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Advancing social equity through teacher well-being: TCM in Finnish elementary schools

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Advancing social equity through teacher well-being: TCM in Finnish elementary schools

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Abstract

Challenging pupil behaviour in elementary schools poses a critical threat to social equity in education, with teacher well-being emerging as a key dimension of this challenge. This study examines how teaching staff in schools perceive the impact of the TCM (Teacher Classroom Management) method on promoting social equity in their work, their well-being, and the school's operational culture in Finnish elementary schools, with a focus on its implementation in the city of Kokkola. TCM is a research-based pedagogical approach that aims to enhance pupils' socio-emotional development, teacher–pupil interaction, and home–school collaboration through systematically applied practices grounded in positive pedagogy. Surveys from 52 educators and principals trained between 2021 and 2024 were analysed using a mixed methods approach. Results show that TCM strengthened teachers' classroom management skills, promoted the use of positive feedback, and improved communication with pupils and parents. These outcomes supported more inclusive and respectful learning environments, contributing to socially just practices. Moderate improvements in pupil behaviour were reported, though challenges such as limited resources and uneven staff participation hindered broader impact. While TCM fostered individual resilience and a constructive mindset, deeper shifts in school culture and collective well-being were less evident. The study underscores the importance of aligning classroom-level interventions with systemic support and shared values to promote educational equity.

Keywords: classroom management, TCM, teacher training, social justice, equity, mixed methods

Introduction

The job definition of a teacher has expanded in recent years in Finland, and the demands seem to be growing globally in the future (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022). Many social phenomena, such as inequality, diverse family circumstances and behavioural challenges for pupils are concentrated in the everyday life of schools (Dicke et al., 2017; Nash et al., 2015), which is also reflected in the teacher's ability to do their job (Jenkins and Ueno, 2017). Classroom conditions also have an impact on pupils' well-being and equal opportunities to improve and learn (Korpershoek et al., 2016). Contemporary research of problematic pupil behaviour emphasises early interventions as means to halt negative future development (Holopainen et al., 2009; Kaakinen and Näsi, 2021). However, a pupil who reacts strongly and negatively to everyday events of the classroom environment pose major challenges especially for the teacher, increasing the risk of escalation in the classroom as well as teacher burnout. Various methods and materials have been developed to support teacher's classroom management.

In this study, we investigate whether the Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) programme can strengthen both social equity and teacher well-being in Finnish elementary schools, based on self-evaluations by teachers and principals. We aim to identify how teaching staff in schools perceive the impact of the TCM method on promoting social equity in their work, their work-related well-being, and the school's operational culture and if TCM goes beyond maintaining discipline by promoting inclusive classroom practices that safeguard equal opportunities for pupils and support teachers in addressing diverse needs. The programme has previously been examined in the same municipality using qualitative methods (Maunula et al., 2022; Maunula et al., 2023). While these earlier studies highlighted teachers' professional growth, they did not capture the broader organisational and equity-related dimensions of the programme. By analysing both teacher and principal perspectives, the present study generates new evidence on how TCM may contribute to fairer learning environments and more sustainable working conditions for educators. In doing so, it positions the Finnish case within an international discussion on how classroom management interventions can advance social equity in education systems facing increasing diversity and complexity.

Theoretical frame

Teacher Classroom Management TCM

TCM was developed to promote socioemotional development of 3 to 12 year old children as well as to enhance interaction between the pupils and the teacher and between school and homes (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). The method also aims to prevent, reduce, and treat conduct problems of children and increase their social competences (Webster-Stratton, 2000). In practice, TCM training consists of six full-day workshops (or 12 half-day sessions) each focusing on a specific classroom management theme (see Incredible Years, n.d.). These include building positive relationships with students, proactive teaching to prevent behaviour problems, using praise and coaching to reinforce desired behaviours, implementing incentive systems to motivate children, managing misbehaviour through strategies like redirection and logical consequences, and teaching emotional regulation and problem-solving skills. The program employs evidence-based techniques such as video modelling, role-play, and self-reflection to help teachers apply these strategies. Teachers are encouraged to set individual goals for

themselves and their students, and to engage in ongoing consultation and coaching between sessions. Tools like compliment charts, and colour card systems are used to support behaviour regulation and promote positive classroom dynamics.

TCM has been studied for over 30 years and is generally considered to be effective (to a certain degree) in various international studies (see meta-analysis by Korest and Carlson, 2022). TCM is based on positive pedagogy and preventive action by the teacher in the classroom. Jointly agreed rules and routines, as well as praising pupils who comply with the rules, create a positive classroom atmosphere (Oliver et al., 2011). TCM has also been found to offer support for pupils with poor mental health (Ford et al., 2018) as well as supporting their social and academic competence (Rappuhn, 2014; Reinke et al., 2018). However, the use of TCM benefits all pupils in the classroom; it strengthens interaction (Tveit et al., 2020) and cooperation skills (Hyland, 2014). Furthermore, TCM enhances teacher well-being (Kennedy et al., 2014) and strengthens the teacher's professional identity and the pupil-centredness of the work (Allen et al., 2020). In Finland, TCM has been applied in practice and studied to certain extent from as early as 2010 although systematic implementation, monitoring, and support have only begun to be developed in recent years. Scientific evidence on the implementation or the effectiveness of TCM is still limited. A pilot study related to the implementation of the method in elementary schools in the city of Kokkola, Finland was carried out in 2022 (Maunula et al., 2022; Maunula et al., 2023). This qualitative pilot study concluded that TCM improved teachers' group management skills, increased and diversified collaboration between home and school, and supported teachers' well-being, in addition to strengthening the school's positive operational culture. Findings of the study were also compiled in an international research article, that highlighted the benefits of the method for classroom teachers especially from the point of positive pedagogy positive classroom management (Maunula et al., 2023).

In relation to social equity TCM offers various tools to promote equality and equity in the classroom. For example, the program promotes teachers' understanding of social problems such as uncooperativeness and inattentiveness and highlights the importance of individual incentives. It addresses systemic inequities by equipping teachers with skills to support children who may be at higher risk for behavioural challenges due to environmental stressors such as poverty or exclusion. By fostering inclusive classroom environments and strengthening home-school collaboration, TCM helps prevent peer rejection and promotes equitable access to social and academic success. The program's emphasis on emotional literacy, individualized support, and culturally responsive teaching practices contributes to a more just and supportive educational experience for all children. Additionally, the method helps in building positive relationships and trust with and within the pupils through social skills training such as role taking (Webster-Stratton, 2000).

Social equity

Classroom management seen as teachers' daily practices and value choices is closely related to social equity and socially just education. In this study, social equity is understood as an outcome that emerges when teachers are supported with practical tools such as TCM. Social equity in the context of education refers to acknowledging equalities or inequalities of educational experiences in relation to various individual factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic background or gender (Francis et al., 2017). The

way teachers perform classroom management, such as establishing and enforcing rules, in a classroom can either reinforce or challenge systems of inequality. Milner and Tenore (2010) for example, have examined classroom management in relation to social equality in diverse learning environments to a great extent. They build on the principles outlined by Weinstein et al. (2004) and promote the idea of culturally responsive classroom management that takes individual factors and differences into account. This is demonstrated for example through teachers adapting their management strategies individually or striving to understand individual motivators or ambitions.

The Finnish school system is deeply rooted in principles of social equity and inclusive teaching arrangements most evidently seen through National Core Curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). For example, the Finnish National Curriculum states that a major task of the schools includes preventing inequality and marginalisation and to promote economic, social and regional equality as well as ethical thinking and multicultural experiences. The Finnish educational policy advances an ethical and respectful attitude towards all pupils coming from various backgrounds and highlights goals related to social equity rather than focusing solely on academic achievements (Zilliacus et al., 2017). Moreover, the Finnish National Curriculum states that the societal mission of basic education is to promote equality, equity, and justice (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). In this context, examining teachers' perceptions of TCM is particularly relevant: their views reveal whether TCM provides them with practical means to align their classroom practices with these equity-oriented policy goals. Teachers' experiences can also shed light on how the method influences their sense of well-being and their contribution to a school culture that values fairness, inclusion, and respect. The TCM method contributes to this perspective by equipping teachers with strategies that promote fairness and inclusion through consistent routines, positive feedback, and individualized support. Thus, TCM can be understood as a concrete pedagogical approach that operationalises the curriculum's equity goals in everyday classroom interactions as well as in staff well-being and operational culture that supports such practices.

The present study

We set out to fill the gap in the previous research and discover how TCM has influenced the teaching staff and how it possibly promotes social equity within the Finnish classroom setting. The following research question was set:

How do teaching staff in schools perceive the impact of the TCM method on promoting social equity through their work, their well-being, and the school's operational culture?

Method and data

Participants

Participants of the study were teachers, classroom assistants and principals who worked in elementary schools in the municipality of Kokkola and who had undergone TCM training between the academic years of 2021 and 2024 ($N = 52$). Participants were recruited through a dataset consisting of the participants of TCM training. Training for the participants was organized by the municipality of Kokkola

and was funded by Iitla's and Tiina and Antti Herlin's foundation, learning networks research and innovation foundation.

The original sample consisted of all 151 participants who had undergone TCM training, 143 of these were teachers or classroom assistants and 8 were principals. Building on the positive findings from the study of the TCM pilot phase (Maunula et al., 2022; Maunula et al., 2023), the in-service training was subsequently extended to other schools within the municipality. Interest in participation was considerable, and principals determined which teachers would be given the opportunity to attend. Over time, the training has been systematically implemented on a regular basis, not only consolidating its role in professional development but also promoting more equitable access to inclusive pedagogical practices across schools. Participants were recruited by sending an invitation to take part in the study via the municipal education department's email. Eventually, 48 teachers or assistants and 4 principals completed the survey resulting in a response rate 33.6% for teachers and assistants and 50% for principals. Occupational status of the respondents is presented in Figure 1.

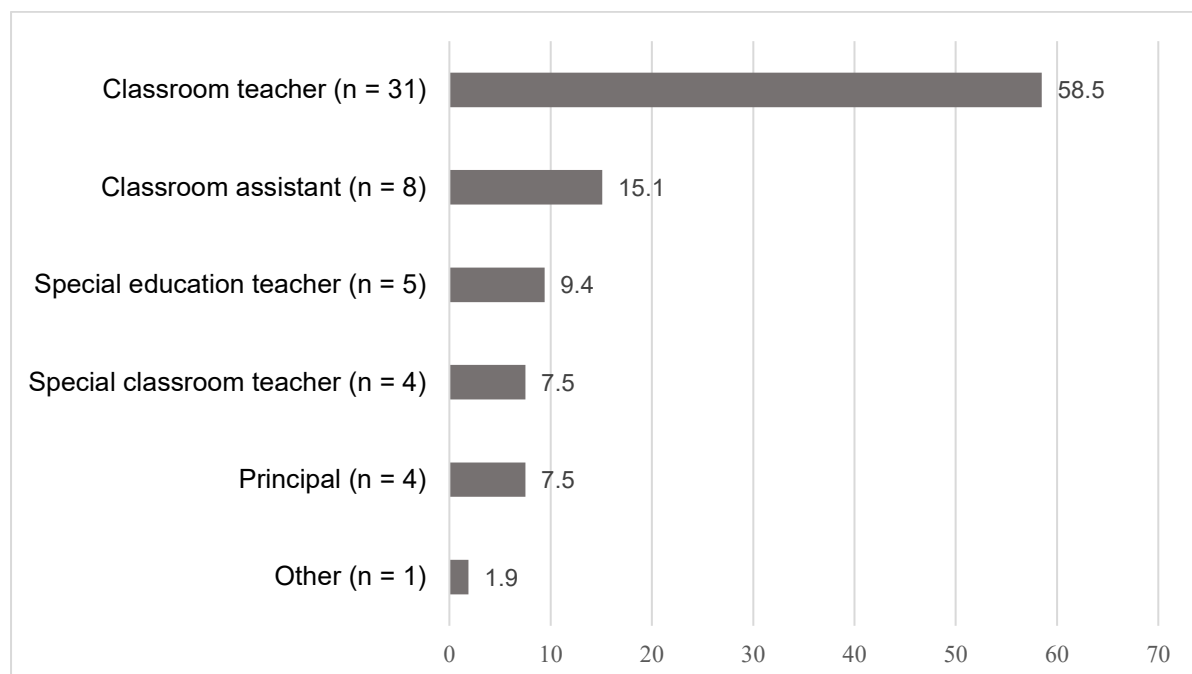


Figure 1: Relative frequency of respondents' occupational status (N = 52)

The educational background reflected occupational distribution, most common being classroom teachers' education (n = 35, 66.0%) followed by special education teachers' education (n = 9, 17%). Most of the respondents (n = 47, 90.4%) identified as women. The respondents had a fairly long working experiences in elementary schools, most common being 10 to 20 years of work experience (n = 16, 32%) while only one in seven (n = 7, 14%) had less than 5 years of work experience. Most of the respondents (n = 40, 76.9%) worked in a Finnish speaking classroom and fewer worked in Swedish speaking classes (n = 12, 23.1%). Classroom sizes varied from less than 10 (n = 10, 22.2%) to over 22 (n = 5, 11%), but most commonly between 19 and 22 (n = 21, 46.7%). Most of the classrooms included children who received intensified and special support. Only 11.1% (n = 5) of the respondents said, that there are no children who receive intensified support in their classroom and 31.1% (n = 15) who said

there are no children who receive special support. Finally, most of the respondents ($n = 28$, 52.2%) had undergone TCM training between 2023 and 2024, a third ($n = 16$, 30.2%) between 2022-2023 and the rest ($n = 9$, 17%) between 2021 and 2022.

Measures and variables

Applying TCM method in classrooms

Participants answered several closed and open-ended questions regarding applying TCM in the classroom that were divided into four topics: 1) classroom management, 2) cooperation between school and home, 3) work community and operational culture, and 4) well-being at work. These topics consisted of 1-2 measures that in turn consisted of several claims, which were answered using a 5-point scale: 1 = Completely disagree, 2 = Partly disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Partly agree, 5 = Completely agree. In some scales where part-time teachers or classroom assistants could perhaps not give a certain answer (e.g. questions regarding official communication with the parents, or rules that the respondent has set in the classroom), an option "I cannot answer" was added. All of the items in the measures were based on the open interviews of the previous qualitative study on TCM in Finland (Maunula et al., 2022).

First, classroom management was evaluated through two self-assessment scales. The first scale consisted of 11 claims regarding teachers' own behaviour in the classroom (e.g., "My negative speech or negative way of thinking towards pupils has reduced" and "I give more positive feedback to my pupils"). Reliability of this as well as subsequent scales was estimated using McDonald's omega as suggested by Hayes and Coult (2022). The scale proved to have a good reliability ($\omega = 0.801$). The second scale consisted of 8 claims and focused on pupils' behaviour in the classroom (e.g., "pupils' aggressive behaviour has reduced" and "pupils' prosocial behaviour has increased (e.g. helping or complementing other pupils or adults)"). This scale had a good reliability ($\omega = 0.816$). Participants were then asked to answer two open-ended questions, "What TCM have you found to be the most useful from the perspective of classroom management and teaching?" and "Does TCM have any deficiencies from the perspective of classroom management and teaching?". Additionally, participants were asked whether they apply TCM in their work on a regional basis.

Second, cooperation between school and home was assessed using one self-assessment scale consisting of 4 claims. Claims dealt with teachers' actions and behaviour towards homes and parents (e.g., "My communication to parents has increased"). The scales' reliability proved to be adequate ($\omega = 0.589$) however, one item ("I add more positive notes about the pupils or the class to messages that I sent to parents") was removed in order to achieve better reliability ($\omega = 0.611$). Participants were then presented with one open-ended question, "In which other ways has TCM affected cooperation between the school and homes?".

Third, work community and operation culture in the school was measured using a single self-assessment scale consisting of 5 items (e.g., "TCM has become established as part of everyday work in the community" and "TCM is useful to promote schools' operational culture"). The scale had adequate

reliability ($\omega = 0.686$). After, one open-ended question was presented “How has your school community’s operational culture developed after the introduction of TCM?”.

Lastly, well-being at work was evaluated using one self-assessment scale that consisted of 9 claims regarding participants’ well-being and experience of stress in their current occupation (e.g., “I feel less strain in my occupation than previously” and “My workload has increased after the introduction of TCM”). The scale had good reliability ($\omega = 0.714$). One open-ended question was then presented, “In which other ways has TCM affected your well-being at work?”.

Control variables

Several control variables were asked from the participants regarding their occupational status (Classroom teacher, Special education teacher, Special classroom teacher, Part-time teacher, Classroom assistant, Principal, Other), gender (Female, Male, I don’t want to answer, Other), education (Classroom teacher, Principal or Classroom assistant), work experience in elementary school (in years), language they use in their classroom (Finnish, Swedish, English or Other), number of pupils in their classroom, grade they are primarily teaching (1 – 6), number of pupils who receive intensified and special support, and the academic year when they participated in TCM training (Before 2021, 2021–2022, 2022–2023, or 2023–2024).

Analytical approach

Data was analysed using statistical methods. All quantitative analyses were conducted using the Jamovi-program (Jamovi project, 2023). As descriptive statistics, means and standard deviation were computed. Open-ended questions were analysed through qualitative content analysis and were interpreted in combination with the quantitative findings to apply methodological triangulation.

Results

Means, medians and standard deviations of the studied variables are presented in Table 1. Participants evaluated TCM to be useful especially in developing classroom management skills but means and medians were positive on all of the scales with a fairly moderate standard deviation. When comparing answers from principals and teachers, the answers were similar although the effect of TCM on the operational culture of the school seemed to be more positive in principals’ answers, but statistical significance could not be proven.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the studied variables

	Teacher’s classroom management skills	Pupils’ behaviour	Cooperation with homes	Work well-being	Operational culture
N	52	51	47	49	51
Mean	4.28	3.61	3.73	3.54	3.83
Median	4.30	3.63	3.75	3.56	3.80
Standard deviation	0.408	0.565	0.604	0.501	0.532
Minimum	3.55	2.38	2.50	1.78	2.80
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.44	5.00

Open ended questions supported the findings of the descriptive statistics. Many of the participants named positive enforcement to be the most useful tool from TCM. Using a positive tone and complimenting every child in the classroom were among the most applied methods, although some felt that if a child does not pay attention in the classroom, they might also miss the positive reinforcements given by the teacher. Some participants also felt that many of the tools that are included in the method, such as timeouts, are hard to execute in practice due to limited space and teacher resources. From a social equity perspective, these constraints are not merely practical but also risk producing unequal learning conditions, as students who need the most consistent support may receive it less reliably. Still, the overall tone of the qualitative findings was positive, most participants naming various tools they have applied in their everyday work and their perceived effectiveness. Importantly, teachers highlighted that the method promotes fairness by ensuring that every child, regardless of their behaviour or background, is acknowledged through positive interactions. One classroom teacher described that while the method does not offer direct solutions to every problem in the classroom, its main benefit is that it affects teachers' perspective and helps to position themselves through positive lens:

Although I acknowledge that I currently follow the TCM method quite extensively in my classroom, it is still restless, the pupils argue with each other daily, and they struggle with emotions and social skills. The TCM method does not eliminate these problems. However, I believe that it helps the teacher, in particular, to think more positively, to see solutions, and to 'wear rose-coloured glasses,' so it is certainly beneficial to train the teaching staff. (Classroom teacher) [translated from Swedish]

When asked about TCM application to cooperation with parents and homes, the responses were more limited, although some felt that the communication with the parents had increased after applying TCM, and they reported using communication platforms such as Wilma (school administration and communication system) more systematically. Some of the participants responded that it is easier to find common ground and set goals with the parents when applying TCM as it offers some structures and instructions that operate as a baseline for communication. Additionally, many reported having started to include more positive notions about the children and their school days in their communication with the parents more frequently. This shift toward more systematic and positive communication using various means of communication was also seen as enhancing social equity, since it ensured that families from diverse backgrounds had more equal access to school-related information and recognition of their children's achievements. By providing common structures and shared language, the method supported more balanced partnerships between teachers and parents, reducing the risk that only the most active or resourceful families would be heard. The following quote from a teacher describes how TCM has impacted parent-school cooperation through interaction and common agreements:

It has been agreed together how to handle difficult situations at home and at school by using positive strategies, such as reward systems. (Classroom teacher) [translated from Finnish]

The open-ended question regarding work well-being yielded likewise positive results although the quantitative scale had the lowest mean (3.54) and median (3.56) across the scales. The participants regarded TCM as a solution-based tool that supported their existing group management tools and increased their work well-being through a positive and more merciful way of thinking about both the

children and themselves as a teacher. Some of the participants also felt that it is easier to see the structure of their work and handle everyday pressures when they have more tools at their disposal. From a social equity perspective, the improvement in teachers' well-being is not only beneficial for staff but also crucial for students, as teachers with greater emotional resources are more capable of providing equal attention and support to children with diverse needs. In this sense, the method contributed to more equitable classroom environments by reducing stress-related barriers to inclusive teaching. One of the participating teachers gave the following response that describes how the method can be applied to identify issues in the work community while also emphasising positive attitude towards continuous professional development:

TCM highlights issues that still require time and energy to be addressed. On the other hand, the training also provided the experience that no one can do more than they are able to, and some things can still be tried. (Classroom teacher) [translated from Finnish]

Responses regarding operational culture in the schools were more diverse including positive and negative comments on the method, which supplemented the quantitative results. Some participants felt that other members of the teaching staff have a negative attitude towards continuing professional education which leads to disengaging behaviour. A more common challenge was, that in many schools some or most of other staff members had not undergone TCM training which participants saw as limiting the collegial conversations which TCM encourages. Joint discussions of group management and the method were seen as a meaningful part of applying the method in practice. This was sometimes linked to smaller school size and vice versa indicating that busy school days that are associated with larger schools were seen as hindering effective application of the method. Additionally, many responded that it is still too early to say whether the method has had any meaningful impact on operational culture due to recent participation on the method training. Some also complimented their school's operational culture to be already positive and encouraging. When interpreting the results from the lens of social equity, the uneven uptake of the training raised concerns about unequal opportunities for students across classrooms and schools. When only some teachers apply the method, children may experience varying levels of support and inclusion depending on their teacher's training background. Ensuring broader staff engagement was therefore seen as essential for creating consistent and fair learning environments. One of the participants responded as follows highlighting the importance of motivating the teaching staff when introducing tool such as TCM while also acknowledging that development-oriented community offers great support in the implementation process:

Some teachers do not see the benefits of it—perhaps their attitude towards the training was already negative from the start. However, some of the staff are truly grateful for the group. My own group of three teachers from my school was good, and the group was generally very discussion-oriented. We had many experienced adults in the group, which likely had a supportive impact on the younger teachers and facilitators in the group. It seems that the significance of the work partner or group leader's team has been meaningful. (Special education teacher) [translated from Finnish]

All in all, the qualitative data reflected and added to the descriptive quantitative findings, mainly highlighting the positive and negative aspects of TCM. Most of the responses had a positive note and emphasized the importance of trial and error when introducing new teaching methods in the classroom.

While TCM was not seen as the ultimate classroom tool, participants felt that trying and applying new methods and improving teaching is a valuable part of teacher's position. From a social equity standpoint, this openness to experimentation was considered important, as it enables teachers to adapt strategies that respond to the diverse needs of students and to reduce inequalities in classroom participation and support. In this way, professional learning through trial and error was not only framed as individual development but also as a pathway to more inclusive and fair teaching practices.

Discussion

The role of the teacher has expanded in recent years, and various societal phenomena are increasingly present in everyday classroom life, placing growing demands on teachers and affecting both their well-being and pupils' equal opportunities for learning. We set out to find how the teaching staff in schools perceive the impact of TCM on their work, well-being at work, as well as the school's operational culture and how TCM supports social equity through these advances. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that TCM is, at least to a certain extent, beneficial to the teaching staff. This included perceived benefits in terms of the individual teacher, individual pupils, the entire class, the homes and parents, and the overall school culture. This provides further evidence in favour of TCM and its usefulness for developing classroom environments that foster support and social equity while also helping teachers classroom management capabilities.

These results reinforce the evidence on the effectiveness of TCM, particularly in developing teachers' classroom management skills and promoting the use of positive pedagogy as part of classroom management. This is in line with previous research that has shown TCM to enhance teacher classroom management skills and use of classroom management strategies over time (Hayes et al., 2019; Karest and Carlson, 2022; Maunula et al., 2022). This has been studied to great extent by Rappuhn (2014), who found, that teachers who frequently apply TCM in their work use more positive (e.g., modelling positive behaviours), proactive (e.g., using problem solving strategies) and support strategies (e.g., self-reflection, stress management) while also perceiving these to be more effective, in contrast to teachers who do not use the method. Our study extends these findings to the Finnish education context.

Although teachers did not explicitly describe TCM as supporting social equity and justice, it is clear that the findings from both quantitative and qualitative data are strongly connected to these principles. Children's need for individual support was perceived as a challenge for the method in practice as participants felt it lacked the necessary tools to do so. On the other hand, many noted other factors of social equity regarding who receives attention and support from the teacher in a classroom and through which kind of behaviour. Previous studies have shown that pupils who are more active in the classroom receive more attention from the teacher (e.g., Goldberg et al., 2021; Lipowsky et al., 2007) and moreover, more active pupils are usually more competent than others (Böheim et al., 2020). Therefore, while TCM did not offer any clear support, it did direct teachers' attention to less active pupils who commonly may be the ones in need of most support (Kelly, 2008), fostering social equity in the classroom. Similar effect was previously discovered by Rappuhn (2014), who found that teachers using TCM demonstrate more sensitivity and attention towards the pupils.

In accordance with earlier research, participants in this study did not perceive the method to have a direct impact on their well-being at work or to the organisational culture in their school. For example, Hayes et al. (2019) found in their study, that TCM does not reduce the risk of burnout or improve teacher well-being. Instead, it seems that TCM is more related to the positive cycle in which positive practices in the classroom applied by the teacher reinforce positive behaviour of the pupils which in turn reflects on teacher well-being (also in Ford et al., 2019; Hayes et al., 2019). For the operational culture the effect of the method was also minimal. This was also seen in a previous study conducted in Finland, in which participants noted that the change of organisational culture is a slow process and requires more participation from the teaching staff as well as opportunities for joint discussions (Maunula et al., 2022). Moreover, this finding appeared in the final report of the pilot study, conducted by the city of Kokkola, in which participants emphasised the importance of connecting TCM to schools' shared values in order to effectively enhance the operational culture of the schools (Palosaari, 2022). This comes as no surprise, as change in the organisational culture is known to be a slow and complex process (e.g. Poole and Venn, 2004).

Lastly, a significant finding was that all the respondents, regardless of their professional status or the timing of their TCM training (which began as early as 2021), reported continuing to utilise the method in their daily work. This study adds to compiling evidence that long term and persistent use of the tools offered by TCM enhances teacher classroom management as well as promotes healthy and socially just classroom environment (e.g., Rappuhn, 2014; Hayes, 2019). Despite many respondents noting that several tools offered by the method were already used by them before the training, this suggests that the method has both a theoretical and practical basis to be applied in everyday work in the school context.

The results presented add to the evidence that TCM could be an effective tool to tackle behavioural and other issues in the classrooms that call for classroom management skills. The observed improvements in teachers' use of positive, proactive, and supportive strategies indicate that the method has the potential to shift pedagogical practices towards a more constructive and inclusive approach. Moreover, introduction of TCM in early onset of teacher training could prove useful to emphasize practical approach of classroom management. Early exposure to evidence-based strategies such as the TCM would equip pre-service teachers with practical tools for fostering inclusive learning environments and managing diverse classroom behaviours. Furthermore, the method's promotion of equity—through its emphasis on attending to less active and/or overlooked pupils—suggests it is a potential tool for supporting inclusive pedagogy. From a policy perspective, the results indicate that the use of TCM across education personnel would be beneficial in everyday school settings. The results highlight the importance of long-term professional development that supports teachers' and principals' existing skills while offering clear tools for improvement. However, the limited impact on school culture and teacher well-being suggests that classroom-level interventions alone are not enough. To support lasting and impactful change, school leaders should combine methods like TCM with broader whole-school approaches that encourage collaboration, shared values, and open discussion among staff.

Limitations

When interpreting these findings, some limitations should be considered. First, the response rate was relatively low, especially for the teachers and the classroom assistants, an issue commonly encountered in survey research (see Wu et al., 2022). As a result, the sample may not be fully representative of the broader population of teaching staff. Furthermore, it is possible that individuals who chose to participate were more motivated or interested in TCM, which may have introduced self-selection bias influencing the overall findings. Second, partly due to the response rate, the sample size in general was small, which should be noted when applying the results nationally or internationally. Third, individual experiences were assessed using self-report measures, which are inherently susceptible to subjective biases. These may include social desirability bias or participants' tendencies to respond in ways they perceive as favourable or expected.

Further research

The findings presented in combination with the previous studies leave room for further research. A large-scale study on the practical implications of TCM in a Finnish context is still missing to date. This would enable the comparison of different respondent groups, (e.g., occupational status or school districts), to map out who benefits the most from the method and how the method should be effectively applied. Moreover, the use of validated scales to evaluate the work well-being of the teaching staff or organisational culture in schools in combination with assessment of TCM, could yield more repeatable and comparable results. Yet another contemporary topic is social equity in relation to individual needs of support that is widely neglected in current educational research.

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