ti software to get a preliminary overview of the students’ experiences. This was a close reading of the data to get an intensive outline of the data (Hinchman & Moore, 2013). After that, to particularize and itemize students’ perceptions I carried another analysis round during which I scrutinized how students’ experiences reflected Biesta’s (Biesta 2010, 2020) domains of good education. This means that I identified specific meaning units in the interview text systematically. Therefore, I created three codes for conceptualizing qualification, subjectification, and socialization in students’ interview talk. Furthermore, I created a code to the identity units in the interviews connected with a concept of a worker citizen. In addition, five specific interview questions were analysed separately. These specific interview questions concerned, students’ future prospects after 1, 5, and 10 years of ending their studying, their experiences of the most important things during their studying and their opinions how to improve VET in the future. The narratives positioning as an analytical tool gave light to the positions of Biesta’s parameters available in students’ narratives and reflected students’ positions in the normative discourse of a worker citizen. Table 6 introduces examples of the analysis in Study 2.

**Table 6.** Example of Study 2 analysis

Meaning unit	Code	Reduction	Narrative's positioning
<i>"I am not like other students. I am so self-critical... I feel that I am not good enough... I'm afraid that I don't know enough about the workforce... I feel insecure and I am afraid of making mistakes. I don't want to be wrong. It is terrible if one can't cope and do what is expected."</i> (Student 7)	Qualification	Student is experiencing incapacity and uncertainty	Student's narrative is in contradiction with VET narrative which emphasizes measurable outcomes like qualifications and employment rates.
R: <i>"How would you describe the things you have received from school which will help you in work? What is the most important thing that you have learned over here?"</i> S: <i>"Well, to be with other people... social skills."</i> (Student 5)	Socialization	Finding one's place in the world (of work).	Student's narrative is in contradiction with VET narrative which emphasizes measurable outcomes like qualifications, employment rates and continuous learning.
R: <i>"If you think about your studying here, what has been the most important thing?"</i> S: <i>"I am not sure if this has anything to do with my studying but to become more independent."</i> (Student 4)	Subjectification	Student has gained courage, self-confidence, and independent thinking.	Student's narrative is in contradiction with VET narrative which emphasizes measurable outcomes like qualifications, employment rates and continuous learning.
<i>"When I started my studying here, I planned to continue to a university of applied sciences. But now even though I know that it might be useful to continue, I doubt if I could concentrate on those studies. I have understood that those would be more self-guiding and there is no clear class structure. That would be hard for me."</i> (Student 18)	Identity of a worker citizen	Student is experiencing incapacity and uncertainty.	Student's narrative supports the identity of a worker citizen.  Student's narrative is in contradiction with VET narrative which emphasizes measurable outcomes like qualifications, employment rates and continuous learning.
<i>"Well, individuals should be recognized better. I am in different position because I am an adult. I can say what I want, but there are many students who can't. They do what the teachers ask, and they don't benefit from this education as much as possible if they had the courage to open their mouths and to say that they are interested in this and that and ask if they could invest in that. A more individual approach would be better."</i> (Student 3).	How to improve VET system	Student needs teachers' support and guidance.	Students' narratives are in contradiction with VET narrative which emphasizes individual and independence in constructing study paths and career.

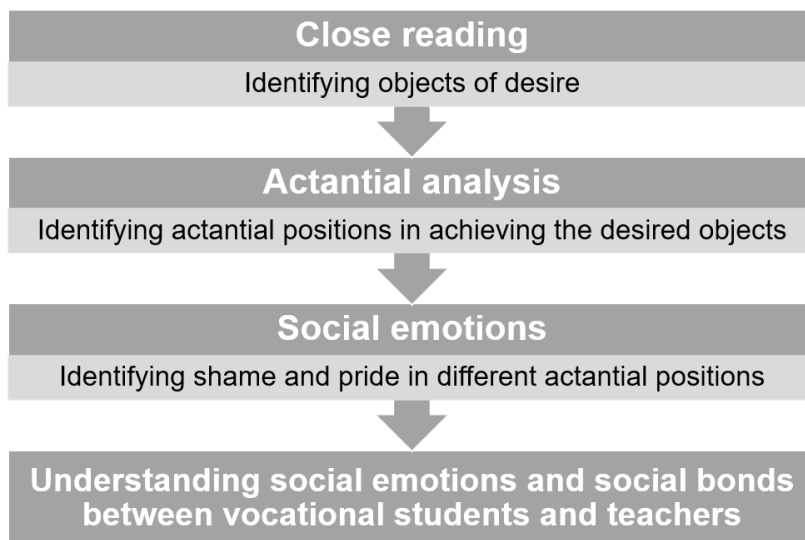
Meaning unit	Code	Reduction	Narrative's positioning
<p><i>"The most important thing for me would be to have a job, a permanent one, so that I would not have to think about tomorrow every day. [...] I would love to stay in the same apartment where I live now. And I also wish that I could have the same friends as now. The only thing would be a permanent job, so that I don't have to worry about bills and so on. That would be the most important thing for me."</i> (Student 18)</p>	<p>How students position them after VET (Future prospects)</p>	<p>Student has adopted an identity of a worker citizen.</p>	<p>Student's narrative supports the identity of a worker citizen.</p>

### 3.4.3 Study 3

Study 3 was based on abductive content analysis (Brinkmann, 2014; Rinehart, 2021; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) which was elaborated through Greimas' (1983) actantial model. The abductive approach of the research refers to an analytical process in which one part involved the interview data, and the other part consisted of the theoretical propositions. The initial theories for Study 3 provided a framework through which to describe the data. The data were then compared with a broader theoretical background to elaborate and refine the themes and to fulfil the criteria for an abductive research approach (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The process thus evolved as a continuous shift in focus between theories and data.

The analytical process started with a close reading of the transcribed interview data which resulted in writing a case story of each interview. This meant clarifying and organising the essential themes and actor dispositions of disconnected fragments into a coherent case story, which could facilitate the recognition of the dynamics between actors. The case stories were written in the first person. Three connecting themes emerged from the close reading of the case stories: Theme 1) topics which were associated with the students' positive or negative experiences of studying and to be a student; Theme 2) topics which were linked to students' private life, occasions and persons outside of the school; Theme 3) topics which were associated with the students' social bonds and sense of belonging. These three themes were positioned as students' desired objects and thus, they created the core of the actantial analysis which was the next step of the analytical process (Greimas, 1983; Schleifer & Harré, 1987). I used Greimas' actantial model to identify and recognize the actors in achieving the desired objects (Greimas, 1983; Schleifer & Harré, 1987). Finally, I identified the thematics of pride and shame in

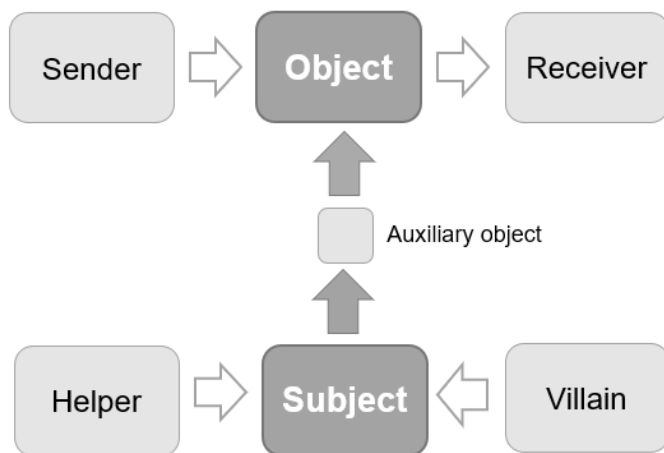
various actantial positions. Figure 3 depicts the outline of analytical process of Study 3.



**Figure 3.** Analytical process of Study 3 in outline

According to Greimas (1983), narratives can be split into six actants (see Figure 4). The subject, a student, is the central actor of the narratives. The sender is one who motivates the subject to obtain the object. This actant position of a sender was often associated with teachers in students' stories. Teachers set the goals for the students. They seemed to be active initiators who guided the students' studies and on-the-job training. Nevertheless, students could also be positioned as senders because they were voluntarily studying in a vocational special education college, and they wanted to find friends and to strengthen their sense of belonging. The receiver is the destination of the narrative or process. This actantial position could be interpreted both explicitly and implicitly. Students were explicit receivers as they received their objects (qualification certificates, they made friends with other students, they gained work experience). Teachers could be recognised in the implicit actantial position of a receiver if students met their expectations, students succeeded in their studying, in completing their exercises or on-the-job learning. Teachers' acceptance, understanding and encouragement could also be interpreted as an auxiliary object which helped the students to achieve their objects. The helper supports the subject in achieving the object and the villain prevents realisation of the subject's aims. The actantial position of a helper was signed to teachers, students' families, friends and other staff in VET institutions and in rehabilitation quarters. Students narrated verbosely the importance of support and understanding they had received. A student's engagement with his or her studying, positive attitude about upcoming events and an ability to see and approve positive

change were explicit helpers. Alternatively, the villains were often connected with students' earlier negative experiences: if they had encountered bullying, exclusion, isolation. They were aware of their special needs and challenges in learning which also took the villain's role in the case stories.



**Figure 4.** Actantial model (Greimas, 1983)

Social emotions like pride and shame were intertwined with the actantial positions explored in the case stories of Study 3. On the one hand the ‘pride’ thematic was assessed as being relative to the actantial position of helpers, and on the other, to the actantial position of the senders-receivers. Hence, pride became evident when the subject experienced that the actant in the receiver-position was assessing the object-position positively which was a result of subject’s success in pursuing that object: An example of this is when a student described pleasure and gratification in studying which was reinforced with the teacher’s acceptance. That is when the helpers contributed to the attainment of the object and to that good which was consequently experienced. On the other hand, shame became apparent when the subject failed to attain the object, and the actant in the receiver position assessed the object-position negatively, such as when a student described how their special need prevented success with school assignments and that they experienced insensitivity towards that. This is often due to the ‘victory’ of the villain or that the villain is superior in comparison with the object and the helpers.

The actantial analysis produced two narrative types which we labelled by adapting Scheff’s concepts of shame and pride as premier social emotions (Scheff 2000, 2003). Case stories (N = 4) that reflected students’ positive experiences of studying and belonging were named Pride stories. Stories (N = 6) that described fundamental failure or unattainable goals, stagnating in life and/or descriptions of detachment and exclusion created a group of Shame stories. Furthermore, there was one case story which was ambivalent, meaning it had characteristics of both

groups. This case story was analysed both as a Pride story and as a Shame story. Table 7 illustrates the analytical process carried out in Study 3.

**Table 7.** Example of Study 3 analysis

<b>Pride stories:</b> Despite the challenges students reflect positive experiences of studying, in private life and social belonging.		
<b>Objects of desire</b>	<b>Helper</b>	<b>Villain</b>
Students' positive or negative experiences of studying and to be a student	Student is engaged with VET studying; Student has a teacher who understands and supports; Student has gained self-confidence through positive experiences; Students allow a positive development for themselves.	Students use voice in an adaptable way; Students' earlier negative school experiences; Students' own well-being.
Students' private life, occasions and persons outside of the school	Family; Other teaching staff; Rehabilitation quarter; Students allow a positive development for themselves.	Students have encountered bullying; Students' social anxiety; Students feel like outsiders.
Students' social bonds and sense of belonging	Active environment and friends; Positive feedback; Repetition; Enough time. Students allow a positive development for themselves.	Students' shyness; Students have encountered bullying; Students' social anxiety; Students feel like outsiders.
<b>Shame stories:</b> Students described fundamental failure or unattainable goals, stagnating in life and/or descriptions of detachment and exclusion		
<b>Objects of desire</b>	<b>Helper</b>	<b>Villain</b>
Students' positive or negative experiences of studying and to be a student	Student is persistent; Student is engaged with VET studying; Student has a teacher who understands and provides support;	Students use voice in an adaptable way; Students' earlier negative school experiences; Students' own well-being; Students are suspicious of teacher's feedback and support; Students psychological and other problems overshadow their lives and experiences. Students are unable to see positive development for themselves.
Students' private life, occasions and persons outside of the school	Family members; Rehabilitation quarters; Friends	Students' shyness; Students have encountered bullying; Students' social anxiety; Students feel like outsiders; Students are unable to see positive development for themselves.
Students' social bonds and sense of belonging	New friends in school and in hobbies.	Earlier negative experiences; Students' own well-being; Students' experiences of exclusion; Students are unable to see positive development for themselves.

## 4 Results

In the following subchapters the results are presented pursuant to the research questions. First, elements enhancing students with intensive special learning needs, secondly elements enhancing their sense of belonging, and finally elements of good VET according to the students. The results of each of the studies have been combined and unified in this summary, hence the results of each study were reported in more detail in the original journal articles.

### 4.1 Elements enhancing studying

The focus of Studies 1 and 3 was on the interaction between a student and a teacher which was appraised as a fundamental social phenomenon which might have had a remarkable effect on vocational students by increasing their engagement with studying and learning and constructing the pathways through learning and work. Study 1 scrutinized the purpose and orientation of the interaction and examined the students' experiences of what guidance was provided. To gain deeper understanding of students needs and preferences, Study 3 elaborated on the actantial positions that appeared in the case stories and how social emotions like pride and shame were intertwined in these. Next, I will introduce the elements which emerged in Studies 1 and 3 pertinent to enhancing studying: 1) Understanding, support and guidance; 2) Student's ability to see positive development.

#### *Understanding, support and guidance*

Studies 1 and 3 showed that students with special educational needs used their voice in an adaptable way. Students spoke highly of their teachers who were kind and respectful adults according to the students' descriptions. Students revered the help and understanding provided by teachers in many respects. Firstly, they appreciated their opportunity to study and secondly that they have teachers who understand their special needs in studying and in workplace learning. Not only teachers' understanding was significant but also peers' acceptance and encouragement were highlighted in the results of the studies. For some of the participants, vocational special college was the first school they had friends. It seemed that students need repeated opportunities to be accepted as themselves in different learning environments and among their peers both in the school context and in the workforce.

The results demonstrated that class teachers seemed to be active initiators in the interaction with their students but still respectful listeners. Thus, the purpose and orientation of interaction depicted it as being teacher-led, such as giving

instructions, explaining, helping with the exercises, organising practical training etc. Students seemed to be adaptable and easily satisfied. In addition to teachers' understanding, their support and guidance in learning was a considerable element. Students expressed a wish for clear instructions on how their results could be improved. They did not look their class teachers for active support for their career plans or private life, but in students' narratives, the interaction with class teachers was characterized as being formal and distant study-related discussion, though emotionally charged. The participants in the study craved an abundance of help, encouragement and understanding from their teachers and thus, the demands of self-direction in studying and career seemed excessive for the students. Students who have serious learning difficulties, disabilities, or serious health problems and who therefore need individual, transversal and diverse special support to be able to achieve professional skills and expertise consistent with the qualification requirement drew benefit from the safe and encouraging environment of VET institutions having a mandate to provide intensive special support for the students. The results of Studies 1 and 3 emphasized that although vocational students with special educational needs may refuse to accept support and help, it would be important that several forms of support are made available and that teachers have enough time for student encounters and understanding and supportive attitude.

#### *Student's ability to see positive development*

According to the results of Studies 1 and 3 not only teachers' actions and understanding were significant but to success in learning, work and social relationships students' own ability to allow themselves to move to the circle of positive development was crucial. Many participants in the study had encountered bullying and exclusion in their earlier studying. Hence, they had difficulties to accept and believe that someone would appreciate their efforts and performance. The results demonstrated that studying at a vocational special college had provided students with a new start, a turning point in their lives. They had become friends; they have become accepted by their teachers and peers; they have received recognition and understanding. If a student was able to seize this chance, then his or her story was embedded in pride but if not, then shame was powerful element of the student's story.

## **4.2 Elements enhancing sense of belonging**

Besides the elements enhancing studying, Studies 1 and 3 explored the elements enhancing students' sense of belonging which were intertwined. I combined and merged the results of Studies 1 and 3, and as a result regarding students' sense of belonging, two themes emerged from analysis of the data set: 1) Understanding, support and guidance; 2) Social and subjective domains of education.

*Understanding, support and guidance*

The results of Studies 1 and 3 showed how significant teachers' acts and attitudes are while working with students who need reinforcement to be able to identify their options as a vocational student, as a worker and as a member of society. Teachers' guidance and support were needed to bolster students with special educational needs to see their opportunities and value. The question was not only about applying career-conversations as part of teachers work, but also what was recognised as an acceptable form of being, doing and dreaming. Nevertheless, the findings of Studies 1 and 3 suggest that implicitly class teachers led students to adapt to the current situation of the work force. Instead of figuring out support practices and solutions with workplace stakeholders and students, they addressed more suitable practice jobs for the students. The results of Studies 1 and 3 showed that students' anticipations of their class teachers' actions were quite traditional and modest, as they expected teachers to provide on-going information related to their individual studying, to the exercises and to workplace learning. When students were talking about their studying, they used their voice in an adaptable and modest way. They looked for their teachers' initiatives and for their active support in their studying but otherwise they needed distance from their teachers. Other school personnel, their families and peers were emphasized when students described their private life, career and prospects. The results pointed out that the support network was a crucial interconnection between the school and the world.

*Social and subjective domains of education*

Studies 1 and 3 indicated that the efficiency of Finnish VET, which is based on individual learning pathways and on rapid responses to the changing competence needs in labour markets, might disregard students' social emotions and thus, their sense of belonging. It became apparent in both studies that the VET system should provide enough time for students to form and re-form their perceptions of themselves as young people, as a student and as a member of workplace and society. This means an opportunity to figure out who is a student among others, and what is a good life for each of them. The results of Studies 1 and 3 addressed that is important to see the teaching profession as well as the whole meaning of VET more broadly. Not only as a qualifying, competence-based, subject-orientated and effective, but also as a socializing and subjectifying element in students' lives. The whole VET system and its teachers function as inductors into workplaces, as well as into everyday life and society. Studies 1 and 3 suggest that investing in the teacher-student dialogues would help students to open their full capacity and to use the vocabulary needed in life and work more independently. In addition to teachers' efforts, students' own ability to see and accept positive development in their social and subjective domains was crucial. Those students who were not able to see themselves in the same world with acceptance and

benevolent senders and receivers which means that they could not acknowledge and accept kind actions from senders and positive assessment from receivers. In conclusion, negatively experienced actantial positions seemed to be the most significant factors which hindered these students achieving their objects, either success in studying or sense of belonging, which was also an explicit source of shame.

### **4.3 Elements of good VET**

All the studies explored the students' perceptions of good VET. Next, I will present the findings of each study and then summarize the results to answer the third research question of the dissertation: what students' definition for good VET is.

In Study 1, the attention was on the interaction between a student and a teacher which was appraised as the core of education. The analysis of the students' experiences in Study 1 resulted in a traditional picture of education: Teachers showed teacher-orientated behaviour such as giving instructions, explaining, helping, supporting, organizing workplace learning whereas students were compliant. They were echoing teachers' opinions and teachers were active initiators. However, this is in contradiction with current ethos of Finnish VET policy objectives of an ideal student as self-governing and autonomous. Study 1 argues that VET teachers should acknowledge both the substance knowledge and the orientation of the guidance, which should stimulate the self-directness of the students, strengthen the meaning making and realise a process of reflection. Students would need enough time for teacher encounters where they would repeatedly have opportunities to form and re-form perceptions of themselves as students and as citizens. Study 1 concludes that it would be important to see the teaching profession as well as whole meaning of VET more broadly. Not only as a qualifying, competence-based, subject-orientated and effective factor, but also as a socializing and subjectifying element in students' lives.

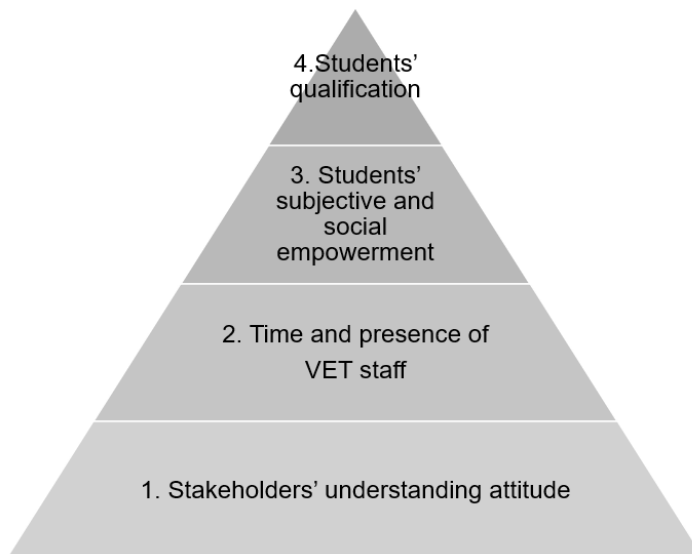
The second study investigated students experiences of good VET in the light of Biesta's (2010, 2020) domains for good education: qualification, socialization and subjectification. This study concluded that the VET system providing intensive special support had offered the students an important opportunity to study and to be like any other young person, to belong to students' community and to blaze one's trail to the labour market. The results of Study 2 addressed that help and support from school personnel, families and other quarters were essential for the students' success. The subjectification and socialization dimensions of education were emphasized in students' descriptions. Even the professional qualification of the participants seemed to be a tool to strengthen their subjective growth and social belonging. Finally, Study 2 concludes that studying at a vocational institution providing intensive special support for students has been an

important turning point in student's life, but the strong connection of Finnish VET to qualification requirements and labour market needs might narrow the VET's scope of actions and impair the social belonging of students. According to the results of Study 2, work created an economic and social bond which connected the findings with the socialization domain of the education: VET has provided the students with a chance to re-allocate their resources and re-build their identity.

Finally, Study 3 focused on the dynamics of social emotions and social bonds between a student and a teacher. It advocated social belonging in VET colleges and contributed to the discussions about the communality, social and subjective dimensions of VET which are to be acknowledged in an effectively and efficiently orientated VET system. The interaction between students and class teachers was regarded as an emotional practice and social belonging was construed as the students' perceptions of the quality of these practices – whether they were included, valued, and respected by others in this setting. The findings of Study 3 indicated that social emotions pride and shame were related to students' ability allow themselves to enjoy a positive development in studying and in social relations. Positive teacher-student relation was particularly important for the participants in the study. Emotions appeared as boundaries and surfaces through which students responded to the objects and others. On the other hand, students expected teacher and peers support and acceptance, but their personal challenges and earlier experiences shaded their chances to accept and trust these actors. The study addressed that an emphasis on personalisation as a pedagogic practice in VET enabled the attainment of qualification requirements but then again it did not foster students' self-regulation or social skills because class teachers seemed to be the active senders who set the objects for studying. According to findings of Study 3, the efficiency of Finnish VET, which is based on individual learning pathways and strives for rapid responses to the changing competence needs in labour markets, disregards students' social emotions and belonging. The results concern not only individual teachers' pedagogical practices and ways of interaction, but also the whole VET culture. The purpose of Finnish VET is to support lifelong learning and students' development as human beings and members of society, along with vocational skills.

To conclude, I will summarize and merge the findings of the three studies to understand the elements of good VET (see figure 5). Students' definition of good VET could be compacted into four topics: 1) understanding; 2) time and presence; 3) subjective and social empowerment; 4) qualification. Students who need intensive special support for their studying because of their serious learning difficulties, disabilities, or serious health problems represent the minority of vocational students (2%) in Finland. Their study paths have been intensively supported, often from the beginning of their school career. The results of the studies highlight that the students need teachers and other VET stakeholders' understanding, help and support to attain the qualification requirements of VET

and the workforce and to strengthen their social skills. They would benefit from multi-professional collaboration in VET colleges which would support their studying and belonging both in school and workplaces. The findings indicated that students need also more time and presence which is in contradiction with the VET policy which emphasizes efficacy, efficiency and agility. The results of the studies demonstrated that the students wanted to belong, to be understood, valued and respected by their teachers, by the employers and by their peers. They appreciated individual solutions in their studying though they wanted to be part of the students' community and like any other young person. The socialization and subjectification domains of education were emphasized in the results of the studies even though students respected the vocational qualification they received. It seemed that the qualification also served the purposes of socialization and subjectification, as it bolstered their self-confidence and sense of belonging both in work force as in society generally.



**Figure 5.** Elements of good VET

## 5 Discussion

The aim of the dissertation was to gain deeper understanding of what are the elements of support that vocational students' who receive intensive learning support perceive as the most relevant to enhance their studying, sense of belonging and what would create the domains of good VET. First, I will discuss the results in the light of literature where Honneth's (1995) principles for recognition, emotional support, cognitive respect and social esteem, form the lenses through which I will discuss the results. Then I will introduce the educational findings of the study. The third subchapter will reflect the methodological choices which is followed by ethical considerations. Subchapter 5.5 presents the limitations of the study. I will conclude the dissertation by presenting directions for future research.

### 5.1 Results in the light of the literature

Firstly, the results of the three studies of the dissertation indicate that the most important element enhancing studying and sense belonging of vocational students' who need intensive special support for their learning culminates in understanding. It is also the most important element in good VET according to the results of the dissertation. Secondly, the results indicated that students need time to attain professional, subjective and social competence needed in the workforce. It seemed that professional qualifications were meaningful to students, but subjectification and socialization were the most important domains of good VET. The dissertation showed that students wanted to find their place in the world, and they wanted to be independent. Thirdly, according to the results it seemed that students' ability to allow themselves to have a positive development was a significant element supporting their studying and sense of belonging.

In conclusion, I argue that the concept of understanding should be elaborated and elucidated. Though different individually tailored measures and methods of special support and guidance make apparent that understanding is essential for the success of the students, I suggest that recognition is the most fundamental element enhancing students in their studying and their sense of belonging. Recognition is the prime mover for all human people (Honneth, 1995, 2012). It is much more than understanding, which could be defined as a cognitive process or as a result of a such process (Baumberger, 2014; Baumberger et al., 2017). According to Honneth (1995) when we are talking about how others see us, how others treat us or how should we treat others and acknowledge each other in everyday life, we are talking about recognition. Participants of the study are students who have serious learning difficulties, disabilities, or serious health problems and who are therefore entitled to long-term and regular special support in their vocational

studying (Act on VET 531/2017, 65§). They need individual help and support daily; they need understanding parents, teachers and employers; they need safe bonds; they need time and presence; they appreciate understanding peers. Above all they need recognition which means that they are depicted by the significant others in a broad-minded and positive way not only as students with special needs but as students with valuable skills and knowledge. Next, I will discuss the results in the light of Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition. I will combine in my discussion other concepts and earlier studies presented in Chapter 1.

### **5.1.1 Emotional support**

According to Honneth (1995) *love* is an element of recognition that refers to an emotional well-being and needs of a student. In the study love relationships are understood as referring to the students' primary relationships (e.g., parent-child relationships, friendships, teacher-student relationships) which are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people. Basic self-confidence is constructed between the primary carer and a child which is the priority in every other form of reciprocal recognition. It is characterized as a double process in which the other is released and, at the same time, emotionally tied to the loving subject (Honneth, 1995). In line with earlier studies (Elffers et al., 2012; Niittyalahti, 2021) it was evident in the results of the dissertation that to feel connected to their vocational studying students' earlier school experiences, sense of belonging and positive relationships mattered for the students who needed intensive special support in their studying. The results indicate that the students lack teachers' approval, understanding and support. VET teachers' role emerged as being pivotal in the results of the dissertation which has also been demonstrated in the study by Henderson and Fisher (2008). According to the results of the dissertation, teachers were active initiators and it seemed that students were compliant listeners in the interaction. The results highlighted parents', support persons' and friends' significance as pillars in each student's private life. It became apparent that students did not demonstrate effective speaker competence in student-teacher interactions nor in work but they were adaptable and flexible listeners (Hymes, 1972; Sanders, 2015). To speak effectively in that interaction would be a matter of contribution to it in a way that leads gradual to the achievement of the student's goal, but it seemed that teachers were more active in goal setting, and they lead the discussions. The particulars that would make students' speaking competent are most identified in terms of its prosocial qualities such as openness, directness and cooperativeness, rather than any linguistic and vocal details. These elements did not emerge in the results. Though the participants in the study needed understanding teachers they also needed distance to them. In results the relationships with teachers depicted comfortable but formal and distant. Consequently, parents, school personnel and other support quarters

should carefully consider that students who have grown accustomed to intensive support and guidance practices, who might have been depicted in a one-sided way, who are not effective speakers might find it hard to embrace themselves and their skills as being valuable and sufficient. In line with Sanders (2003), it was explicit that students would benefit from training and practice in participating and using their voice in social interaction. The dissertation argues that a positive circle of reciprocal recognition establishes a strong sense of solidarity and allows students to feel that they are important and respected members of their community. Huttunen and Heikkinen (2004) gained similar results.

The participants in the study have undoubtedly benefitted from the multidisciplinary and multi-professional support which aim is to help them to attain the qualification requirements, to support their well-being and rehabilitation. However, many of these students have competed with underrepresentation and with negative stereotypes and are attentive for indications that could communicate that they do not belong or are not fully included (Walton & Carr, 2012a, 2012b). Thus, the socialization and subjectification domains of education emerged as the most important elements of good VET according to the results (Biesta, 2010, 2020, 2022). It seemed that even vocational qualification served students sense of belonging and subjective empowerment. The students wanted to find their place in the world, in the vocational colleges, in the labour market and in their peer-groups. Therefore, it is fundamental to acknowledge that student's agency is constituted in and through relationships with others when a student's formation as an ethical subject and agent depends on the responsiveness of others with respect to care for students needs and emotions, respect for dignity and esteem for their social achievements. In line with earlier studies (e.g., Pekrun, 2011; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014; Pekrun & Schutz, 2007) the dissertation suggests that it is essential to understand the causes of the emotional events and to recognize how these influence students' studying and sense of belonging. Because students with special needs might encounter minimal opportunities for positive educational experiences or personal relationships, lack of social approval might cause negative emotional reactions like shame and rage in them (Honneth, 1995; Jenson et al., 2004). Shame as a social emotion is closely related to the situations in which students' social bonds are threatened (Scheff, 2000, 2003). If others are viewed as caring less about the relationship than the student himself or herself, then self is evaluated negatively or there might be indications of alienation from significant others. If a student experiences shame, it might also cause comparisons between student and others, in which the student appears inferior, or the student might simply wonder if he or she is sufficient (Retzinger, 1995). The study demonstrated that students with special educational needs encounter more often rejection and exclusion than the majority of students and that negative images and stigma connected to special education and students with special educational needs dominate the sense-making, Kaiser and Miller

(2003), Mietola (2014), Niemi (2014) and Walton and Cohen (2007) gained similar results. Following Taylor (1994), I claim that misrecognition of significant others might shape students' identity. It might hinder the successful relationship to their selves and their ability to permit themselves a positive development in their studying and in their social relations.

### **5.1.2 Cognitive respect**

*Rights* as a form of recognition which stands for the recognition of the equal moral accountability was ambiguously available in the results of the study. Accessibility and individual development are multidimensional key tasks for Finnish education system (Finnish Government, 2021). It is concerned with the provision of equal opportunities in education. Nevertheless, disabled people in Finland are still less educated than most people generally and they also have fewer opportunities after compulsory education (Kyröläinen, 2020). As depicted in Chapter 1.1, Finnish VET has traditionally been the field of secondary education that has enrolled students who have severe learning and other challenges (Herranen & Souto, 2016; Kauppila et al., 2020). There has not been any other form of secondary education available for those who have special educational needs until 2021 when the Act on general upper secondary education was implemented (Lukiolaki 10.8.2018/217). After that, general secondary education providers have been obliged to organize special support for their students. Furthermore, it seems that students with special needs also have worse employment opportunities: Only a quarter of the students qualifying from vocational special colleges find paid work after finishing their studying (Vipunen – Education statistics Finland, n.d.). However, the results of the dissertation demonstrate that the Finnish VET system providing intensive special support have enhanced students in their studying and their sense of belonging. Students have gained new knowledge, skills and possibilities to belong in school community and work. Like Biesta's (2010, 2014, 2020) also Bernstein's (2000) description for enhancement in education entails discipline: Through education we should also experience boundaries, be they social, intellectual, or personal as tension points condensing the past and opening possible futures. These experiences of boundaries are an important dimension in education because we learn to live our lives with others (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Anyhow, according to the results of the dissertation it seems that students with special needs have serious challenges in finding their place in the labour market and in society generally after qualification which indicates that the rights to be included and to participate which operate at a social level are more complicated for them. It became evident that the students would need more time and attendance to consolidate their place in the work force. This is in contradiction with the aims of effectively working and changing society and labour market

which needs Finnish VET strives to serve. VET in Finland advocates the possibility for all to study and to gain the competence needed for a qualification. It supports individual study paths, individual development and growth, individual needs for the special support in studying (Act on VET, 531/2017). Students have the opportunity to gain individually the missing competence and proceed with their studying according to their own personal competence development plan. They are entitled to special support if they have individual challenges in learning (Act on VET 531/2017, §64, §65). But the end of the education is not unique, it is not deliberated and individual, but it is sharp and narrow: to fulfil the competence requirements of a qualification and thus to serve labour market needs. The dissertation suggests that striving for real individualism and recognition would be something else, it would be about the way which one enters into co-operation with others as Dewey (1923) puts it. It would be about the unique way to find one's place in the world which would be realized only by means of a thoroughly collective experience (Hargreaves, 1980). It would be about our existence "in and with the world, natural and social, and not just our existence with ourselves" (Biesta, 2022, p. 90-91). It would be legal recognition which would enable students to understand themselves as someone who possesses the capabilities that will make them appear as full members of society (Honneth, 1995, 2012).

### **5.1.3 Social esteem**

Social esteem is linked with solidarity which means that students' traits and abilities are valued though they are not shared by all (Honneth, 1995; van den Brink & Owen, 2007). If students could share a common project or horizon of value in relations of solidarity, it would enable them to form a practical relation-to-self. The results of the study highlighted the students' need to belong. They craved for teachers' acceptance, they missed friends, they wanted to be included in work force, the wanted to be connected and recognised by the significant others. It became apparent that the VET system and the workforce should provide enough time for students to form and re-form their perceptions of themselves as young people, as students and as members of workplaces and society. Social identity is often attached to one's role in organized labour processes. Gorz (1999) has introduced a concept of work-based society which means that work is a socially recognized and normalized institution and salary paid from the work defines social standing and scopes for action of individuals. It means that full economic, social and political rights remain attached to jobs which are occupied full-time and on a regular basis and that individuals define their identity and social relationship through work. However, students with special needs qualifying for a profession might find this challenging firstly because only a quarter of them have paid work after their qualification and secondly because paid work is generally decreasing

and fragmenting, competition for jobs is increasing and opportunities for occupations are shared unequally between different groups of workers and income brackets (OECD, 2020). Hence, so long as this is the case, activities deviating from the norm of regular, full-time work will be regarded as inferior, as tending to deprive citizens of all their full rights. As Gorz (1999, 65) claims the solution is political and it lies in the definition of new rights, new freedoms, new collective guarantees, new public facilities and new social norms:

‘A society which shifts the production of the social bond towards relations of co-operation, regulated not by the market and money, but by reciprocity and mutuality. A society in which all individuals can measure themselves against others, gain their esteem and demonstrate their value not mainly by their occupation and earnings but by a range of activities deployed in the public space and publicly acknowledged in other than monetary ways.’

The dissertation supports the views of Ågren (2021) and Ågren et al. (2020) and claims that a waged-work centred orientation might cause uncertainty and apply pressure to students with special needs who struggle with the questions of belonging and suitability, who lack understanding and recognition. However, sense of belonging is composed individually, little by little, in many different ways and in many different environments which are relevant and significant for the subjects. Though sense of belonging is a subjective feeling of value and respect, it derives from relationships that are founded on shared experiences, beliefs or personal characteristics which connects it with the aspects of recognition and transfers it to a social issue. In line with Therborn (2013), the dissertation addresses a need to consider inequalities to belong in society also as social constructions which are developed in interaction and not as universal or institutional social facts. Thus, it is also possible to deconstruct them, find alternatives and strive towards building alternative futures for all. That is, to consider what are the social institutions and practices which aim to assess everybody’s progress and identify the conditions for human flourishing (Stewart, 2013). The results indicate that it is not enough to capture the cases of students’ inclusion or exclusion but we should include an explicit focus on our social norms, our attitudes, our values and the conditions they impose (Davey & Gordon, 2017). In-line with Honneth’s (1995) definition of solidarity, I suggest that people should praise each other’s contributions to a shared goal and to a horizon of values which would enhance their opportunities to experience each other’s uniqueness as meaningful for shared praxis.

## 5.2 Educational findings

The fundamental aim of this dissertation was to conduct research which gives light to the voice of vocational students receiving intensive special support for their studying and to gain deeper understanding about the elements enhancing their studying, sense of belonging and creating the basis for good VET. Based on the findings of the dissertation I will now introduce my educational findings.

Firstly, both teachers, other college staff, parents, rehabilitation quarters and students themselves should elaborate and elucidate their perceptions on understanding and striving towards mutual recognition. In the context of Finnish VET the purpose of which is to serve labour market needs, this implies that more attention should be paid on elimination of barriers to learning and participation and on diversity management of employers. It means awareness rising that a student with special needs in one area of life can be a top expert in another. All teachers, college staff and workplace instructors should develop their skills to recognise the skills, knowledge and strengths of all students (Brown et al., 2019). Teachers work as change agents or pioneers whose attitudes, activities and values are crucial. Students with special needs call for time to recognise their capabilities and strengths. They need time to develop their speaker competence, openness, directness and cooperativeness in interaction. They need encouragement and opportunities to practise how to express their preferences but at the same how to voice their needs for support. They need emotional support, cognitive respect and social esteem which are the modes of recognition.

Secondly, I argue that the Finnish education system including VET should develop its practices towards ecological, social and economic sustainability i.e., towards ecosocial wisdom. Värri (2007, 73) claimed that ‘it is not enough to understand to change the world but instead we should consciously impact on education’s perspectives on social values.’ Besides being a pedagogical project, this is also a political one. It is an action which calls for challenging existing necessities and platitudes to blaze the trail for ecological wisdom. It is an action of recognition. We need new measures and practices which are disconnected with the economic growth and efficacy to produce well-being for all. We need an education system which renews our relationship with the world and our perceptions of humanity and good life. But to put a different interpretation on our existence demands a new ontological premise: Sustainable development is not founded on egoistic autonomy and subjective ownership but it is founded on mutual recognition (Värri, 2014, 2018). I argue that the effectiveness and efficacy of Finnish VET are in contradiction with the ecosocial aspects and with the needs of students with special needs. Applying Salonen and Bardy’s (2015) definition of ecosocial wisdom I would call for responsibility, fairness and mutual recognition in VET practices and in the workforce which would improve sustainable development and enhance students with special needs studying and sense of belonging. VET process can strengthen the sense of personal

accountability, the tendency to see others as distinct individuals, and the willingness to raise a critical voice (Nussbaum, 2010).

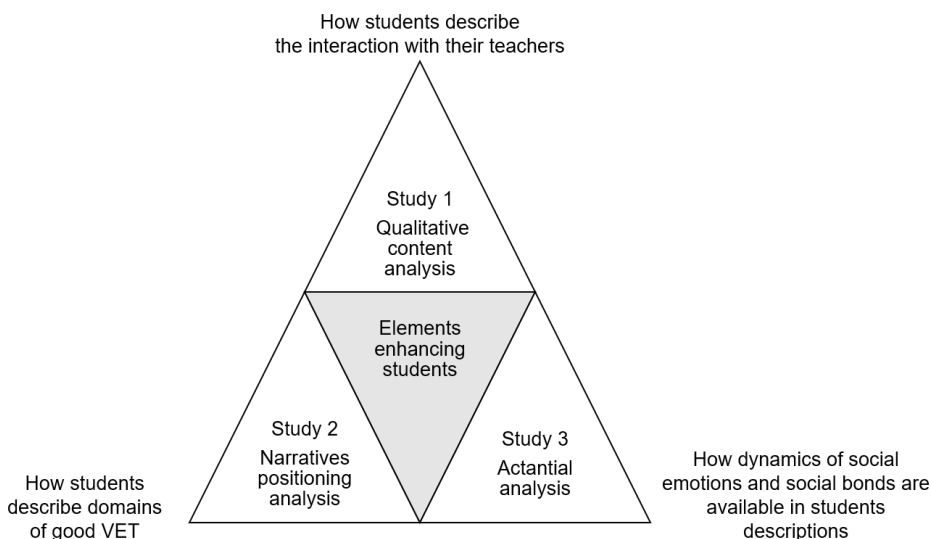
### **5.3 Methodological reflections**

This research was conducted as a multi-method study with a qualitative research approach. As the aim of the study was to deepen the understanding of the elements enhancing studying and sense of belonging of vocational students receiving intensive educational support, therefore a qualitative approach was relevant. A qualitative study gives voices to participants and it provides an in-depth understanding of the intricate issues and focuses on understanding the narratives and observations obtained (Gonzalez et al., 2008). Instead of emphasizing replicability, generalizability or stability as in quantitative research paradigm, validity and reliability of a qualitative study is founded on truthfulness, credibility and trustworthiness (Cohen et al., 2018). The study does not seek to generalize but to present the students' expectations fairly and fully.

My research was influenced by the perspectives of critical pedagogy which meant that my starting point for the dissertation was the assumption that vocational students with intensive special needs who represent the minority of students in Finnish VET were not equal in education nor in the labour market and that my aim was to contribute on understanding of their needs and to shifting VET and labour markets towards equality. Furthermore, the study was grounded on social constructionism which has an ontological premise which assumes that reality itself is a social construct generated from multiple negotiations of interpretations (Sandu, 2016). Because the research frame opened multiple perspectives on students' needs it was fundamental to use also multiple methods. Social life phenomena are too complex to be studied using a one dimensional statistical method (Flick, 2018). Each qualitative method reveals only part of reality. Therefore, by combining several research methods, that is using multiple methods, I strived for a holistic understanding of the students' needs and expectations (Morse & Chung, 2003). Though the multi-method research frame served a supplementary function, the multiple methods used have answered different study pertinent questions but their primary aim was to support the core qualitative driven approach and the overarching research questions and the aim of the dissertation (Hesse-Biber et al., 2015).

Many perspectives have been presented to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research such as credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability (Elo et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In conducting this research, I sought to enhance the quality of the studies and the dissertation in several aspects. Caelli et al. (2003) proposed four key issues to be considered. First, they call for a declaration of the theoretical position of the researcher which refers to the researcher's motives, presuppositions and personal history that leads

him or her towards a particular inquiry. Second, methodology should be clearly distinguished from method. Thirdly, Caelli et al. (2003) argue that qualitative approaches need to be rigorous which means that qualitative researchers need to 1) articulate a knowledgeable, theoretically informed choice regarding their approach to rigour, and 2) select an approach that is philosophically and methodologically congruent with their inquiry. Fourthly, they use the term analytic lens to refer to the methodological and interpretive presuppositions that a researcher brings to bear on his or her data (Caelli et al., 2003). The credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research can also be increased through theoretical triangulation which yields a more accurate and valid estimate of a result when each method of measurement converges to the same answer (Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006). Figure 6 presents my triangulation design, where each vertex of the triangle produces the results that are compared and weighed against the results of other methods.



**Figure 6.** Triangulation design

Next, I will evaluate the quality of this study through its reliability and validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Noble & Smith, 2015; Smith & Noble, 2014). Firstly, research’s *reliability* is related to the errors and bias concerning participants and/or researcher. The researcher’s sphere which has evolved in close connection with my teaching practice, and which creates the bridge between the researcher and the aim of the study is on one hand a richness of the study and on the other its limitation. I have had a significant opportunity to build my competence as a vocational special needs teacher and as a researcher in a constructive dialogue between those two positions. Because I worked simultaneously as a special

education teacher in vocational special needs education college and conducted this research on the same field, it was vital to be aware of my own perspectives and prejudices and to demonstrate rigour in anonymity and reliability. It was extremely relevant to be aware of the potential to influence the collection of empirical material as my role as a researcher and interviewer could be considered to be an instrument in the collection of semi structured interview data (Pezalla et al., 2012). Some of the participants might have provided more positive answers as they knew my position as a vocational teacher even though I did not teach any of them. I emphasized to the participants my role as a researcher who is honestly interested in their experiences and opinions of their studying. I also highlighted that the research was completely unconnected with their assessment and their anonymity is secured when reporting the results. I told participants that my interests were completely in their experiences of VET so that their needs could be acknowledged better in the future. Anyhow, I recognised some tensions in the interview situations. It was sometimes demanding for me to practise between a position of the professional distance of a researcher and an empathic teacher who recognises students' emotions and worries. Anyhow, my honest intention was not to get through the defences of participants but to let them speak about the issues relevant to them. In conclusion, my dual role as a teacher and as a researcher have enabled me to have a rich view of the topic.

The second key concept to discuss about the study's quality and trustworthiness is *validity* which refers to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and in the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Noble & Smith, 2015). In this study the *internal validity* was promoted by two rounds of data collection which allowed the development of data collection and analytical process. It provided me with an opportunity to particularize and clarify the interview protocol and the interview process. Namely, there were some limitations related to the validity of the first interview protocol as it produced fragmented narratives by the students. It might have been difficult for them to describe their experiences and reflect on their own situation. This might have resulted in short answers like no or yes. Therefore, during the second interview round I used pictures, the aim of which was to inspire discussion. However, I was surprised that the participants preferred discussion and that the pictures were not necessary for improving the flow of the stories. Additionally, the verbatim transcriptions of both sets of interview data allowed the data to be revisited through the analysis processes. I translated the interview excerpts used in the articles from Finnish to English. Even though my aim was to be accurate in meaning yet the translations might have lost some subtle meanings of participants. In general, my aim was to choose excerpts that would access the varied experiences of various students and to highlight different viewpoints, which is defined as a balanced and fair manner according to guidelines of National Advisory Board on Research Ethics [TENK] (2019).

*The external validity or generalisability* of the research is concerned with whether the dissertation's findings can be generalised to other relevant settings or groups (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Noble & Smith, 2015). I consider that the applicability of the findings in other contexts is limited though the thick description of the context, researchers reflexivity, collaboration and peer debriefing assisted me to uncover the biases or assumptions related to analytical process and thus to strive for external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Lub, 2015).

*The objectivity* of the study was promoted by writing out and discussing the decisions and limitations of each article and of this summary. My supervisors provided me with valuable feedback and comments throughout the dissertation process. I shared the anonymised data with them, and we were able to discuss the data analysis, interpretations and findings of the study. The study received no external funding or other interests. It was based exclusively on my own interest and was not ordered or influenced by any other party.

## **5.4 Ethical considerations**

This chapter discusses the ethical principles which guided the research process from the beginning to the publishing of the results (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics [TENK], 2019).

Central to the dissertation has been to understand what the needs and expectations of the students with intensive special needs are. The need to understand derives from the hermeneutic approach of the study. According to Gadamer (1989) the phenomenon of understanding not only pervades all human relations to the world but it also has an independent validity in science. Understanding is primarily agreement. Understanding each other is always understanding each other in respect of something (Gadamer, 1989). Though understanding is a versatile concept in philosophy, the desire to understand is pervasive in our everyday life. We also strive for mutual understanding for political or social reasons. Baumberger et al. (2017) provide three reasons for the need for understanding. First, the value of understanding seems to surpass that of knowledge. We can know something without understanding it. If I strive to achieve understanding of the students' needs and preferences it requires more than acquiring knowledge, but it is putting several pieces of information together, grasping connections and reasoning about causes, which will eventually provide more value than pure knowledge. Secondly, understanding is a central goal of the scholarship because scholarly explanations provide understanding. The third reason derives from epistemology. An epistemology which considers understanding can do better than an epistemology which restricts itself to knowledge (Baumberger et al., 2017).

Because the dissertation focused on marginalized groups of people in VET it was highly relevant to consider the wider implications of the research carefully and particularly the understanding and discussion the research produces and promotes about these people (Mietola et al., 2017). I was aware of the participants' challenges related to their studying, but it was not relevant to ask for their diagnoses or special pedagogical arrangements but to meet them primarily as students, give voice to them and to listen to them. Students participated in the interviews independently without any support people. Teachers of the students helped only in organizing the timetables and to find a place for the face-to-face interviews. Participation was completely voluntary, and it was discussed repeatedly with the students. Before starting the interviews, the students were assured that no identifiable information would be published, and no one would have access to the data, except for the researcher and her supervisors and the external transcriptionist of the second set of interview data, who was bound by a confidentiality agreement. The data were anonymised by removing students' names and other identifying information. I gave students general information about the research and we discussed the research before we started the actual interview. Also, signed consent was sought, and parents of underage students were informed before the interviews.

Besides these procedural aspects, special attention was paid to ethics in practice (Renold et al., 2010). This meant that the ethical questions were also acknowledged during the interviews. I ensured that participants understood my questions by using plain language and giving them an opportunity to ask and add things relevant to them. The limitation that should be taken into consideration is that the students volunteered seemed to be positively engaged with the vocational institution and with their learning. Consequently, their descriptions might have been more positive than those who had a pessimistic attitude about their studying and schooling. The number of participants was relatively small but the participants volunteering for first data collection round represented several vocational special colleges and for the second round they broadly represented the institutions' vocational fields. I took care that face-to-face interviews were carried out in privacy and I tried to organise the interview situations as calm and comfortable as possible which is an important dimension when students shared their private experiences and emotions with the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). I also provided the opportunity to meet on-line, because some of the students found they were more confident and they felt more secure (Hewson, 2017). On the other hand, on-line interviewing helped with scheduling and reduced the travelling. The disadvantages of Skype/Teams interviews were small technical problems and lack of non-verbal communication.

Finally, an interview is always a moral enterprise (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Ethical problems in this interview research arise particularly because of researching disadvantaged students' private experiences and placing them in the

public arena. Anyhow, one strength of the study was its purpose beyond the scientific value to understand and improve the situation of special needs students. The premise of the study was to make the research for them.

## 5.5 Limitations of the study

This dissertation has some limitations that should be acknowledged in interpreting the results and in considering future research topics. I consider as an overarching limitation of the study that it was designed from practical premises rather than being based on a comprehensive theoretical understanding which was constructed gradually by identifying a knowledge gap during the dissertation process.

Besides this overarching limitation, the sampling used in both data collection procedures might have led to sampling frame bias. Robinson (2014) introduced a framework of four paradigmatic points: (1) setting a sample universe; (2) selecting a sample size; (3) devising a sample strategy; (4) sample sourcing. Firstly, defining a sample universe contains both inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria specifies the attribute that cases must possess to qualify for the study which was clear in the dissertation: Students who study in a vocational special college and receive intensive special support for their studying could be included in the study. Secondly, the size of sample used in the dissertation was relatively small which is one of the limitations of the study. However, I argue for a limited number of participants to gain an intensive insight from their needs and experiences and permitting individuals within the sample to have a strong voice (Robinson, 2014). Thirdly, the purposive sampling used in both data to recruit the participants had both advantages and disadvantages. The number of vocational special colleges ( $n=6$ ) is relatively small in Finland. I recruited the participants from four of the six colleges, but the vocational fields included within the study were limited. The first data collection concentrated on two vocational fields (business and administration; ICT) which were chosen because of their popularity. In addition, I supposed that these fields would interest students who possess competence in interaction. The second data collection included six vocational fields from one vocational special college to gain a comprehensive research sample. The fourth dimension to be considered here is the sample sourcing. After I had received permission to conduct my research, I contacted the class teachers who asked students in their groups to volunteer, which might have restricted the full range of variations in students' needs and experiences. Students who volunteered seemed to be active and good students, thus those who have more negative attitude towards their studying might have produced different descriptions of their needs and expectations. This is called a the self-selection bias (Costigan & Cox, 2001).

The aim of the dissertation was not to generalise the results to the whole education system but to gain deeper understanding of the vocational students' needs and to provide a detailed picture of their experiences which would inform stakeholders of the education field. Therefore, the results are options but not the only solutions because in the abductive, constructionist research approach as this the findings discuss with the theoretical background and vice versa (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Using a different methods and theoretical frame would have provided a differently loaded final outcome.

## **5.6 Directions for future research**

The aim with this dissertation was to gain understanding of the needs of the students who receive intensive special support for their VET studying. The main suggestion of the dissertation is that instead of emphasizing effectivity and individually tailored study paths, the focus should be on the subjective and social growth of the students. More attention should be paid to the social structures, on attitudes and barriers that are hindering the participation of those students who belong to the minority, and who are viewed as being less capable and competitive in the labour market. To thrive, these students need acceptance, support, understanding, and encouragement provided by the social community. Thus, they need recognition of their skills, knowledge and capabilities instead of emphasizing their needs for support. The students of the study appreciated their studying time at vocational special colleges and the understanding and persistence of the teaching personnel, but they still had challenges to find their place out of the school context. Most of them might have benefitted from more time, from more encounters with what is new and strange, from more opportunities to choose and to use their rights. Furthermore, I argue that the world that students with special needs enter after their qualification needs knowledge and tolerance of diversity. This is a challenge to the aims of an effective and agile Finnish VET system which is closely connected with qualification requirements and workforce needs. The excellence of VET is measured through quantitative outcomes like qualifications and employment rates. I argue that VET is educationally valuable even though its activities are not connected to intrinsic values like gaining the competence according to qualification requirements. Studying at a vocational special college is a significant turning point for many students but to fulfil VET's promise of more tailored solutions and recognition are needed to enable each student to stay and/or (re-)enter the labour market and to move freely and in a self-determined manner through their educational and professional careers (Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, 2018). As for future research, it would be worthwhile to examine the measures to strengthen ecosocial wisdom in VET which is disconnected from economic growth and strives for sustainable development in

society. Longitudinal studies in the area would provide valuable research knowledge. It would be compelling to investigate students who need special support trajectories after VET: what impact does their vocational competence have on their employability and career, and what support do they receive in workplaces?

In future research, it would also be interesting to examine students' experiences in general vocational education. These students' employment situation is different when compared with students qualifying from vocational special colleges, but anyhow, it would be important to examine their experiences of good VET and how their special educational needs and preferences were met during their studying and in transition to the workforce. Though support activities as part of the individually tailored study paths are each vocational students' right, there are college-specific variations in these and in their implementation (Goman et al., 2021). Such research would offer valuable knowledge on chances and barriers the system creates for students.

Additionally, an interesting topic would be to apply the perspectives of sociocultural and activist theory and to investigate how vocational teacher education could implement a social justice agenda and how could vocational teachers and vocational special teachers become change agents in their work and how teacher activism could create new sites for learning and participation for special needs students (Engeström, 2001; Hancock & Miller, 2018; Montañó et al., 2002; Niesz, 2018). The sociocultural theory argues that people develop through their roles and understandings in which they participate (Vygotski, 1978). I agree with Hancock and Miller (2018) that 'deeper understanding of combined reflection and action – praxis – is needed for researchers and teacher educators to support teacher candidates' implementation of inclusive practices'. I assume that vocational teacher education is critical when reshaping the public discourse over students with special needs (McLaren & Baltodano, 2000).

## References

- Act on Vocational Education and Training 531/2017. Government of Finland. Retrieved [19.5.2022], from <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2017/20170531>
- Act on General Upper Secondary Education [Lukiolaki] 10.8.2018/714. Government of Finland. Retrieved [28.5.2022] from <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2018/20180714>
- Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (Ed.). (2018). *Opinion on the future of vocational education and training post 2020*. EU Commission. Retrieved [16.5.2022] from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1146&newsId=9263&furtherNews=yes>
- Ahmed, S. (2014). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Akkerman, S. F., & Bakker, A. (2011). Boundary crossing and boundary objects. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 132–169. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311404435>
- Amisbarometri (2022). Retrieved [28.5.2022] from <https://sakkiry.fi/amisbarometri/>
- AMKE [The Finnish Association for the Development of Vocational Education and Training] (2017). *Ammatillisen koulutuksen rahoituksessa 14–22 prosenttia leikkauksia*. Retrieved [16.5.2022] from <https://www.amke.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset/uutinen/ammattillisen-koulutuksen-rahoituksessa-14-22-prosentin-leikkauksia.html>
- Anderson, J. (1995). Translator's introduction. In A. Honneth (author) *The Struggle for recognition. The Moral grammar of social conflicts*. (pp. x–xxi). Polity Press.
- Axinn, W. G., & Pearce, L. D. (2006). *Mixed Method Data Collection Strategies*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511617898>
- Bach, P., Nicholson, T., & Hudson, M. (2014). The affordance-matching hypothesis: How objects guide action understanding and prediction. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8(254). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00254>

Sanna Ryökkyinen

- Backman, J. (2018). Äärellisyyden kohtaaminen: kokemuksen filosofista käsitehistoriaa. In J. Toikkanen & I. A. Virtanen (Eds.), *Kokemuksen tutkimus VI. Kokemuksen käsite ja käyttö* (pp. 25–40). Lapland University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press.
- Bamberg, M. (1997). Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7(1–4), 335–342.
- Bamberg, M. (2004a). Positioning with Davie Hogan: Stories, tellings, and identities. In C. Daiute & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Narrative analysis* (pp. 136–157). SAGE Publications, Inc.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985246.n23>
- Bamberg, M. (2004b). Form and functions of ‘slut bashing’ in male identity constructions in 15-year-olds. *Human Development*, 47(6), 331–353.  
<https://doi.org/10.1159/000081036>
- Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk*, 28(3), 377–396.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2008.018>
- Barry, B. (1998). Social exclusion, social isolation and the distribution of income (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 1158903). *Social Science Research Network*.  
<https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1158903>
- Barton, L. (2005). Emancipatory research and disabled people: Some observations and questions. *Educational Review* 57(3), 317–327.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910500149325>
- Basit, T. (2003). Manual or electronic? The role of coding in qualitative data analysis. *Educational Research*, 45(2), 143–154.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0013188032000133548>
- Baumberger, C. (2014). Types of understanding: Their nature and their relation to knowledge. *Conceptus: Zeitschrift Für Philosophie*, 40(98), 67–88.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/cpt-2014-0002>
- Baumberger, C., Beisbart, C., & Brun, G. (2017). What is understanding? An overview of recent debates in epistemology and philosophy of science. In S.R. Grimm, C. Baumberger, & S. Ammon (Eds.), *Explaining understanding. New perspectives from epistemology and philosophy of science* (pp. 1–34). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315686110>

- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Baxter, L. A. (2004). A tale of two voices: Relational dialectics theory. *The Journal of Family Communication*, 4(3 & 4), 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2004.9670130>
- Beach, D., & Sernhede, O. (2011). From learning to labour to learning for marginality: School segregation and marginalization in Swedish suburbs. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 257–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2011.547310>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Penguin Books.
- Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity*. Blue Ridge Summit: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Biesta, G. (2010). *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Biesta, G. (2014). *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Biesta, G. (2015a). Freeing teaching from learning: Opening up existential possibilities in educational relationships. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 34(3), 229–243. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-014-9454-z>
- Biesta, G. (2015b). What is education for?: On good education, teacher judgement, and educational professionalism. *European Journal of Education*, 50(1), 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109>
- Biesta, G. (2020). Risking ourselves in education: Qualification, socialization, and subjectification revisited. *Educational Theory*, 70(1), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12411>
- Biesta, G. (2021). The three gifts of teaching: Towards a non-egological future for moral education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 50(1), 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2020.1763279>
- Biesta, G. (2022). *World-Centred Education. A View for the Present*. Routledge.
- Billett, S. (2014). The standing of vocational education: Sources of its societal esteem and implications for its enactment. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 66(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2013.867525>

Sanna Ryökkynen

- Black, A., & Lawson, H. (2017). Purposes of education for young people with severe learning difficulties: Exploring a vocational teaching resource - 'A stepping stone to...' what? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 47(2), 207–226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2016.1142505>
- Brewer, J., & Hunter, A. (2006). *Foundations of Multimethod Research*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984294>
- Brinkmann, S. (2014). Doing without data. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 720–725. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414530254>
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2018). Ethical issues of interviewing. In *Doing interviews*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529716665>
- Brown, K., Pesonen, H., & Itkonen, T. (2019). Diagnoses or solutions. Different pathways for supporting students with diverse learning needs. In N. Burnett (Ed.), *Solution focused special education: Practical and inclusive strategies for all educators* (pp.101-116). Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social Constructionism*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315715421>
- Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). 'Clear as mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200201>
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making Sense of Qualitative Data. Complementary Research Strategies*. SAGE Publications.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Routledge.
- Cooley, C.H. (1992). *Human Nature and the Social Order*. Scribner's.
- Costigan, C., & Cox, M. (2001). Fathers' participation in family research: Is there a self-selection bias? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(4), 706–720. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0893-3200.15.4.706>
- Couldry, N. (2010). *Why Voice Matters. Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Council of European Union. (2020). *Osnabrück declaration 2020 on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies*. Retrieved [16.5.2022] from [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/osnabrueck\\_declaration\\_eu2020.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/osnabrueck_declaration_eu2020.pdf)

- Davey, S., & Gordon, S. (2017). Definitions of social inclusion and social exclusion: The invisibility of mental illness and the social conditions of participation. *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health*, 10(3), 229–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17542863.2017.1295091>
- De Fina, A. (2013). Positioning level 3: Connecting local identity displays to macro social processes. *Narrative Inquiry*, 23(1), 40–61. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.23.1.03de>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. SAGE.
- Dewey, J. (1923). Individuality in education. *General Science Quarterly*, 7(3), 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sce.3730070301>
- Dewey, J. (1949). *The School and Society*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Drisko, J. W., & Maschi, T. (2015). *Content Analysis*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190215491.001.0001>
- Elffers, L., Oort, F. J., & Karsten, S. (2012). Making the connection: The role of social and academic school experiences in students' emotional engagement with school in post-secondary vocational education. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 22(2), 242–250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2011.08.005>
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *SAGE Open*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080020028747>
- Finnish Government. (2021). *Valtioneuvoston koulutuspoliittinen selonteko* [Education policy report of the Finnish government]. 95. Retrieved [28.5.2022] from <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162995>
- Flick, U. (2018). *Doing Triangulation and Mixed Methods*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529716634>
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 777–795.

Sanna Ryökkynen

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Books.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1989). *Truth and Method*. Sheed & Ward.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Basil Blackwell.

Goman, J., Hievanen, R., Kiesi, J., Huhtanen, M., Vuojus, T., Eskola, S., Karvonen, S., Kullas-Norrgård, K., Lahtinen, T., Majanen, A., & Ristolainen, J. (2021). *Erityinen tuki voimavaraksi. Arviointi ammatillisen koulutuksen erityisestä tuesta* [Special needs support as a resource—Evaluation of the provision of special needs support in vocational education and training]. (Vol. 17). Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointi keskus.

Gonzalez, L., Brown, M. S., & Slate, J. R. (2008). Teachers who left the teaching profession: A qualitative understanding. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(1), 1.11. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1601>

Gorz, A. (1999). *Reclaiming Work. Beyond Wage-Based Society*. Polity Press.

Greimas, A. J. (1983). *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*. University of Nebraska Press.

Grimm, S. R., Baumberger, C., & Ammon, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Explaining Understanding: New Perspectives from Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315686110>

Hakala, K., Mietola, R., & Teittinen, A. (2013). Valinta ja valikointi ammatillisessa erityisopetuksessa. In K. Brunila, K. Hakala, E. Lahelma, & A. Teittinen (Eds.), *Ammatillinen koulutus ja yhteiskunnalliset eronteot* (pp. 173–200). Gaudeamus.

Hakkarainen, A. M., Holopainen, L. K., & Savolainen, H. K. (2016). The impact of learning difficulties and socioemotional and behavioural problems on transition to postsecondary education or work life in Finland: A five-year follow-up study. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 31(2), 171–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2015.1125688>

Hancock, C. L., & Miller, A. L. (2018). Using cultural historical activity theory to uncover praxis for inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(9), 937–953. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412517>

Hargreaves, D. H. (1980). A sociological critique of individualism in education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 28(3), 187–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.1980.9973574>

- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199283262.001.0001>
- Heikkinen, H. L. T., Kiilakoski, T., Huttunen, R., Kaukko, M., & Kemmis, S. (2018). Koulutuksen tutkimuksen arkkitehtuurit. *Kasvatus*, 49(5), 368–383.
- Heikkinen, H. L. T., & Kukkonen, H. (2019). Ammattikorkeakoulu toisin ajateltuna: osaaminen, sivistys ja tiedon intressit. *Aikuiskasvatus*, 39 (4), 262–275. <https://doi.org/10.33336/aik.88096>
- Henderson, D., & Fisher, D. (2008). Interpersonal behaviour and student outcomes in vocational education classes. *Learning Environments Research*, 11(1), 19–29. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-007-9034-z>
- Hermanoff, A. (2016). *‘Mukava mennä iloisella mielellä’: Narratiivinen tutkimus kehitysvammaisten nuorten toisen asteen opinnoista* [”It is nice to start with a happy mood.” A narrative research on vocational education studies among the youth with mental disabilities]. Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis 320. Doctoral dissertation.
- Herranen, J., & Souto, A.-M. (2016). Vapaus valita toisin? Ammatillinen koulutus koulutusmyönteisten nuorten kunnianhimoisena valintana. In H. Silvennoinen, M. Kalalahti, & J. Varjo (Eds.), *Koulutuksen tasa-arvon muuttuvat merkitykset: Kasvatussosiologian vuosikirja 1* (pp. 195–226). Suomen kasvatustieteellinen seura. Kasvatusalan tutkimuksia 73. Jyväskylän yliopistopaino.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., Rodriguez, D., & Frost, N. A. (2015). A qualitatively driven approach to multimethod and mixed methods research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber, D. Rodriguez, & N. A. Frost (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of multimethod and mixed methods research inquiry*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199933624.001.0001>
- Hewson, C. (2017). Research design and tools for online research. In N. G. Fielding, R. M. Lee, & G. Blank (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of online research methods* (pp. 57-75). SAGE Publications Ltd,  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473957992>
- Hinchman, K. A., & Moore, D. W. (2013). Close reading: A cautionary interpretation. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(6), 441–450.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/JAAL.163>
- Holm, G. (2018). Justice through education in the Nordic countries: Critical issues and perspectives. *Education Enquiry*, 9(1), 1–3.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1429770>

Sanna Ryökkyinen

- Honneth, A. (1995). *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Polity Press.
- Honneth, A. (2012). *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*. Polity Press.
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Huttunen, M. (Ed.). (2013). *Mittarit opiskelijoiden elämänlaadusta ja sijoittumisesta. Käsikirja mittareiden käyttöön*. Ammatillisten erityisoppilaitosten kumppanuusverkoston laatutyöryhmä. Retrieved [24.9.2022] from [https://ameo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/YTY\\_Mittarit-opiskelijoiden-el%C3%A4m%C3%A4nlaadusta-ja-sijoittumisesta\\_k%C3%A4si.pdf](https://ameo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/YTY_Mittarit-opiskelijoiden-el%C3%A4m%C3%A4nlaadusta-ja-sijoittumisesta_k%C3%A4si.pdf)
- Huttunen, R., & Heikkinen, H. L. T. (2004). Teaching and the dialectic of recognition. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 12(2), 163–174.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681360400200194>
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics. Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Penguin.
- Hämäläinen, J., & Matikainen, P. (2018). Mechanisms and pedagogical counterforces of young people's social exclusion: Some remarks on the requisites of social sustainability. *Sustainability*, 10(7), 2166.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072166>
- Ikäheimo, H. (2002). On the genus and species of recognition. *Inquiry*, 45(4), 447–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/002017402320947540>
- Ikäheimo, H., & Laitinen, A. (2011). Recognition and social ontology: An introduction. In H. Ikäheimo & A. Laitinen (Eds.), *Social and critical theory* (pp. 1-21). A Critical Horizons Book Series (Vol. 11). BRILL.
- Iser, M. (2019). Recognition. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/recognition/>
- Jahnukainen, M. & Itkonen, T. (2021). Steps to inclusion? The role of tiered intervention in Finland and in the United States. In A. Köpfer, J. J. Powell, & R. Zahnd (Eds.), *International handbook of inclusive education: global, national and local perspectives* (pp. 345-356). Verlag Barbara Budrich.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1f70kvj.22>

- Jauhola, L., & Kortelainen, J. (2018). *Osallisena opinnoissa. Tutkimus oppijoiden osallisuuden vahvistamisesta ammatillisessa koulutuksessa*. Opetushallitus. Raportit ja selvitykset 2018:7. Retrieved [1.6.2022] from <https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/osallisena-opinnoissa.pdf>
- Jenson, W. R., Olympia, D., Farley, M., & Clark, E. (2004). Positive psychology and externalizing students in a sea of negativity: Positive psychology and wellness in children. *Psychology in the Schools*, 41(1), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.10139>
- Kaiser, C. R., & Miller, C. T. (2003). Derogating the victim: The interpersonal consequences of blaming events on discrimination. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 6(3), 227–237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684302030063001>
- Kalalahti, M., Niemi, A.-M., Varjo, J., & Jahnukainen, M. (2020). Diversified transitions and educational equality? Negotiating the transitions of young people with immigrant backgrounds and/or special educational needs. *Nordic studies in education*, 40(1), 36–54. <https://doi.org/10.23865/nse.v40.2127>
- Karusaari, R. (2020). *Asiakaslähtöisyys osaamisperusteisessa ammatillisessa koulutuksessa* [Customer orientation in competence-based vocational education]. Acta Electronica Universitatis Lappeensis 273. Doctoral dissertation.
- Kauppila, A., Lappalainen, S., & Mietola, R. (2020). Governing citizenship for students with learning disabilities in everyday vocational education and training. *Disability & Society*, 36(7), 1148–1168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1788512>
- Kauppila, A., Mietola, R., & Niemi, A.-M. (2018). Koulutususkon rajoilla: Koulutuksen julma lupaus kehitys- ja vaikeavammaisille opiskelijoille. In H. Silvennoinen, M. Kalalahti, & J. Varjo (Eds.), *Koulutuksen lupaukset ja koulutususko* (pp. 209–240). Kasvatussosiologian vuosikirja 2. Kasvatusalan tutkimuksia, No79. FERA Suomen kasvatustieteellinen seura
- Kemmis, S., Wilkinson, J., Edwards-Groves, C., Hardy, I., Grootenboer, P., & Bristol, L. (2013). *Changing Practices, Changing Education*. Springer Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-47-4>
- Kerdeman, D. (2015). Interpretation, social science and educational research. In P. Smeyers, D. Bridges, N. C. Burbules, & M. Griffiths (Eds.), *International handbook of interpretation in educational research* (pp. 17–37). Springer Dordrecht. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9282-0>

Sanna Ryökkyinen

- Kiilakoski, T. & Oravakangas, A. (2010). Koulutus tuotantokoneistona? Tulostavoitteinen koulutuspolitiikka kriittisen teorian valossa. *Kasvatus & Aika*, 4(1), 7–25.
- Komulainen, K., Naskali, P., Korhonen, M., & Keskitalo-Foley, S. (2011). Internal entrepreneurship--A Trojan horse of the neoliberal governance of education? Finnish pre- and in-service teachers' implementation of and resistance towards entrepreneurship education. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 9(1), 341–374.
- Korhonen, S., Neuvonen, A., & Hokkanen, L. (2017). *The Nordic model is not about well-being – It is about capabilities*. Sitra.  
<https://www.sitra.fi/en/articles/nordic-model-not-well-capabilities/>
- Korthagen, F. A. J., Attema-Noordewier, S., & Zwart, R. C. (2014). Teacher–student contact: Exploring a basic but complicated concept. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 40, 22–32.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.01.006>
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. SAGE.
- Kuptsch, C., & Charest, É. (Eds.) (2021). *The Future of Diversity*. International Labour Organization.
- Kyröläinen, A. (2020). *Vammaisten henkilöiden työllistymisen rakenteelliset esteet*. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö.  
<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162325>
- Laitinen, A. (2003). *Social equality, recognition and preconditions of good life*. Conference paper. Social Inequality Today, Macquarie University.
- Larsen, L., & Thunqvist D. P. (2018). Balancing the esteem of vocational education and social inclusion in four Nordic countries. In C. H. Jørgensen, O. J. Olsen, & D. P. Thunqvist (Eds.), *Vocational education in Nordic countries. Learning from diversity*. (1<sup>st</sup> edition, pp. 74–94). Routledge.
- Laukia, J. (2013). *Tavoitteena sivistynyt kansalainen ja työntekijä. Ammattikoulu Suomessa 1899-1987* [Educating good citizens and workers. Vocational school in Finland 1899-1987]. Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies. University of Helsinki. Doctoral dissertation.
- Laukia, J., & Karjalainen, A. (2019). Ammatillinen koulutus ja yhteiskunta [Vocational education and training and society]. *Ammattikasvatuksen aikakauskirja*, 21(3), 4–7.

- Lawy, J. R. (2017). Theorizing voice: Performativity, politics and listening. *Anthropological Theory*, 17(2), 192–215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499617713138>
- Leary, M. R. (Ed.) (2001). *Interpersonal Rejection*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195130157.001.0001>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 1986(30), 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.1427>
- Lub, V. (2015). Validity in qualitative evaluation: Linking purposes, paradigms, and perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915621406>
- Lucas, R. E., & Dyrenforth, P. S. (2006). Does the existence of social relationships matter for subjective well-being? In K. D. Vohs & E. J. Finkel (Eds.), *Self and relationships: Connecting intrapersonal and interpersonal processes* (pp. 254–273). The Guilford Press.
- Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social Systems*. Stanford University Press.
- Lundahl, L. (2016). Equality, inclusion and marketization of Nordic education: Introductory notes. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 11(1), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499916631059>
- Lynch, K. (2019). Inequality in education: What educators can and cannot change. In M. Connolly, D. H. Eddy-Spicer, C. James, & S. D. Kruse (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of school organization* (pp. 301–317). SAGE.
- Mahar, A. L., Cobigo, V., & Stuart, H. (2013). Conceptualizing belonging. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 35(11), 1026–1032. <https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2012.717584>
- Martin, A. J., & Collie, R. J. (2019). Teacher-student relationships and students' engagement in high school: Does the number of negative and positive relationships with teachers matter? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(5), 861–876. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000317>
- Mattila, M. (Ed.). (2020). *Eriarvoisuuden tila Suomessa*. Kalevi Sorsa -Säätiö.
- Maunu, A. (2020). Opiskelijälähtöisyyttä arjen paineissa. *Kasvatus & Aika*, 14(1), 44–66. <https://doi.org/10.33350/ka.76271>
- May, V. (2013). *Connecting Self to Society: Belonging in a Changing World*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Sanna Ryökkyinen

- McLaren, P., & Baltodano, M. P. (2000). The future of teacher education and the politics of resistance. *Teaching Education*, 11(1), 47–60.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210050020363>
- Mertanen, K. (2020). *Not a single one left behind: Governing the 'youth problem' in youth policies and youth policy implementations*. Studies in Education 98. University of Helsinki. Doctoral dissertation.
- Mietola, R. (2014). *Hankala erityisyys: Etnografinen tutkimus erityisopetuksen käytännöistä ja erityisyyden muotoutumisesta yläkoulun arjessa* [Troubling special: An ethnographic study on practices of special education and formation of special in the everyday life of lower secondary school]. Studies in Educational Sciences 256. University of Helsinki. Doctoral dissertation.
- Mietola, R., Miettinen, S., & Vehmas, S. (2017). Voiceless subjects? Research ethics and persons with profound intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20(3), 263–274.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2017.1287872>
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *An Expanded Sourcebook. Qualitative Data Analysis*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. SAGE Publications.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A Methods Sourcebook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. SAGE Publications.
- Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. (n.d.). *Performance principles*. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö. Retrieved [28.5.2022] from <https://minedu.fi/suoritepaatokset>
- Ministry of Education and Culture & Finnish National Agency for education (2019). *Finnish VET in a nutshell*. Retrieved [28.5.2022] from <https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/finnish-vet-nutshell>
- Montaño, T., López-Torres, L., DeLissovoy, N., Pacheco, M., & Stillman, J. (2002). Teachers as activists: Teacher development and alternate sites of learning. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(3), 265–275.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/713845315>
- Morse, J. M., & Chung, S. E. (2003). Toward holism: The significance of methodological pluralism. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(3), 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200302>
- Mäkinen, H. (2021). *Selvitys osatyökykyisten Suomen mallista* [Report on the Finnish model for people with partial work ability]. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö.  
<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162815>

- National Advisory Board on Research Ethics [TENK]. (2019). *Ihmiseen kohdistuvan tutkimuksen eettiset periaatteet ja ihmistieteiden eettinen ennakoarviointi Suomessa* [The Ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland]. Retrieved [28.5.2022] from [https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2021-01/Ethical review in human sciences 2020.pdf](https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2021-01/Ethical%20review%20in%20human%20sciences%202020.pdf)
- Naude, L., van den Bergh, T. J., & Kruger, I. S. (2014). "Learning to like learning": An appreciative inquiry into emotions in education. *Social Psychology of Education*, 17(2), 211–228. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-014-9247-9>
- Niemi, A.-M. (2014). Tuki, tarve, leima, oikeus? Erityisyyden muotoutuminen ammatillisen koulutuksen diskursseissa. *Kasvatus*, 45(4), 349–363.
- Niemi, A.-M. (2015). *Erityisiä koulutuspolkuja? Tutkimus erityisopetuksen käytännöistä peruskoulun jälkeen* [Special educational paths? A study on the practices of special needs education after basic education]. Käyttätymistieteen laitos. Kasvatustieteellisiä tutkimuksia. University of Helsinki. Doctoral dissertation.
- Niemi, A.-M., & Jahnukainen, M. (2018). Tuen tarve, työelämäpainotteisuus ja itsenäisyyden vaatimus ammatillisen koulutuksen kontekstissa [The need of support, working-life emphasis and self-responsibility in the context of vocational education and training]. *Ammattikasvatuksen aikakauskirja*, 20(1), 9–25.
- Niemi, A.-M., & Jahnukainen, M. (2020). Educating self-governing learners and employees: Studying, learning and pedagogical practices in the context of vocational education and its reform. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(9), 1143–1160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1656329>
- Niemi, A.-M., & Kurki, T. (2014). Getting on the right track? Educational choicemaking of students with special educational needs in pre-vocational education and training. *Disability & Society*, 29(10), 1631–1644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2014.966188>
- Niemi, A.-M., & Mietola, R. (2017). Between hopes and possibilities. (Special) educational paths, agency and subjectivities. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 19(3), 218–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15017419.2016.1239588>
- Niesz, T. (2018). When teachers become activists: For teacher activist groups, the professional is political and the political is professional. (Power & influence in education). *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(8), 25–25.

Sanna Ryökkyinen

- Niittyalahti, S. (2021). *‘Mä olen saanut mahdollisuudet oppia’: Opintoihin kiinnittyminen ammatillisessa koulutuksessa*. The Faculty of Education. University of Tampere. Doctoral dissertation.
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 18(2), 34–35.  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for Profit. Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton University Press.
- Nylund, M., & Rosvall, P.-Å. (2019). Vocational education, transitions, marginalisation and social justice in the Nordic countries. *European Educational Research Journal*, 18(3), 271–277.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904119838893>
- Nylund, M., Rosvall, P.-Å., & Ledman, K. (2017). The vocational-academic divide in neoliberal upper secondary curricula: The Swedish case. *Journal of Education Policy*, 32(6), 788–808.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1318455>
- Oades-Sese, G. V., Matthews, T. A., & Lewis, M. (2014). Shame and pride and their effects on student achievement. In R. Pekrun, & L. Linnenbrink-Garcia (Eds.), *International handbook of emotions in education* (pp. 246–264). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203148211.ch13>
- OECD. (2020). What is happening to middle-skill workers? In *OECD Employment Outlook 2020: Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c9d28c24-en>
- Official Statistics Finland (2020). Transition from school to further education and work [e-publication]. Retrieved [2.11.2022] from [https://www.stat.fi/til/sijk/2018/sijk\\_2018\\_2020-01-23\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html](https://www.stat.fi/til/sijk/2018/sijk_2018_2020-01-23_tie_001_en.html)
- Oliver-Hoyo, M., & Allen, D. (2006). The use of triangulation methods in qualitative educational research. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 35(4), 42–47.
- Owal Group. (2021). *Selvitys ammatillisen koulutuksen reformin toimeenpanosta*. Retrieved [19.5.2022] from [https://owalgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Reformin-toimeenpanon-tilanne\\_1603.pdf](https://owalgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Reformin-toimeenpanon-tilanne_1603.pdf)
- Pazey, B. L. (2020). Incorporating the voices and insights of students with disabilities: Let’s consider our Approach. *International Journal of Student Voice*, (8).

- Pekrun, R. (2011). Emotions as drivers of learning and cognitive development. In R. A. Calvo & S. K. D'Mello (Eds.), *New perspectives on affect and learning technologies* (pp.23-39). Springer New York, NY.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-9625-1>
- Pekrun, R., & Linnenbrink-Garcia, L. (2014). Introduction to Emotions in Education. In R. Pekrun & L. Linnenbrink-Garcia (Eds.), *International handbook of emotions in education* (pp. 1-10). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203148211.ch1>
- Pekrun, R., & Schutz, P. A. (2007). *Emotion in Education*. Academic Press.
- Pezalla, A. E., Pettigrew, J., & Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*, 12(2), 165–185.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794111422107>
- Pirkanen, H., Eerola, P., & Jokinen, K. (2020). Nuorten aikuisten käsityksiä tulevaisuuden perheistä [Young adults' perceptions of the future families]. In T. Valkendorff & E. Sihvonen (Eds.), *Nuorten perheet ja läheissuhteet* [Young people's families and close relationships] (pp. 127–142). Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura. Nuorten elinolot - vuosikirja, 2020. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2020110489259>
- Plomin, R. (1999). Genetics and general cognitive ability. *Nature*, 402(S6761), C25–C29. <https://doi.org/10.1038/35011520>
- Power, S. (2012). From redistribution to recognition to representation: Social injustice and the changing politics of education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 10(4), 473–492.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2012.735154>
- Pritchard, D. (2010). Understanding. In D. Pritchard, A. Millar, & A. Haddock (Eds.), *The Nature and value of knowledge: Three investigations* (pp. 66-88). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199586264.001.0001>
- Pylväs, L. (2018). *Development of vocational expertise and excellence in formal and informal learning environments*. The Faculty of Education. University of Tampere. Doctoral dissertation.
- Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 8(3), 238–264.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/11766091111162070>

Sanna Ryökkyinen

- Raudasoja, A. (2006). *Mitä autismin kirjon opiskelijat oppivat valmentavassa koulutuksessa?* [The evaluation of preparation training for students with autism spectrum disorders for work and independent life]. Käyttätymistieteellinen tiedekunta. Soveltavan kasvatustieteen laitos. Helsingin yliopisto. Doctoral dissertation.
- Reay, D. (2016). How possible is socially just education under neo-liberal capitalism? Struggling against the tide? *Forum*, 58(3), 325–331. <https://doi.org/10.15730/forum.2016.58.3.325>
- Reimer, B. (2004). Social Exclusion in a comparative context. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44(1), 76–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2004.00263.x>
- Renold, E., Holland, S., Ross, N. J., & Hillman, A. (2010). ‘Becoming participant’: Problematizing ‘informed consent’ in participatory research with young people in care. *SAGE Qualitative Research Methods*, 7(4), 427–447. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857028211>
- Retzinger, S. M. (1995). Identifying shame and anger in discourse. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38(8), 1104–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764295038008006>
- Rinehart, K. E. (2021). Abductive analysis in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(2), 303–311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420935912>
- Rintala, H. (2020). *Work-based learning in vocational education and training: Varied communities, fields and learning pathways*. The Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. Tampere University. Doctoral dissertation.
- Risjord, M. (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203802540>
- Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1), 25–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.801543>
- Roorda, D. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J. L., & Oort, F. J. (2011). The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students’ school engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(4), 493–529. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311421793>
- Räty, K. (2016). *Eriytyinen tuki elinikäisen oppimisen mahdollistajana ammatillisessa aikuiskoulutuksessa* [Special support as enabler of lifelong learning in vocational adult education and training]. The Faculty of Behavioural Sciences. Department of Teacher Education. University of Helsinki. Doctoral Dissertation.

- Salmi, E. (2022). *Motivaatio, oppimisvaikeudet ja ammatillisten opintojen loppuun suorittaminen* [Motivation, learning difficulties and graduation in vocational education and training]. The Faculty of Education and Psychology. University of Jyväskylä. Doctoral dissertation.
- Salonen, A. O., & Bardy, M. (2015). Ekososiaalinen sivistys herättää luottamusta tulevaisuuteen. *Aikuiskasvatus*, 35(1), 4–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.33336/aik.94118>
- Sanders, R. E. (2003). Applying the skills concept to discourse and conversation: The remediation of performance defects in talk-in-interaction. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills* (pp. 221-256). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.
- Sanders, R. E. (2015). Competence in speaking in interactions. In A. F. Hannawa & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *Communication competence* (pp. 105-130). De Gruyter, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110317459>
- Sandstrom, G. M., & Dunn, E. W. (2014). Social interactions and well-being: The surprising power of weak ties. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40(7), 910–922. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214529799>
- Sandu, A. (2016). *Social Construction of Reality as Communicative Action*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2012). A primer on practices. In J. Higgs, R. Barnett, S. Billett, M. Hutchings, & F. Trede (Eds.), *Practice-based education: Perspectives and strategies* (pp.13-26). Brill.
- Scheff, T. J. (2000). Shame and the social bond: A sociological theory. *Sociological Theory*, 18(1), 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00089>
- Scheff, T. J. (2003). Shame in self and society. *Symbolic Interaction*, 26(2), 239–262. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2003.26.2.239>
- Schleifer, R., & Harré, R. (1987). *A.J. Greimas and the Nature of Meaning: Linguistics, Semiotics and Discourse Theory*. Croom Helm.
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Sage.
- Selkivuori, L. (2015). ”Ei näihin vaikeuksiin työelämässä törmää”: Oppimisen tuki ja erityiselle tuelle annetut merkitykset ammatillisessa aikuiskoulutuksessa opiskelijan näkökulmasta [” You don’t come up against these difficulties in working life” Students’ perspectives of special learning support in vocational adult education]. *Studies in Education*,

Sanna Ryökkynen

Psychology and Social Research 522. University of Jyväskylä. Doctoral dissertation.

Siljander, P. (2014). *Systemaattinen Johdatus Kasvatustieteeseen: Peruskäsitteet ja Pääsuuntauokset*. Vastapaino

Simola, H. (2015). *Koulutusihmeen Paradoksit: Esseitä Suomalaisesta Koulutuspolitiikasta*. Vastapaino.

Sjöblom, S. (2016). *Suomen vammaispoliittisen ohjelman VAMPO 2010–2015 loppuraportti* [Finland's disability policy programme (VAMPO) 2010–2015: Final report]. Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö. <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/74810>

Skura, M., & Świdarska, J. (2021). The role of teachers' emotional intelligence and social competences with special educational needs students. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 37(3), 401–416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1885177>

Smith, J., & Noble, H. (2014). Bias in research. *Evidence-Based Nursing* 17(4), 100–101. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2014-101946>

Smyth, J. (2006). 'When students have power': Student engagement, student voice, and the possibilities for school reform around 'dropping out' of school. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9(4), 285–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120600894232>

Spilt, J. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., & Thijs, J. T. (2011). Teacher wellbeing: The importance of teacher–student relationships. *Educational Psychology Review*, 23(4), 457–477. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-011-9170-y>

State Auditor's Office. (2021). *Tarkastuskertomus 2/2021: Ammatillisen koulutuksen reformi*. Retrieved [26.10.2021] from <https://www.vtv.fi/app/uploads/2021/03/VTV-Tarkastus-2-2021-Ammatillisen-koulutuksen-reformi.pdf>

Stewart, F. (2013). *Capabilities and human development. Beyond the individual – the critical role of social institutions and social competencies*. Occasional paper 2013/03. UNDP Human Development Report Office.

Sun, J., Harris, K., & Vazire, S. (2020). Is well-being associated with the quantity and quality of social interactions? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119(6), 1478–1496. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000272>

Taylor, C. (1994). Politics of recognition. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Expanded paperback edition (pp.25-74)*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400821402-004>

- Therborn, G. (2013). *The Killing Fields of Inequality*. Wiley.
- Tiilikkala, L. (2004). *Mestarista tuutoriksi: Suomalaisen ammatillisen opettajuuden muutos ja jatkuvuus* [From master to tutor. Change and continuity in Finnish vocational teacherhood]. Studies in education, psychology and social research 236. University of Jyväskylä. Doctoral dissertation.
- Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 167–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275112457914>
- Turner, J. E., Husman, J., & Schallert, D. L. (2002). The importance of students' goals in their emotional experience of academic failure: Investigating the precursors and consequences of shame. *Educational Psychologist*, 37(2), 79–89. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3702\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3702_3)
- Tyler, K. M., Stevens-Morgan, R., & Brown-Wright, L. (2016). Home-school dissonance and student-teacher interaction as predictors of school attachment among urban middle level students. *RMLE Online*, 39(7), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2016.1226101>
- Tökkäri, V. (2018). Fenomenologisen, hermeneuttis-fenomenologisen ja narratiivisen kokemuksen tutkimuksen käytäntöjä. In J. Toikkanen & I.A. Virtanen (Eds.), *Kokemuksen tutkimus VI. Kokemuksen käsite ja käyttö* (pp. 64–84). Lapland University Press.
- van den Brink, B., & Owen, D. (2007). Honneth's theory of recognition. In B. van den Brink & D. Owen (Eds.), *Recognition and power. Axel Honneth and the tradition of critical social theory* (pp. 2-20). Cambridge University Press.
- van Leeuwen, B. (2007). A formal recognition of social attachments: Expanding Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. *Inquiry*, 50(2), 180–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00201740701239897>
- van Uden, J. M., Ritzen, H., & Pieters, J. M. (2014). Engaging students: The role of teacher beliefs and interpersonal teacher behavior in fostering student engagement in vocational education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 37, 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.08.005>
- Vipunen - Education statistics Finland (n.d.). Vocational education and training. Retrieved [25.5.2022] from <https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/vocational/Pages/default.aspx>
- Vygotski, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.

Sanna Ryökkynen

Värri, V.-M. (2007). Kasvatusfilosofian tärkein tehtävä. *Niin & Näin*, 1, 70–73.

Värri, V.-M. (2014). Halun kultivointi ekologisen sivistyksen mahdollisuutena. In A. Saari, O.-J. Jokisaari, & V.-M. Värri (Eds.), *Ajan kasvatus: Kasvatusfilosofia aikalaiskritiikkinä* (pp. 87–122).

Värri, V.-M. (2018). *Kasvatus Ekokriisin Aikakaudella*. Vastapaino.

Wallenius, T., Juvonen, S., Hansen, P., & Varjo, J. (2018). Schools, accountability and transparency—Approaching the Nordic school evaluation practices through discursive institutionalism. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 4(3), 133–143.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2018.1537432>

Walton, G. M., & Carr, P. B. (2012a). Do I belong? How negative intellectual stereotypes undermine people’s sense of social belonging in school and how to fix it. To appear in M. Inzlicht & T. Schmader (Eds.), *Stereotype threat: Theory, process, and application*.

Walton, G. M., & Carr, P. B. (2012b). Social belonging and the motivation and intellectual achievement of negatively stereotyped students. In M. Inzlicht & T. Schmader (Eds.), *Stereotype threat: Theory, process, and application* (89–106). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199732449.003.0006>

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(1), 82–96. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.1.82>

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, 331(6023), 1447–1451. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1198364>

Wenham, L. (2021). *Misunderstood, Misinterpreted and Mismanaged*. Peter Lang Verlag.

Wentzel, K. R. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and adolescent competence at school. In T. Wubbels, P. den Brok, J. van Tartwijk, & J. Levy (Eds.), *Interpersonal relationships in education: An overview of contemporary research* (pp. 19–35). SensePublishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-939-8>

Wheeler, L. (2020). Doctoral theses in vocational education. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 72(4), 597–597.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2020.1838211>

- Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2011). *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. Bloomsbury Press.
- Yauch, C. A., & Steudel, H. J. (2003). Complementary use of qualitative and quantitative cultural assessment methods. *Organizational Research Methods*, 6(4), 465–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428103257362>
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3), 197–214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220600769331>
- Ågren, S. (2021). Exploring vocational education students' visions of a successful transition to working life from the perspective of societal belonging. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 4, 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-021-00037-5>
- Ågren, S., Pietilä, I., & Rättilä, T. (2020). Palkkatyökeskeisen ajattelun esiintyminen ammattiin opiskelevien työelämäasenteissa. In L. Haikkola & S. Myllyniemi (Eds.), *Hyvää työtä! Nuorisobarometri 2019* (pp. 157–178). Valtion nuorisoneuvosto, Nuorisotutkimusseura, Nuorisotutkimusverkosto, & Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö.
- Äikäs, A. (2012). *Toiselta asteelta eteenpäin: Narratiivinen tutkimus vaikeavammaisen nuoren aikuisen koulutuksesta ja työllistymisestä* [Life after upper secondary education. A Narrative study of the education and employment of a severely disabled young adult]. Dissertations in Education, Humanities, and Theology. University of Eastern Finland. Doctoral dissertation.
- Äärelä, T. (2012). ”Aika paljón vaikuttaa minkälainen ilime opettajalla on naamalla.” *Nuoret vangit kertovat peruskouluajoistaan* [“It means quite a lot what kind of look a teacher has.” Young prisoners talking about their experiences at a comprehensive school]. Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis 242. Doctoral dissertation.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Interview protocol (Studies 1, 3)

### *Teema 1: Opiskelijan näkemys vuorovaikutuksesta opettajan kanssa*

1. Kuvaile suhdettasi opettajasi kanssa?
  - Miten teidän yhteistyönne sujuu? Mikä opettajassasi on mukavinta? Mikä ikävintä? Miten läheisiä olette opettajasi kanssa?
2. Kuvaile vuorovaikutusta opettajasi kanssa
  - Millainen tunnelma keskusteluissanne yleensä on? Vapautunut ja rento / Kireä ja asiallinen / Vaihteleva? Kuvaile opettajasi tyyliä: onko hän puheissaan myönteinen vai negatiivinen? Huomioiko hän onnistumiset vai puuttuuko hän haasteisiin? Kumpi puhuu tavatessanne enemmän, sinä vai opettajasi? Haluaisitko puhua enemmän? Jos tapaamisessa on useampia ihmisiä, niin huomioiko opettajasi sinut vai kiinnittykö huomio muihin? Saatko sinä liian vähän, riittävästi vai liikaa puheenvuoroja? Kyselläänkö sinulta liian vähän, sopivasti vai liikaa?
3. Millaista kieltä opettajasi käyttää?
  - Ymmärrätkö pääasiallisesti mitä opettajasi puhuu? Käyttääkö opettajasi sanoja, joita et ymmärrä? Onko opettajasi asiallinen vai vitsikäs? Puhuuiko opettajasi liian paljon ja nopeasti?
4. Millaista kieltä sinä käytät?
  - Ymmärtääkö opettajasi pääasiallisesti mitä puhut? Käytätkö sanoja, joita opettajasi ei ymmärrä? Oletko asiallinen vai vitsikäs? Puhutko paljon ja nopeasti? Vai vähän ja rauhallisesti? Harkitsetko paljon sanomisiasi
5. Miten kuvaisit osallistumistasi keskusteluun?
  - Arvioi asteikolla 15 osallistumistasi keskusteluun: 1 en puhu juurikaan; 2 puhun hyvin vähän; 3 en osaa sanoa; 4 puhun paljon; 5 puhun liikaa
  - Oletko tyytyväinen siihen, paljonko olet äänessä keskusteluissa?
6. Minkälaisista asioista juttelet mielelläsi opettajasi kanssa? Onko koulussa joku ihminen, jonka kanssa voit puhua henkilökohtaisista asioista?
7. Miten opettajasi mielestäsi kuuntelee sinua?
  - Arvioi asteikolla 1–5 kuulluksi tulemista, miten tyytyväinen olet: 1 olen täysin tyytymätön, siihen miten opettaja kuuntelee minua; 2 olen vähän tyytymätön; 3 en osaa sanoa; 4 olen tyytyväinen; 5 olen erittäin tyytyväinen
8. Tarkkailletko opettajasi ilmeitä ja eleitä, äänenpainoja?
  - Mitä olet huomannut? Millaiset eleet ja ilmeet tuntuvat mukavilta ja mitkä asiat kiusallisilta?

9. Jännittääkö keskustelut opettajasi kanssa?
  - Miten jännitys tulee esille?
10. Jännittääkö sosiaaliset tilanteet yleensä sinua?
11. Miten paljon uudet tilanteet jännittävät sinua?
  - Arvioi asteikolla: 1 ei ollenkaan, 2 vähän, 3 en osaa sanoa, 4 jonkin verran, 5 todella paljon
12. Miten usein keskusteleet vastuupettajasi kanssa opinnoistasi?
13. Mistä asioista keskustellette eniten?
14. Ovatko tapaamiseenne suunniteltuja vai tulevatko ne yllättäen? Tiedätkö etukäteen mistä tapaamisessa keskustellaan?
15. Miten tärkeää vuorovaikutuksen onnistuminen ja myönteisyys sinulle on
  - Arvioi asteikolla: 1 ei ollenkaan, 2 vähän, 3 en osaa sanoa, 4 jonkin verran, 5 todella tärkeää

### *Teema 2: Vuorovaikutuksen orientaatiot*

16. Mitkä asiat auttavat vuorovaikutuksen onnistumisessa?
17. Mitkä asiat vaikeuttavat vuorovaikutuksen onnistumista?
18. Millainen vuorovaikutus opettajasi kanssa on mielestäsi onnistunut?  
Määrittele onnistunut vuorovaikutus omin sanoin.
19. Millainen vuorovaikutus opettajan kanssa tukisi sinua omalla polullasi?
20. Millainen vuorovaikutus opettajan kanssa estää sinua etenemästä omalla polullasi?
21. Onko sinulla selkeä suunnitelma, että miten etenet opinnoissasi?

### *Teema 3: Minkälaista ohjausta opiskelijat saavat?*

22. Oletko saanut päättää opintoihisi liittyvistä asioista?
23. Mistä asioista opettaja päättää?
24. Millaiset aloitteet/ehdotukset opettaja huomioi herkimmin?
25. Millaiset aloitteet / ehdotukset opettaja yleensä ohittaa?
26. Oletko mielestäni saanut äänesi riittävästi kuuluviin opintojesi suunnittelussa?

## Appendix 2. Interview protocol (Study 2)

1. Mitkä fiilikset sinulla on nyt, kun opintosi ovat päättymässä?
  - Koetko olevasi valmis työelämään ja maailmaan? Voisitko kertoa miksi?
  - Mikä on tämänhetkinen jatkosuunnitelmasi?
  - Näyttääkö lähitulevaisuus sellaiselta kuin haluatkin?
2. Jos mietit näitä menneitä vuosia ammatillisessa koulutuksessa, niin mikä on ollut tärkeintä, mitä olet saanut ammatillisesta koulutuksesta?
  - Mikä asia on muuttunut elämässäsi eniten? Onko muutos ollut sinulle mieluista?
  - Miten ammatillinen koulutus on auttanut sinua elämää/työelämää varten?
  - Onko ammattiaineiden oppiminen ollut tärkeintä vai joku muu asia, mikä asia?
3. Miten jatkaisit lauseita:
  - Nyt kun tässä valmistumisen kynnyksellä mietin opintojani, niin tärkeintä on ollut se, että...
  - Mielestäni ammatillisessa koulutuksessa kannattaisi ottaa huomioon...
4. Millaisena sinä näet elämäsi vuoden päästä, jos kaikki menee hyvin?
  - Mitä teet, kenen kanssa elät, millaista elämää elät...
5. Millaisena näet elämäsi 5. vuoden päästä, jos kaikki menee hyvin?
6. Millaisena näet elämäsi 10. vuoden päästä, jos kaikki menee hyvin?
7. Mihin asioihin koet voivasi vaikuttaa tällä hetkellä omassa elämässäsi?  
Mihin asioihin haluaisit vaikuttaa?
8. Missä asioissa koet saaneesi eniten apua koululta?
9. Kuka on ollut merkittävin henkilö elämässäsi tulevaisuuden suunnittelun ja tulevaisuuteen valmistautumisen näkökulmasta?
10. Onko jotain mitä haluaisit vielä lisätä?