

Thematic Article



Development of teacher education in Finland 1945-2015

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Abstract

This paper examines how Finnish teacher education has altered from The Second World War to the present. Our approach is historical and chronological, although our analysis is based on sociological descriptions. We have concentrated on the turning points of primary school teacher education in relation to societal and education policy changes. In our analysis, we probe how teachers' duties and images have been presented in teacher education documents in different times. We argue that the ideal teacher has changed dramatically. Teacher education, in turn, is in situation, which is challenging and even contradictory. It has to follow current education policy and at the same time to convince the academic world that it is academically strong and autonomous not forgetting the educational needs of prospective teachers.

Keywords: Teacher education, educational sciences, elementary school teacher, comprehensive school, theory and practice

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Introduction to the history of Finnish elementary school teacher education

There are several factors which have affected Finnish teacher education. In our analysis, we have focused on the education of elementary school teachers, which substantiates the ideas of professionalization and disciplination. Educational science has become the norm in teacher education during the short academization period which we will introduce next. The triumphal march of this behavioral science has affected greatly how teacher education has been organized and ideal teacher represented (Simola 1996). At the same time, teacher education has been compelled to take into consideration the needs of education policy. These pressures are topical even at the moment. We try to indicate how these forces behind the pressure, usually with different interests, have changed, and especially how they have altered the mission, structures and goals of teacher education. In conclusion, we present the table presenting the role of research and the ideal teacher during three different eras with characteristic educational policies.

In our analysis, we refer to Finnish social scientist Pertti Alasuutari who has introduced three culturally different post-war periods which he call “economies”. These economies have been constructed on the basis of public discussion in Finnish papers concerning foreign and employment policy. Also, issues like alcohol, agriculture, health and welfare were included. In Alasuutari’s thinking, these topics and discourses reflect values, realities and the truth of different times. The three economies are in chronological order moral economy, planned economy and competition economy which we will illuminate in detail, although quite briefly, during different phases of our analysis. Alasuutari has stated that his division can also be used for analyzing educational policy (Alasuutari 1996). Earlier it has been used, for example, to present changes of teacher profession during the same period in Finland (Säntti 2007).

We hope that this rather general three-part division provides analytical assistance to understand this period, during which the Finnish elementary teacher education altered remarkably. Like Alasuutari, we have also studied different texts from post-war era. Our data consists of various teacher education texts like study programmes, records of teacher education departments and faculty council not to forget various directions for students. Teacher educators’ academic qualifications and structure of teacher studies have also been analyzed. Finnish pedagogic course books made by the leading educational scientists constitute self-contained data. Teacher education committee reports are maybe the most remarkable text group that we have studied. From these documents, we have traced the major changes in teaching practice studies.

Moral economy in teacher education after the Second World War

Finnish educational policy was in new situation after the Second World War. The political left wing demanded democratization and renewal of the Finnish school system. After winning the parliamentary election in spring 1945, the left wing was in favorable position to hasten their claims. The end result of war diminished the German influence

considerably in Finland. In academia and cultural circles, this meant that United State became gradually the new signpost and English language gained a firm foothold from German. (Autio 1990.)

The primary school teacher education had been organized in teachers' colleges (also known as teacher seminary) which possessed long and quite static tradition since 1863, when the first one started in Jyväskylä. The ethos of these institutions was based on patriotic and Christian virtues, and non-academic culture separated them from university institution. Finland was after The Second World very backward country, and our economy structure resembled more Eastern Europe countries than our western neighbor Sweden or other Western countries. In many families, the day-to-day living was based on agriculture and forestry, and the education of primary teachers was organized to serve the interests of these livings. It must be also remembered, that Compulsory education act of 1921 had not yet been fulfilled in eastern and northern parts of Finland. (Autio 1990, Ahonen 2003, Rinne 1986.)

When we look at the content of primary school teacher education after the wartime, one can notice that practical and moral orientation was quite obvious. Clearly, this era reflected the moral economy period, which is the first phase in the division by Alasuutari. Characteristic work orientation of this period was calling or vocation. Teacher was expected to devote to her/his work and to act as a role model for pupils. Thus, teachers were in a special position. They were presented as the keepers and moderators of collectively cherished cultural values. This position signified high moral expectations. (Alasuutari 1996, Rinne 1986.)

The pedagogical textbooks like Käytännöllinen opetustaito (The practical skill of instruction) (Viljonen 1949) which was studied in teachers' colleges, concentrates on practical educational matters and has not a single reference to research findings of educational science. Other widely used textbook Taitava opettaja (Skillful teacher) (Koskenniemi & Valtasaari 1965), includes few references to research but it was clearly written for teachers who needed guidance in their daily routines. Surely, the most read book in teacher education was Opettajapersoonallisuus (Teacher personality) (Haavio 1948) which crystallizes various expectations laid upon the teacher. Moral and practical interests were manifested also in teacher practice. The primary goal of teacher practice was to introduce everyday school practices and tricks of the trade to prospective teachers. Theoretical elements nor educational thinking was present in teacher practice program (Salminen & Sääntti 2013).³

The oldest of our teachers' colleges had turned into the Jyväskylä College of Education in 1934 with professor and the mandate to give academic degrees all the way to doctorate. Also, three provisional teacher colleges of education were established in Helsinki (1947),

³ This new structure was based on German model Fachhochschule, in England Vocationally oriented polytechnics (Kivinen & Rinne 1996).

Turku (1949) and Oulu (1953). While all four colleges of education trained mainly secondary school graduates, was Jyväskylä the only place with explicit research-orientation and professor in their staff. They all situated in more urban environment than traditional teachers' colleges. Still, the curriculum included agricultural features and all of them (besides Jyväskylä) were firmly controlled by the National Board of Education. Thus, they did not have the university autonomy (Nurmi 1990, p. 12; Rinne & Jauhiainen 1988, 219-220; Salminen & Sääntti 2013).i

In 1950s, two independent teacher education options, teachers' colleges and colleges of education, coincided. Gradually, the tension begun to grow between these two institutions. The issue was the future of teacher education. Traditional teachers' colleges situated in small rural towns still wanted to recruit students from lower social background with quite modest basic education. These institutes defended the status quo and were afraid of the scientific atmosphere, which was seen as harmful for prospective elementary school teachers. Four colleges of education and leading educational scientists contrasted clearly this view by urging the extension of teacher education. This would mean founding more professor's chairs and providing additional options for teacher students to earn academic grades. These ideas emphasized the scientific approach, and they were presented for the first time at the beginning of 1950s in committee reports. (Rinne & Jauhiainen 1988, p. 219-220; Kangas 1992, p. 105-106; Salminen & Sääntti 2013, p. 108; Committee report 1956.)

Differences of opinion lead to the debate in Finnish parliament in 1957 over the future of primary school and teacher education. The centre party, representing mainly the interests of rural population, defended the traditional teachers' college system while the left wing accused these colleges for maintaining archaic Christian and patriotic culture. Some social democrats wanted to associate teacher education question to comprehensive school reform which was emerging at the time. The question divided the right-wing. (Autio 1990.)

It was quite clear that university institution had some saying. The academic world did not welcome with open arms the development of teachers' colleges into academic institutes. It was afraid that the practical orientation of teacher education would blur the academic disposition. Also the Minister of Education drew in 1957 parallels between teacher education and the education of nurses as equally demanding. (Autio 1993, Salminen & Sääntti 2013.)

Planned economy from late 1960s

In 1960s Finnish society started the modernization process which meant industrialization, urbanization and conscious formation of the welfare state. It has been said that the pace of social change in Finland was exceptional. The state started to regulate more intensively administrative sectors including education. In Alasuutari's thematic division, Finland abandoned the moral code and accepted the planned economy, which

was based on thorough engineering and progressive attitude. These perspectives replaced old virtues of obligation and calling, which had been clearly defined as professional standards for elementary school teachers'. The predominant work orientation was professionalism, which was to be seen in Finnish teacher education quite clearly (Alasuutari 1996; Sääntti 2007; Jauhiainen & Rinne 2012, p. 122-123).

Finnish Parliament made significant educational decision in 1968 when it approved the basic outlines concerning the law of the comprehensive school reform. This reconstitution would mean equal nine year education for all pupils. The comprehensive school reform required also the renewal of teacher education. Committee reports of 1960s had clear message: the old teachers' college culture was to be buried (Committee reports 1967, 1968, 1969). Besides new education, modern teacher needed fresh image reflecting social and psychological awareness. Especially, didactical understanding was underlined. Expectations included readiness for change and eagerness to test modern methods in classroom work. At the organizational level, the decisive steps were taken for merging the teacher education of primary school and secondary school teachers (Autio 1993; Committee report 1967, p. 7-8).

Gradually educationalist started to emphasize academic interests in teacher education. As comprehensive school reform was proceeding, the science and disciplination was seen as an answer for teachers' day-to-day duties and school improvement. Educational science represented requisite advancement for outdated teacher culture. Thus, educational science became major in teacher training. The didactical studies, based on German pedagogical thinking, were given a special attention in teacher training. (Simola 1995, p. 135-221.)

One feature of teacher education relates especially to planning economy. The goal rationalization was emphasized both in comprehensive school and teacher education contexts. The idea was that every primary school teacher would have specific orientation for goal setting. These were based on the work of Robert F. Mager who presumed that goals must be translated into specific and observable actions which could be traced step-by-step process handling. Teacher practices were structured according to these principles and reflected also quite similar taxonomy by Canadian S.C.T. Clark which was used especially in the evaluation of the performances of prospective teachers. All these ideas emanated professionalism, which was based on educational science (Lahdes 1975, p. 47, 73; Simola 1996).

Besides ideological pressures, also other factors influenced teacher education. The school reform made sure that educational policy stayed in the headlines. Baby boomer generation caused pressure in education, and quite luckily, it also guaranteed resources. New academic posts and educational science departments were established.⁴ These

⁴ These departments were mainly for those students who would work as administrators or researchers in education (Ahonen 2000).

granted the proliferation of educational research. In University of Helsinki, Professor Matti Koskenniemi developed didactic process analysis. It bore a resemblance to natural science approach. Koskenniemi's study took place in educational sciences department with no teacher education function. Still, Koskenniemi believed that rigour scientific research and practical school work could be fused together successfully. Actually, he required that speculative orientation of education should be compensated for empirically tested pedagogy. His ideal teacher was a didactical thinker who would be willing to develop himself according to scientific criteria. These visions reflected planned economy perfectly (Ahonen 2000, p. 396-437; Koskenniemi 1978; Salminen & Sääntti 2012).

Finally, in 1974 teacher education departments were established in universities which meant that the elementary school teacher education extended to three year studies. At the time, these departments had special status inside academia. Their orientation was strictly professional, if not vocational. Also, research orientation was modest. Many prominent Finnish educationalists had presented left-wing opinions in school reform discussion. Then, it is no wonder that DDR-based idea of Polytechnic model fascinated many of these scholars. The Polytechnic model was long-awaited answer for the merge of theory and practice, which gave rhetorical leverage at the right moment for leading teacher educators (Committee report 1975, p. 36). This model was not accepted by conservative academia management. Firstly, the origin of the ideology was seen as too Marxist, and secondly, practice may have been tolerated, but certainly not promoted in traditional university (Autio 1993; Salminen & Sääntti 2013).

The transitional period, during which teacher education proceeded to university level, gave extra impetus to lift the studies of elementary school teacher even to Master's degree. This would be a huge step, and thus, the discussion of the matter was disagreeing and concrete goals were discordant. Then, other factors coincided the intended status boost. New university act promoted for the abandonment of bachelor level studies. As teacher education was already in university, although limited to bachelor's degree level, the renewal would also apply to them. In consequence, also elementary school teacher studies would lead to Master's degree. More by accident than design, this administrative resolution fulfilled the wildest dreams of some teacher educators (Autio 1993; Simola & Rinne 2013).

New act of teacher education was passed in June of 1978 (Finnish acts and degrees. Degrees and Studies in Education 530/1978). Quite naturally, teacher education culture did not change overnight. New teacher education departments were populated with old teacher educators with quite modest academic profile. Only professors, also adjunct Professor, had doctorates. Lecturers possessed usually Master's degrees, few had even lower-level qualifications (Sääntti et al. 2014).

It was quite clear that the starting point of fully academic teacher education suffered from practical orientation which oozed old-fashioned teachers' college tradition. Still, high hopes for teacher education were imposed. For some time, teacher practice had been the

melting pot for theory and practice. In 1970s, the goals of teacher practice were still very practical (Committee report 1975; Committee report 1978). Teacher students accused teacher practice for being too normative and theoretical studies detached from the reality of schools. Methodological emphasis was also criticized. (Autio 1997, p. 150-151; Kivinen & Rinne 1992, 56-60; Rantala et al. 2010, 56-57).

Competition economy from 1990s onwards

Criticism against academic teacher education intensified in 1990s when some members of academia were skeptical about teacher education's position in the university. According to critics, teacher education departments had too practical orientation and the research in these departments was scant, low-grade and confined to restricted didactical issues. This led to the situation, where the loudest critical voices demanded that teacher education should be positioned to vocationally oriented universities of applied science. This, in turn, influenced to the reorientation of teacher education. Gradually, in teacher education qualitative orientation, which offered alternative to empirical research, coincided with novel theoretical perspectives. The need to perform credible research was admitted, and new research directions were adopted from social sciences (Ahonen 2000, p. 425, 426-427; Salminen & Sääntti 2013, p. 115). At the same time in 1990s, the Finnish Parliament, the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education subscribed to new rhetoric which necessitated competitiveness, customer orientation and individual choices. These principles required radical changes in school culture. Thus, more and more schools started to profile and started local development projects (Ahonen 2003, p. 158-166; Simola 2001; Varjo 2007, p. 241-242).

As favourable attitudes towards school development raised, in teacher education the scientific rhetoric strengthened. It stemmed simultaneously from academic pressures and school development demands. The meaning of educational science for teachers' day-to-day work was emphasized and school teachers were offered more active role in research activities, not just the role of informant or guinea pig. Research-orientation was meant for every teacher in every school. This was done in persuasive tone, and the approach was proclaimed as an emancipative stance, more as an encouraging promise than a laborious obligation. Ideas were in line with the international action research movement. (Salminen & Sääntti 2013, p. 116-117; Toom et. al 2010).

Besides research-orientation and expectations for development, the new teacher image included also the increased freedom of action when the direction of school authorities was moderated. This cleared the way for curriculum planning as more jurisdiction were given to local, and even to school level. The didactical thinker of the previous era was replaced with the idea of change agent with critical stance and self-evaluative attitude (Heikkilä 1995, p. 122-124; Kansanen 1993, Korpinen 1996; Niemi 1993).

New research and developmental emphasis were reflected also in teacher practices. Only two decades earlier the main purpose of the practice was to introduce the prospective teachers with current school conventions and tricks of the trade, now the goal was the development of teachers' work and school. These rather burdensome obligations were expected from students in situation where the duration of teacher practices were shortened and guidance resources withdrawn (Salminen & Sääntti 2013, p. 119-120).

At the beginning of the new millennium, the research-orientation had developed into research-based approach, which is clearly the agenda of the current Finnish teacher education. The constant refrain "all teaching is based on research" is guaranteed by the fact that the most of teacher educators have completed a doctoral degree. International publishing seems to be the rule rather than the exception to modern teacher educator searching for scholastic credibility. Thus, Finnish teacher education culture has altered quite rapidly from teaching orientation to research-based assumptions (Hökkä 2012; Sääntti et al. 2014; Westbury et al. 2005).

The change of teacher educators' duties has affected also that of teacher. The right attitude towards educational science and "research tinkering" has turned into the obligation to actually undertake classroom-based research. Teachers are expected to incorporate into their teaching the results of classroom and academic research. Also, teachers should reflect on their practice in a systematic way. In sum, teachers are expected to act as researchers in their own work environments. The latest approach differs from research-based era for being more binding and temporally demanding. Research-orientation approach was based on projects with clear start and end, also not to forget the right attitude (at the right time), whereas research-based agenda penetrates every corner of teachers' day-to-day work systematically and continuously (Commission of the European Communities 2007; Committee report 2007, p. 13).

The competition economy era according to Alasuutari, which we live at the moment, reflects educational policy based on decentralization, accountability and individualistic culture. Although Finnish school system is not as market-oriented as, if you like, our health and social care system or various other public sectors, high hopes are placed in school system in order to take care of themes like competitiveness and efficiency. Still, teachers resist the service attitude characteristic of the competition economy, but rather conceives of themselves as educational, sometimes also caring, professionals. Teacher educators have been forced to accept full-grown entrepreneurial culture. The traditional academic culture never had the time to become firmly established in our teacher education (Rinne & Koivula 2005; Sääntti 2007; Vuorikoski & Räisänen 2010, 70).

Discussion

Current Finnish teacher education is said to serve, in some Finnish writings⁵, as an international example which other countries should follow. PISA-success of Finnish pupils have been introduced as an evidence of the high quality of our teacher training. Teacher education programmes are applauded for following in full the academic standards and research-based agenda. Thus, modern elementary school teacher students are taking their Master thesis and are introduced to methodological issues with the research-based ideology in their minds (Committee report 2007; Kansanen 2014; p. 37-38; Valtonen & Rautiainen 2013, p. 17, Westbury et. al 2005). Although the present situation seems to be quite favourable, we wish to present few conflicts and tensions which are not brought forward too often when discussed about Finnish teacher education.

The economic structure of Finnish society has changed thoroughly during our study. Since our school system has been traditionally governed by the state, the school changes have firmly followed social and political changes. It must be remembered that Finns have been quite unanimous when it comes to schooling. Shared understanding of the big picture and the direction of school policy has prevailed during the last decades. This has led to quite coherent and consistent evolution. If Finnish school system or culture has changed at all after the comprehensive school reform, is a controversial issue. We cannot find any transitional period or radical innovations.

Instead, as one can notice from our analysis, Finnish teacher education has altered dramatically. Nowadays, teacher education departments are expected to operate as any academic department in university with no exception in position or mission. This is ensured by juridical decisions (Finnish acts and degrees. University act 558/2009). It has also meant that academic guidance has taken more space from parliamentary government. Sikes portray teacher education departments as wannabee institutions which try to convince other university disciplines that these novel institutions are functioning according to academic standards which nowadays mean, for example, active international relationships and active publishing (Salminen & Sääntti 2013, p. 124; Sikes 2006, p. 556).

Political and economic trends still have considerable effect on our educational policy. Besides them, as we have witnessed, the academic culture presented by educational science has pervaded both teacher education and also the eligible teacher image. This denotes that the souls of our teachers are determined simultaneously by current political and academic demands, not to forget the appeals of parents. One noteworthy problem is that educational science is not famous for being very effective to deal with practical problems of school (Biesta 2007 2008, 295; Broekkamp & Van Hout-Wolters 2007; Labaree 2000). Then, we see that it is justified to ask whether scholarly orientation and

⁵ Books like *Finnish lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland* or other example *Miracle of Education; The Principles and Practices of Teaching and Learning in Finnish Schools*.

the concerns of teacher as a practitioner are congruent (Clifford & Guthrie 1988, p. 334-337; Sääntti et al. 2014).

The education of Finnish teacher educators and their work orientation have changed also critically (Sääntti et al. 2014). These victims, or heroes, of academic intensification must experience daily the devil's bargain which means that they are expected to look after the theoretical mission peculiar to university with simultaneous pressure to deal with rather practical orientation in teacher practices (Goodson 1995). These practice courses still belong to teacher education curriculums. In concrete, this duality leads to situation where teacher educator may think whether to attend an international seminar abroad or guide students in some local school. Quite clearly, as teacher education is nowadays firmly established inside the walls of university, it is reasonable that they accept the habitus of scholar rather than that of elementary school teacher (Labaree 2003). This project culminates in the ideology of research-based teacher. From this point of view, disciplinization has seized also teachers' practice in school. This has served the interests of teacher educators who have been eager to draw teacher into the academic world.

The perennial question of theory and practice is in Finnish teacher education answered in a manner, which is quite original. The fulcrum of Finnish teacher education is abbreviated in following words: research, theory, and practice are fused - with the idea of research-based thinking as the connecting glue (Westbury et al. 2005). Our incomplete analysis about the relationship between theory and practice in Finnish teacher education committee reports seems to implicate that these two domains, theory and practice, have at least in rhetorical level, approached each other. During the moral code, which prevailed after the Second World War, theory was seen more as harmful for teachers. In the next period of planned economy, cautious efforts were taken to bring more theory to teacher education and teacher practice. In current rhetoric, these two have found each other, and now theory is said to be the valuable partner of every pre-service and in-service teacher. The scientific rigour and academic credibility have met social relevance of teachers practicing in school. If this is true, our teacher education departments must be professionally and academically strong at the same time, which is characteristic for traditional professions like medicine and law (Hargreaves 2000; Clifford & Guthrie 1988, p. 255; Labaree 2003, p. 13; Labaree 2008, p. 292-293; Simola 1996, p. 101-102).

Current Finnish teacher education utilizes strong rhetoric when it presents school achievements and high-quality of our teacher education. According our historical analysis, recurrent dilemmas and tensions of teacher education have been avoided. There is an urgent need to study empirically how existing research-based agenda is affecting school work. At the moment, there is no such evidence available (Kansanen 2014; Puustinen et al. 2015).

Table 1. The development of teacher education and teacher ideal in Finland 1945-2015.

The period	Educational policy	The ideal teacher	The role of research
Moral economy from 1945 to 1960s	Tradition based on parallel school system	Normative teacher with calling/vocation	Minor, incidental
Planned economy from 1960s to 1990s	The comprehensive school reform, centralized school administration	Didactical thinker, professional mission	Teacher should make the acquaintance of educational science
Competition economy from 1990s onwards	Diversified school culture, local decision making, continuous development, OECD-driven policy	a, Research-oriented teacher, change agent, research and development projects	Readiness to change
		b, Research-based teacher, uninterrupted development	Teacher researches and develops continuously

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