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“The most respected teachers in the world”? Media representations of the Finnish teacher in treacherous times

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This study investigates how different types of teachers are represented and constructed in television fiction. Previous research indicates that fiction is as powerful as non-fiction in shaping and changing peoples' attitudes, beliefs and opinions. In Finland, the context of this study, there have been many teacher characters in literature, TV and movies and, despite their esteemed status in society, their representation has been mainly negative. Motivated by the current 'treacherous' changes in Finnish education (introduction of a new core curriculum, problems of discipline, increasing number of dropouts and marginalized youth), we examine how a recent and popular Finnish TV-series centered on a school, display these societal issues and, at the same time, portray different facets of teacherhood. The main concept used as a tool for analysing the TV-series is *representation* while content and discourse analyses serve as analytical frameworks. The results of this study show that two main subsets of teachers are present in the TV series: *art teachers* vs. *teachers in general*. Compared to the traditional representation of teachers the art teacher is constructed as more positive and as some sort of independent warrior teacher. Yet her representations tend to be not only one-sided but also caricatures, which puts into question the respect and appreciation of teachers in Finnish society.

Keywords: Finnish education, media representation, teachers, TV series

Tämä tutkimus selvittää miten erilaisia opettajatyyppejä representoidaan ja rakennetaan fiktiivisessä televisiosarjassa. Aiemmat tutkimukset osoittavat, että fiktio on yhtä vaikuttava kuin ei-fiktio muodostamaan ja muuttamaan ihmisten asenteita, uskomuksia ja mielipiteitä asioista. Suomessa, joka on tämän tutkimuksen konteksti, on ollut paljon opettajahahmoja kirjallisuudessa, TV:ssä ja elokuvissa. Huolimatta opettajien korkeasta yhteiskunnallisesta asemasta

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representaatio on ollut pääosin negatiivissävytteinen. Koulujärjestelmään viime aikoina kohdistuneiden 'haastavien' muutosten (uusi POPS, järjestysongelmat kouluissa, pudokkaiden kasvava määrä ja syrjäytyminen) valossa tarkastelemme kuinka tuoreessa kouluun sijoittuvassa TV-sarjassa esitetään näitä yhteiskunnallisia asioita. Toiseksi tarkastelemme millaisia muotoja opettajuudelle sarjassa luodaan. Tärkeimpänä työkaluna käytämme *representaation* käsitettä, jota tutkitaan sisältö- ja diskurssianalyysin viitekehyksissä. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että sarjassa esitetään kaksi opettajuuden alatyyppejä: *taideopettajat vs. opettajat yleensä*. Verrattuna perinteiseen opettajarepresentaatioon taideopettajat rakennetaan positiivisemmin ja eräänlaisina itsenäisinä taistelijaopettajahahmoina. Heidän representaationsa on kuitenkin yksipuoleinen ja jopa karikatyyrimäinen, joka kyseenalaistaa opettajien arvostuksen ja kunnioituksen suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa.

Introduction

According to the global 'guru' and the best 'marketer' of Finnish education, Pasi Sahlberg (2011: 24), "In Finnish society, the teaching profession has always enjoyed great public respect and appreciation." This article examines how what could thus be labeled as the "most respected teachers in the world" are portrayed in a TV-series about life in a Finnish school. The reader might be surprised to find an article about Finnish teachers in this special issue of *IJE4D* about diversities in education. It is a well-known fact that the diversity of the teaching body in the Nordic country is far from diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and language (Dervin, 2014). Yet Finnish teachers are diverse if one considers that identity markers such as gender, worldview, class, regional origins and dialects, also count as signs of diversities. As we shall see all the characters from the TV-series under review are white but the way these teachers are depicted reveals different facets and diversity of teacherhood in Finland.

In 2014, the weekly magazine of the *Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö OAJ*, the Finnish Trade Union of Education, published an article about the influence of fictional teachers on teachers themselves. Called "Fictional colleagues", the piece presents short interviews of Finnish teachers discussing their admiration for many and varied teacher characters in books and films such as Jane Eyre, Maria von Trapp from *The Sound of Music*, and Ilona Niskavuori from Hella Wuolijoki's *Niskavuori* series. One art teacher commented on a character, Asko Haavisto, from the TV-series under review in this article, *Uusi Päivä* (New Day, 2010-): "Asko represents in a sense my own ideal as a teacher: he seeks to combine a traditional teacher's attitude to modern methods" (OAJ Magazine).

Starting from the hypothesis that fictional teacher characters are societally significant and very powerful in affecting people's attitudes, opinions and beliefs as much as non-fictional ones (Green, Garst & Brock, 2003: 174), we study the representations of teachers in the aforementioned Finnish TV-series, a family drama-comedy which premiered in 2010 and was in its fifth season at the time of writing. Broadcasted three times a week the series is quite popular in Finland; the producers estimate that it has a weekly average of about 700,000 viewers (*Uusi päivä*, Website,

2012; total population of Finland: around 5 million inhabitants). *Uusi päivä* is targeted at the whole family but the audience is mostly under 18. The series is situated in the imaginary small town of Virtaus in contemporary Finland and deals with the everyday life of a high school specialized in literature and the arts.

Our study is original in the sense that it concentrates on a TV-series whereas previous studies have looked at Finnish films and literature (Kujala, 2007; Nygren, 2007; Stenval, 1991; Holopainen, 1997). We examine how teachers are portrayed in the programme and how they are related to media and societal discourses on education in Finland – and, in a sense, to discourses from other geographical spaces as Finland herself cannot be immune from global constructions of teacherhood and education. As asserted by Sahlberg at the beginning of this introduction, Finnish teachers are appreciated and respected, while e.g. in many other European countries the teaching profession is not always valued. In his study on the development of teachers' role in Finnish society Rantala (2005) notes that teachers used to be referred to as “kansankynttilä” (“the candle of the nation”), “giving light” (i.e. wisdom) to the people until the 50s. The scholar also argues (ibid.) that teacherhood shifted after the 1950s from a *call of duty* to just a *profession* and that teachers then lost their status as change-makers. In a similar vein Luukkainen (2004: 160-162) describes shifts in the way Finnish teachers have been described from “candles of the Nation” (1960s), good didacticians (70s), experts (80s), reflective researchers (90s) to societal influential figures/educators (2000s).

Kellner (1998: 66) suggests looking at how the media portray ongoing societal struggles to see whether they reflect dominant ideologies and representations. School reforms, the new national core curriculum of 2016, increasing marginalization and discipline issues were the current educational topics in the Finnish media while *Uusi päivä* was under production. How much of these ‘teacherous’ issues are discussed in the series and how do they get enmeshed in the way teachers are represented in the TV-series?

Representation as a Tool to Study Teacherhood in Media Productions

Representation is a wide interdisciplinary concept which is used in many fields such as sociology, psychology, and politics, amongst others. In all these fields representation has a semiotic meaning, standing for something else. Hall argues that representations connect language and meaning to culture (Hall, 1999: 15). He defines representations as the “production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language” (Hall, 1999: 17) – language referring here to words and utterances but also to anything used to transfer meaning: sounds, images, facial expressions and even clothes (Hall, ibid.: 17-19). Representations can refer to “real” or fictional objects, people or ideas. In cultural studies as well as in postcolonial studies representations relate to the important keywords of ideologies and power.

Belonging to the same ‘culture’ or society means that people can make sense or interpret the world roughly the same way (Hall, ibid.). In times of accelerated globalization likes ours, meanings, attitudes and opinions cross national boundaries through intercultural encounters and global media productions quicker than ever, which makes discerning ‘local’ vs. ‘global’ representations difficult. When people

communicate, they negotiate and co-construct representations, and formulate them by using signs, i.e. small units of language (words, concepts, images), coded with meanings. People decode the signs in their own ways while at the same time they try to produce meaning by connecting them with others (Hall, 1999: 19). Objectively there is not one fixed way of perceiving e.g. *a teacher* or what *teacherhood* entails yet people will share mental constructs of these elements (the way a teacher should speak, dress, behave, etc.), influenced by their common history, environment, discourses and cultural productions such as films and novels, often across national borders.

The relation between representations and reality is complex. When decoding a text (a TV-series in this article) the audience can consider them as truth and 1) accept the 'hegemonic stand' they provide, 2) negotiate or even 3) resist the representations that they provide them with (Hall, 1992: 145). In this article we are not interested in if and how the viewers struggle with these questions. Instead we consider what is occurring in the TV-series, and the ensuing representations about teacherhood and education, from a socio-constructionist point of view within specific historical, cultural and social contexts – i.e. Finland in 2014. At the same time we consider the dominant ideologies 'hidden' in the representations we shall identify in the TV-series (Kellner, 1998: 11). From a critical point of view it is important to make these representations visible in order to show the inequalities and hegemonic motives behind them (Kellner, 1998: 34). To reveal the power structures in a TV-series one should look at how it portrays the already existing societal struggles through representations of people, ideas and 'things' (Kellner, 1998: 66).

Representations of Teachers in Finland and Elsewhere

Internationally teachers and/or mentors have been popular characters in the cinema industry since its beginning. In her diachronic study of teachers in Hollywood films Dalton (2010) explains that teachers are "little men" who remain alone and take transformative action while leaving the institutions unchanged. They may question things but they still do not shake the *status quo* (Dalton, 2010: 20). Teachers in the English-speaking worlds are also often portrayed as heroes: They save children from drugs, violence, their abusive families and other types of problems (Ayers, 1993: 149). Scanlon (2011: 123) calls these representations "warrior chiefs" who are radical authoritarians showcasing narcissism, directedness and controlling. Heroic representations tend to show the teacher's work as innate skills and not knowledge-based. Scanlon (ibid.: 122) explains that "Like the 'good' woman, the 'good' teacher is positioned as self-sacrificing, kind, overworked, underpaid and with unlimited patience". Negative representations of teachers can also hint at the deep-rooted social distrust of teachers (Dalton, 2010; Scanlon, 2011).

Teacher characters have also been casted in Finnish films (Kujala, 2005; Nygren, 2007). Kujala (2005) has studied 11 movies from the years 1938 to 2002, comparing male teachers' life stories. Kujala (2005) argues that male teachers have been portrayed in films mostly as strict discipline keepers and conservative figures. Generally speaking the representations are stereotypically either good or bad. Finnish films also seem to punish teachers who are breaking the traditional norms of the school

or society. Kujala (2005: 241) asserts that Finnish films tend to reflect common discourses about schools in the media.

In another study Nygren (2005) focuses on the representations of teachers' physical and mental characteristics. As such female and male teachers are portrayed in slightly different ways. Nygren (2007) found that female teachers are shown wearing a long skirt and having their hair carefully arranged. Psychologically they are mother-like or dictator-like. According to the same scholar (2007: 61) male teachers are shown either as being untidy or old-fashioned; uptight commanders or smiling helpers. Female teachers instead are portrayed as weaker individuals who have problems in maintaining morality and their character (Kujala, 2007: 149-150). Even though there are differences between how males and females are depicted in Finnish films the age appears to be a bigger factor in the representations of their relationships with students. Younger teachers represent a more positive and novel way of thinking and older generations more conservative and authoritarian (Kujala, 2007: 161).

Finally, in Finnish literature there have been teacher characters since the first novels were published in the language. According to Silventoinen (2008) 57 Finnish novels have had teacher characters. The very first novel written in Finnish, Aleksis Kivi's (1870) *Seitsemän veljestä* (Seven brothers), has an important teacher character who is a merciless authority that the main characters hate and rebel against. In some novels different categories of teachers have been identified based on how willing they are to change the system (Silventoinen, *ibid.*).

This short review of how teachers have been portrayed in films and fiction shows that diachronically and synchronically there has been a diversity of teachers' characteristics and representations.

Research Method and Data

The qualitative approach in this study is a combination of both content and discourse analyses. We used content analysis at the beginning of the research to categorize the conversations between teachers and other characters in the series (Krippendorf, 1989). Content analysis is the starting point of the study to find larger themes and discourses and then to do a more in-depth analysis of how the representations of teachers are constructed by means of approaches from discourse analysis (see Gee, 2010). Amongst others, we used speech act categorization (Austin, 1962: 98-100) to gain information about the characters, their interaction with others and their relationships with their students. A speech act is an utterance that has performative function in language and communication. For example *promising, greeting, congratulating* represent speech acts.

The data examined here is composed of five episodes from the third season (2012) of *Uusi päivä* (episodes 225-230). We have divided up each episode into scenes, retaining those including teachers only. The 82 scenes that we have selected each represent an action in a single location and continuous time. Altogether the data consists of approximately 135 minutes of video material (one episode is 25-30 minutes long), plus the descriptions of the characters on the website. Unfortunately we were unable to determine if the website was written by the same production team.

Nevertheless we feel that the character presentations function as important paratexts to the TV-series itself and thus deserve analysing.

Uusi päivä is a special TV-series because of the way the producers use social media to connect with their audience in many ways and to make the TV-series 'real'. They have even created Facebook profiles for some of the characters and asked fans to give their opinion on how they want the series to continue. One of the characters is also hosting a 'real' radio-show in Finland, acting as the same character as in the series.

We chose the five episodes under review because of the clear intertextuality with current and similar events related to education in Finnish society at the time of writing. The major theme is a demonstration organized by some teachers and students against school reforms and especially against the 'treacherous' merger of two schools into a 'grand' high school. The episodes also concentrate on conflicts amongst the school staff and the students. The titles of the five episodes are very interesting as they make reference to e.g. a Finnish communist song from the 1970s (*In whose troops are you fighting*); a love song about divorce from the 1960s (*Now it is enough*); or a citation from a popular song by *Irwin*, a popular protest singer, in which he states that the whole government should be sacked because they only impose taxes and the political "*thing feels reckless*". Through these titles the tone of the episodes is set against a climate of societal and personal upheaval.

Analysis

Meeting the Cast of Teachers

In the five episodes analysed here there are eight teacher characters. Four of them are seen more than once speaking. They are all white, heterosexual, of Finnish origins and they appear to be between 20 to 50 years old (their ages are not mentioned). In what follows we propose a review of how the characters are presented on the TV-series website, bearing in mind that each portrait contributes to creating certain images and ideologies around these teacher characters. The main character is the principal of the school, Asko. Then the most prominent teachers are Marika, Lissu and Aleksi. The other teachers, who seldom appear in the scenes, are not even named on the website and during the five episodes.

Asko is described with positive attributes such as *energetic*, *caring* and *loving*. He has a speaking role in 29 scenes and is shown mostly in the school, at home or on the way to either. The website mentions that quarrels are solved fast in Asko's family. This is mentioned only in his web-profile but not for the other family members; it thus gives the impression that he is the one solving the problems. In the five episodes Asko is the only teacher who deals with discipline problems. He appears first to be demanding and not willing to compromise. However his solution-seeking characteristics emerge in one of the episodes when Asko approaches a 'hooligan' student, Jimi, who threw toilet paper rolls at officials during the demonstration. Asko makes the boy stand in front of all the other students in his classroom and preaches about freedom of speech and freedom to protest against the school merger plan but he makes it clear that he did not think that throwing toilet paper was appropriate. Asko also uses his power in the series and sometimes threatens students to act in a certain way or else they would get

punished. He is also described as a person who takes his work very personally. In a scene, at the beginning of episode 226, he is in bed with his wife complaining about the fact that he was not able to sleep because he was thinking about the creative/arts students and teachers during the night. He is thus described as a reasonable person who is the solution-seeker for both his family and the school. In the different categories of teachers that the TV-series introduces (see below) he is a representative of the subset of 'teachers in general' *par excellence*.

The second character mentioned on the website is Lisbeth (Lissu) Kanerva, who is one of the two art teachers. She appears in 19 scenes during these five episodes. She is seen on the street going to or from the school, in the teachers' common room, a classroom, the cafeteria, the school gym, the studio, a student house, and the principal's office. She is shown teaching students only once but that is only related to the organization of the demonstration. It is important to note at this stage that in general in the TV-series teachers are very rarely shown teaching. This young-minded and outgoing female teacher is always called by her nickname Lissu. She wears colorful and fashionable clothes and befriends her students, with whom she has a band. Lissu is the main proponent of the demonstration against the reforms and the 'grand' high school, together with another character, Marika (see below). She refers to the demonstration using words such as 'the struggle' or 'war'. Others actually call her the 'rebellion queen'. She even creates a slogan for the demonstration: "Art is love!". This action seems to correlate with her 'fast' and impulsive personality.

The next character is Marika Ruuskanen, who is also an artist. Marika has a speaking role in 24 scenes. She is characterized with neuroticism and sensitivity, which often are presented as characteristics of artists (see Freud according to Wollheim, 1975: 155). Because of her instability she needs her husband to calm her down. Thus she is not an independently sane person, compared to e.g. Asko who loves his family and is overprotective (see above). Her husband has a strong influence on her way of thinking. After the demonstration he is angry with her and lets her know that her behavior wasn't decent enough – for a teacher. Marika changes her mind and refuses to further participate in the 'struggle'. After talking with her husband, Marika claims that she has been manipulated to participate in the demonstration. Yet later on she changes her mind again and continues the 'struggle'. Just like the previous character Marika is a character that is portrayed as being instable; thus certain distrust towards her actions is constructed. In Marika's description on the website her zodiac sign is also mentioned - which is not the case of Asko's or Lissu's profiles. This may suggest again that Marika is an irrational individual.

The final profile on the website is that of Aleksi Ruuskanen, a popular and charismatic character. Aleksi appears in 16 scenes. He is so charismatic that a student falls in love with him. He is said to "despise business" but at the same time he is also a "company man by nature" and manager of the school band. He thus appears to be a very contradictory character. Aleksi is a young man who works in the high school but only gives some courses on radio broadcasting. He does not work fulltime and does not appear to be very committed because, in one of the episodes under review, he tells the principal that he might quit the job. Aleksi does not participate much in the protests and Lissu puts pressure on him to get involved. He can be seen as a solo freelance teacher,

which is a rare representation of teachers in the Finnish context. Similarities might be seen in the film character of the substitute teacher as analysed by Kujala (2007).

Artists and Rationalists – Representations of Teachers in Uusi päivä

As can be noted in the previous section, different teacher profiles are presented on the TV-series website. According to Hall (1999) representations are constructed through differentiation. It is clear that as a product to ‘sell’, the TV-series production team has constructed the characters to act and talk in a certain way and thus to create intertextuality in the viewers’ mind (Mckee, 1997: 100). During the episodes under review the juxtaposition between the subset of teachers in general/rationalist and art teachers is highly visible. Two teachers stand out between these two categories, the ‘freelancers’: Alekski, the radio-broadcasting teacher presented in the previous section, and Ilona, who is a teacher of journalism.

The representations that have been formulated in the aforementioned web-profiles come to action during the demonstration and events against the school fusion. The art teachers promote an anti-reformist movement and are the brains and engine behind all the actions. By playing the role of anti-reformists they want to maintain the current state of affairs. Conversely the principal and the subset of teachers in general are reformists because they are willing to change. These representations already exist in Finnish teacher literature (Silventoinen, 2011) where teachers are often portrayed either as either reformists or conservatives (Dalton, 2010). Interestingly enough the arts teachers represent the latter category although the general belief about such teachers in the Finnish context (and probably elsewhere) is that they are ‘future-oriented’.

The art teachers are defined in their profiles through adjectives like *joy*, *love*, *cheerfulness* and *relaxed atmosphere*. The representation of the art teachers is more of a construction of artists as teachers than the contrary. These teachers also combine certain characteristics such as instability, a lack of rationality, emotionality, creativity, and neuroticism. We argue that these characteristics turn the art teachers into “others” and decrease their credibility as reliable professionals. Art teachers have not been portrayed in Finnish films before this TV-series. On the contrary, internationally inspiring art teachers are found in films such as *Dead poets’ society* (poetry teacher) and *Mona Lisa smile* (art history teacher) (Ellsmore, 2005; Dalton, 2010).

One (negative) representation of the art teachers that is constructed relates to them not always being capable of dealing with their job. The following excerpt illustrates this point:

Excerpt 1 – A discussion between Timo (T) and his wife Marika (M)

T: Have there been more comments about the demonstration?

M: It is enough that they are taking the issue forward.

T: Sure. The crayfish party was organized for nothing because you guys lost control.

M: But the party was nice.

T: Yes, yes, but that rampage was really bad taste.

M: Well, I guess so.

T: Well what else could you expect from a pop singer?

M: It was Lissu's idea...

T: That's exactly what I mean. You didn't think so much what is wise and constructive. Then you took everyone with you. Also your reputation and work are at stake. With this the supporters of the high school got a cliché example of how artists are as teachers. Thanks to Lissu Kanerva.

In this excerpt Marika is talking with her husband after the demonstration. The husband sees the demonstration as a bad thing and relates it to the characteristics of the organizers, especially the other teacher, Lissu. His reference to the "cliché example of how artists are as teachers" hints at the lack of wisdom, control and constructive mind that he accuses his wife of. As a consequence of talking with her husband Marika changes her mind about the demonstration and decides not to take part in the "struggle". Marika and Lissu turn against each other and intend to do it publicly by giving a statement in a magazine. External guidance and mediation are thus needed to get the teachers back together. Their students then play the role of solution-makers. One of them takes control and gets the art teachers to find a solution: "Honored teachers! Blaming each other doesn't help anyone". The student seems to remind them of their position by saying *honored teachers*, meaning that they should behave like ones.

The demonstration is often talked about in negative terms and deemed inappropriate on many occasions. Even the subset of 'teachers in general' gets judged because of the events. The principal, who is for the fusion between the schools, has to 'pay' for the misbehaviours from both students and teachers on a few occasions. For example during a visit from the city council members, a demonstration breaks out and a young boy (Jimi) throws toilet paper rolls towards them. In the next excerpt the principal is talking with a city council member who is upset about what happened.

Excerpt 2 – Asko, the principal, talking to a city council member

C: How couldn't you keep your subordinates and a couple of students in order?

A: I'm sorry but the people of the high school do have a right to show their opinion.

C: You made this possible.

A: That thrower isn't from our school.

C: It was pure vandalism.

A: Yes, yes.

C: Unfortunately this opening is going to be remembered... I mean also considering your future.

In this excerpt power differentials are negotiated between the principal and the council member. The latter chooses to use the words "a couple of" to underestimate the demonstrators' significance. Interestingly other characters in the TV-series have a similar reaction towards what happened in the demonstration and call it "banal", "negative fuss", "a proper show", "a trick", "rage", "bad taste". All these different ways of referring to the demonstration can be seen as situated meanings, which emerge from the context and past experiences (Gee, 1999: 46). As such, in the Finnish media conversations about demonstrations often hint at vandalism. This relates the TV-series

to dominant discourses (Gee, 1999). Asko's reaction is slightly contradictory: first he apologizes and then protects the demonstrators by stating that they have a right to show their opinion. This again adds to the precariousness of the situation in such 'treacherous' times.

The anti-reformist movement is doomed to lose in the TV-series. In Finnish representations of teachers, these professionals do not rebel against the system (Luukkainen, 2004; Simola, 1995; Rantala, 2005; Kansanen (ed.), 2000). The art teachers, who are the anti-reformists, organize what they consider to be "a proper demonstration" but it fails both in its reliability and as a relevant change-making event. The cultural model of old-fashioned demonstration is denigrated throughout the plot and the way people talk about it. The reasons to demonstrate are also depicted as naïve – see childish: the slogan that the teachers stand for is the 'irrational' "Art is love!". Furthermore in the demonstration the most important issue is "are you having a good time?" – a question that one of the art teachers, Marika, shouts in a megaphone.

As a consequence of the "negative fuss" of the demonstration, the teachers in general show disapproval of their colleagues' bad behavior and spell out what should have been appropriate: "One can put things forward in an appropriate way also", says a secondary teacher character whose name is not even mentioned in the TV-series. This appropriate way is not explicated but what happened during the demonstration is generally depicted as inappropriate when most of the teachers are in the teachers' room, having a conversation about it. The 'teachers in general' seem to be taking a rationalist position, unlike the art teachers: "It would have been more convincing without toilet paper", one of them asserts. Finally, it is interesting to note that in the five episodes the subset of teachers in general/rationalist teachers are shown working in classrooms or in their offices more than the art teachers who seem to be spending time around the school and minding things that are not related to actual teaching.

Teacher-Student Relationships

The identity of a teacher is always created through the presence of students. The TV-series makes no exception in that sense. The 'teachers in general' are clearly the ones that are disliked and criticized by the students while the art teachers are well appreciated. However the general teacher-student relationships appear to be unusual in *Uusi päivä* as the teachers spend a lot of their free time with students. The principal himself has an ally among the students. The teachers and students appear to be depicted as equal unlike most of the representations in Finnish films (Kujala, 2007, Nygren 2007).

The teachers appear in 82 scenes in which they have a speaking role in the five episodes. Out of these scenes they talk to students in 30 of them. A scene corresponds to a specific sequence in the TV-series; a shift between scenes happens when the topic, location and characters change. In some of the scenes the teachers use many speech act verbs, thus each scene can contain more than one speech act. According to our categorization of the speech acts in the episodes (see table below) teachers make statements when talking to students. By stating we consider opinions and phrases that do not require direct responses. Secondly teachers ask questions to students related to the demonstration and only once in relation to school tasks. Advising, thanking,

protesting and ordering are dedicated to students in half of the cases. Few promises are addressed to the students.

Speech act categorization	Ask o		Lisu		Marika		Aleksi		Total	/int*
	/int*		/int*		/int*		/int*			
Order	7	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	8	3
Advise	2	1	3	2	1	0	1	1	7	4
Promise	3	0	2	1	0	0	3	1	8	2
State	5	2	11	3	10	1	5	3	31	9
Ask	7	3	8	2	7	7	3	0	25	12
Thank	5	4	0	0	5	2	1	0	11	6
Protest	1	0	2	1	4	2	1	0	8	3
Total * /int= Speech acts in interaction with students		12		9		13		5	88	39

Table 1 Teachers' interactions classified as speech act categories

The teachers in *Uusi päivä* mostly state while they are speaking. In stating there is no direct expectation of a response from the other interlocutor: it is a kind of unidirectional message. But keeping in mind that most of the interaction happens outside teaching situations as the art teachers are not represented in their 'teaching position', the perspective changes.

In what follows we examine the interactions between the students and the 'teachers in general'. The principal, Asko, is the discipline keeper in the school. Although school discipline problems have been discussed in the Finnish media, in the series, discipline is not a real issue in the school. The question of discipline is crystalized in one student who is depicted as a 'hooligan'. Instead of portraying the general situation in the school, the young boy, who is the classical "rebel without a cause" and who even looks like James Dean with a leather jacket, jeans and 60s hairstyle, is blamed. In a way he seems to be the representative of the current discourse about discipline problems in Finnish society. The explanation given about the cause of the boy's discipline problems is that he is very clever and dissatisfied with the whole school system. The viewers are even told that he is the son of a 'good' family. Compared to how discipline or behavioral problems are understood in research, this way of explaining does not blame the society, school, family but the individual (Hänninen, 2011; Holopainen, 2009). Jimi's behavior appears to be driven by his own temper. Asko is the teacher who is mostly in contact with him. Every time it has to do with negative feedback: he preaches and gives orders to the boy. When Asko finds out that Jimi is actually good in school he changes his way of speaking and starts to say that his grades are convincing but if his actions harm the school, good grades will not help him. With other students Asko has a more formal relationship. As mentioned earlier Asko uses a boy called Tomi as an ally in the school reform issue. Asko supports Tomi

and wants him to give a speech in the school opening ceremony. Later on Asko thanks Tomi for his support in the ‘grand’ high school issue. Asko thanks (4 times) and orders (2 times) the students the most in the episodes.

The only time another ‘normal’ teacher, a Swedish language teacher, speaks is at the end of her language lesson. She is standing in front of the class. The students are chatting during the lesson and the teacher interrupts them by testing their knowledge in Swedish. This teacher’s role appears thus to be traditional. She is teaching at the front of the class and the students should be paying attention to her.

We now move on to the art teachers interacting with the students. While Asko interacts with the student 12 times out of 29 scenes, Marika does 13 out of 24 and Lissu 9 out of 19. The art teachers are thus relatively more in interaction with the students. They ask and state in front of the students. Their ways of instructing them are indirect – unlike Asko who gives direct instructions. For example Lissu gives instructions to a class this way: “If we’d just stick with the writing instead of drawing so the others will understand us as well.” “If we’d” is not a direct message but requires reading between the lines. Interaction between the art teachers and students is less formal and happens in cafeterias, music studios, commonrooms and on the street. Communication is friendly and informal. This kind of outside teaching time dedication is not unfamiliar in teacher films (Scanlon, 2011). Yet as seen earlier, the students sometimes play the rational beings with the art teachers. For example in the following excerpt a student (St) tries to convince a teacher, Marika, to continue fighting with them against the fusion:

Excerpt 3 – Interaction between Marika and a student

St: Marika!

M: Hello. What?

St: What are you doing this evening?

M: What for?

St: We should think of how to continue with the war.

M: Hey...

St: The demonstration was...

M: Fiasco. I no longer see myself in these barricades. Sorry!

St: Ah. No... Hey!

We need you. You got power, flames.

M: Flames?

St: At six o’clock in the student house

M: I didn’t say I’m coming!

St: You will save us. See you.

One final aspect of interaction between the art teachers and the students is the fact that there is sexual tension between some of them. First of all there is Alekski (the freelancer), who is involved with a female student. Alekski’s age is not mentioned but a relationship between a teacher and a student, being a high school student, is quite exceptional and taboo in Finland. In *Uusi päivä*, Alekski starts to doubt the decency of his actions after having kissed the student. He talks to a friend about the meaning of having a relationship with a colleague – camouflaging his involvement with a student.

Excerpt 4 – Aleksi (A1) talking to a friend (F)

A1: Hey. How... How is it like to have a relationship with a colleague?

F: Well... At first it was a little bit difficult when we were thinking about what people will say cause we are from two floors.

A1: What did they say then?

F: Nothing. Nobody has authority to criticize others relationships.

A1: You are right. If there is for example age difference it doesn't matter.

F: Me and Lissu, we didn't have a problem with that.

A1: I wasn't talking about Lissu.

F: Who were you talking about then?

A1: In general.

F: It is a waste of time to think of what others speak. It is a waste of energy.

A1: We only live once.

Through the discussion with his friend, Aleksi agrees that no one has the right to criticize others' relationships even if there is an age difference. Aleksi claims that he is talking "in general" but it is obvious that he is reflecting on his relationship with the student. This issue of teachers' demand for decency and exemplar moral behavior is strong in the tradition of filmic representations (Ellsmore 2011; Kujala, 2007). In *Uusi päivä* male students also show sexual interests in female teachers. One of teacher characters (Ilona), who has very few lines, is portrayed as an attractive woman. Male students gossip about the teacher saying that she is "women's magazine material". One of them even goes speechless when Ilona is introduced to him. The attraction is obvious. Students treating teachers as sexual objects in their speech is something that has been noted earlier in Finnish films. Nygren (2007: 51-55) calls this type of teachers "Boys' first crush".

Conclusion

Let us go back to P. Sahlberg's somewhat distorted reality of Finnish teachers at the beginning of this article: "In Finnish society, the teaching profession has always enjoyed great public respect and appreciation." Our study indicates that this representation of Finnish teachers is somehow contradictory and simplistic. Teachers are constructed mostly positively by the TV-series directors yet three opposed representations (subsets) can be identified: the art teachers, the 'teachers in general' and the freelancers. The former remind us more of charismatic teachers, heroes or warrior chiefs (Dalton, 2010; Dalton, 1995; Ayers, 1993; Scanlon, 2011, Ellsmore 2005) – although characters such as Marika and Lissu are constructed as caricatures because they tend to lose their temper and need to be instructed by their students and family. On the other hand the 'teachers in general' are rather negative because they are rebelled against and they are giving traditional teaching that makes students talk during their lessons and lose their concentration. The representation of the art teachers moves away entirely from teaching. As such they do not teach at all but have leisure time activities with the students (dancing projects and gigs) but they never teach an actual class. Teaching is left to the 'teachers in general'.

These representations of the ‘teachers in general’ and the art teachers might actually do a disservice to the teaching profession in Finland, ingraining new ideologies and negative views in the viewers’ brain. Many scholars have demonstrated that, generally speaking, TV-series have an impact on people’s views on people (Scanlon, 2011; Kellner, 1998; Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Green, Garst & Brock, 2003). By giving too much importance to the subset of ‘teachers in general’ – and let them win the battle of rationalism and reforms – the TV-series might be sending a wrong message about other kinds of teachers, which we might call ‘diverse teachers’. Finally the ‘whiteness’ of the representations of teachers in the Finnish context may also be detrimental to the visibility and empowerment of the increasing number of foreign-migrant teachers in the Nordic country.

Although the way teachers are depicted is caricatured in the TV-series there is also some ‘truth’ in the analysed episodes. Current societal discussions about ‘treacherous’ issues concerning Finnish education (that are largely ignored by or unknown to the proponents of Finnish education worldwide) are somewhat problematized in the TV-series: discipline issues in schools, the significance of art education, the need for school reforms and cuts leading to school mergers. It would be interesting, in a future study, to examine how certain groups of viewers and/or followers of this very popular TV-series view its similarities and differences with the ‘reality’ and if and how they feel it has helped them to create their own opinions about educational matters in Finland.

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