

Chapter 28

The Foundations of Critical Studies in Education in Finland



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Abstract This chapter considers the historical roots of critical studies of Finnish education, particularly sociology, politics, and the history of education. It presents an interview with six emeriti professors who have participated in constructing the academic field. The chapter highlights their views about the greatest achievements of societally-oriented educational research in Finland, and what they considered the biggest disappointments or mistakes in this line of research.

The editors were pondering the best possible way of recognising the historical roots of critical studies of Finnish education in this book, particularly sociology, politics, and the history of education. In an editorial meeting we decided to invite some of those heavily involved in past decades to discuss the successes of critical studies in education in Finland and what they now think should have been done in other ways.

We gathered together six emeriti professors:

1. Sirkka Ahonen, Professor of history and social studies education at the University of Helsinki.
2. Ari Antikainen, Professor of sociology of education at the University of Eastern Finland, previously Professor of education, especially planning and administration of education at the University of Tampere.

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3. Leena Koski, Professor of sociology at the University of Eastern Finland.
4. Elina Lahelma, Professor of education at the University of Helsinki.
5. Risto Rinne, Professor of education, especially adult education at the University of Turku.
6. Hannu Simola, Professor of education, especially sociology of education at the University of Helsinki.

These Finnish emeriti professors have known each other for decades and they often worked together in academic circles in the past. They were also a central group in establishing a national doctoral school in educational sciences, KASVA, in 1995, which has been essential in providing doctoral education for critical and social studies in education. The discussion amongst them took place on the 20th of October 2021 in Helsinki as an invited face to face meeting and with three of the editors present as well.¹ Nearly all the emeriti were able to attend in person (Emeritus Professor Antikainen participated via email). The meeting was guided by two questions that had been sent to all beforehand: ‘In your view, what has been the greatest achievement of societally-oriented educational research in Finland?’ and ‘What do you see as the biggest disappointment or mistake in this line of research?’

The roundtable discussion was one of a kind and the editors hope it will mark a milestone in Finnish educational studies for many years to come. In the interests of authenticity, we have tried to leave it much like a transcript with all the features of spoken conversation that involves. Still, in the interests of a coherent account in the limited space available here, we have made some decisions about what to include, the order of contribution and the best way of translating the conversation to English. Our editorial additions are written in square brackets with contextual notes in italics, and where significant detail has been cut this is marked by ellipsis within square brackets. End notes have been added by the editors for those interested in tracking back the studies named in this discussion and other background details. The emeriti had the opportunity of both commenting on the Finnish version and then approving the final chapter in English prior to publication.

The Roundtable Discussion with Finnish Emeriti Professors of Critical Studies in Education

Rinne: We were asked two questions: what has the main achievement of Finnish social science-oriented educational research been this far, and what has been a disappointment or a mistake? After a fifty-year career or even longer in Finnish educational research, we are all, of course, disqualified to answer this question as we are part of this process, and we have our own attachments to it. The entry of sociology of education into Finnish society always [looks better] from further afield. But if we take a closer look, Kalevi Kivistö and other partners were at the beginning of sociology of education. And then [there was] its rise at the University of Eastern Finland, where Ari Antikainen, Leena Koski and others did [research], right from [the time

of Annika] Takala. And then, we had education policy research in Tampere. And of course, recused, I represent the school of Turku. We set up the Turku research unit, which is specifically a societally, historically oriented unit of sociology of education. [...] I would say from my perspective that the most important thing that has been achieved is that we have been able to go deeper and behind the surface and intentions [of education] more strongly than before. For example, I defended my doctoral dissertation on the topic of curriculum history. One of the key concepts that had been brought to Finland was [the idea of] a hidden curriculum, which is extremely rich and abundant in telling us that a curriculum is a document full of goodwill, which can be referred as a curriculum poetry, as the Swedish Svingby,² Broady,³ and some others have said. Seen through the hidden curriculum, its lofty goals and aspirations, or the sublime goals of the discourses and reform are not what they say they are. They are a barrel of wishes in one way. You must be able to look behind the surface and see what the hidden curriculum points out.

As Pierre Bourdieu⁴ says, above all, education is a field of symbolic violence that forces everyone who goes through it, over a 10–20-year history, to adapt in a certain way. Understanding the symbolic violence that people sift through in education is the most important opening that has been done in the societally-oriented research in the field of education in Finland. This also provides a closer examination of the social functions of education, what a school does to a people, including the boundaries of normality. And of course, these four functions⁵ include selection which means educational selection of the right people in the right place. And even if it is never over-emphasised, selection happens there. Integration into Finnish national ideology and politics is one task. Another task, then, is to produce suitable citizens with certain kind of qualifications. And let's say that what I have seen in particular, and should be brought up more and more these days, is the fourth function of education, common to all, of storage. [...] So, all of these, these are the central achievements. In addition, if I think about it, the reality arose in in one single major research project in which I was involved with many others that pointed out that we don't have unified comprehensive schools but unified comprehensive schools which have clearly divided into different blocks, producing different results. The well-off choose better school paths, others [are left with] weaker school paths.⁶ This is perhaps the biggest concern.

Ahonen: If I put it briefly, I think that the most important achievement has been to bring the question of educational equality, or rather educational opportunities and equity, to the forefront of research. Equality has always been talked about, since Snellman,⁷ but in this research strand the concept has been brought to a post-Second World War perspective. When equality, or equality of educational opportunities, is brought to the front, the school is shown to be a substructure of the welfare state. Pekka Kuusi, who has influenced my ideas, in his great book, [*Social Policy of the 60's*]⁸ does not mention education at all amongst these structures of the welfare state. And I think now, after this approach of our education or research approach has worked, it is no longer possible to [leave education out]. And in this research approach, the consequences of educational policy decisions are examined from a societal perspective. For example, the consequences of comprehensive school reform are examined from the perspectives of different groups in society. A very central

question since the 1980s has been whether the comprehensive school is a middle-class school after all. Education policy shifts are linked to broad societal background phenomena, most recently neoliberalism. Then an answer has been sought to the question of whether education policy is guided by instrumental rationalism or the ethos of *Bildung* (*sivistyseetos*). Comparative international research is part of this current line of research which has started, not very strongly, but nonetheless [it has started]. Comparative research provides material for answering structural questions in education, for example, to explain the problematic development of higher education governance. And what information technology has to offer is big data giving limitless possibilities for comparative research.

Antikainen: *Ari Antikainen was not able to attend the roundtable, but his written statements were read aloud.* The greatest success in critical studies in educational sciences has been the study of educational inequality in its theoretical and methodological diversity. Its international influence and connection to the examination of the Nordic and Finnish welfare society model has been strong. Its impact on the Finnish education policy debate has been significant.

Koski: I basically agree with the previous ones [Ahonen and Antikainen] and I think that the main achievement of this is the demonstration of various social distinctions and related processes. Proving to us social differences, class-based differences, different manifestations of racism and gender is, of course, important. Then, if you think about the differences, less attention has been paid to disability research. Of course, it has been done, but to lesser extent. These topics have been raised and investigated with a great variety of different materials, from a very wide variety of different theoretical premises. And the procedures for how those differences arise, how the school marginalises some students and how universities marginalise some of the students and so on, it has been quite well proved. Where I disagree with Ari [Antikainen] is that it had political significance. I think it had almost no political significance for what we got from the research. Another point I think is noteworthy, is the education policy research critical towards neoliberalism, which is related with very many educational processes. This individualisation and intensification processes and the rise of budgetary authority over other political efforts. And in general, showing that what is being said about the school and what is shown of schools, and what is shown in the statistics is only part of how school works. A huge number of different political and ideological and gendered and moral processes are involved with school at all different levels from early childhood to liberal adult education. Those same processes work in a slightly different way at different levels. In my opinion, this has been proved again and again in Finnish sociology of education.

Lahelma: It was difficult to choose one achievement. I actually have a list of four achievements that are also interconnected and partly repeat what has already been said. The first that has already emerged is equality and social justice. Their problematization in relation to educational goals. The persistent tensions in education policy have been analysed: on the one hand, the stated goals of education emphasising equality and justice, on the other hand, the neoliberal education policy emphasising individual choice and competition and the measurement of results. Analyzing

this tension and emphasizing the importance of equality has been an important achievement.

The second achievement is expansion of educational research that earlier was largely focusing on didactics. You remember Kansanen's⁹ didactic triangle with teacher, student and subject with arrows between them. Without underestimating its importance, going beyond the triangle has been one achievement of critical sociology of education. At this point, I would like to highlight the pioneer of Finnish feminist sociology of education: [...] a dear friend and colleague, the recently deceased Tuula Gordon. Tuula's way to open the understanding of school was through defining school layers. In her view the school was viewed analytically through the formal, informal, and physical layers linked to each other.¹⁰ It helped to notice that didactic processes are also interlinked with school spaces, sounds, movements, corporality, and informal relationships between teachers and students, which also continue outside the school. For example, the social relationships of young people, such as the boys' struggle in the informal hierarchy, are relevant in their orientation to studying. Here collaboration with youth research has been important.

The third achievement, related to the first, is intersectional understanding of social distinctions. First, gender. Gender, which had previously been considered as a dichotomous background variable, was now set as the target for analysis. In this, of course, the importance of feminist theoretical research and feminist sociology of education has been absolutely central. Feminists started to analyse gender as social structure, not just a matter of personal identity, as Raewyn Connell¹¹ and others have pointed out. On the other hand, drawing on Judith Butler,¹² gender was analysed already in the 1990s as habits, repetitions, performatively, with the possibility of change. In intersectional research, analyses of social class, ethnic background, special educational background, gender, sexuality, and other dimensions of differences interact. The theoretical concepts used in feminist gender-related research have also helped to understand other differences in a more multidimensional way.

Fourth, I want to mention the theoretical-methodological development. Especially, I would like to emphasise the significance of ethnographic research. Socially contextualised ethnographic perspective on everyday school helps to see behind the differences that are revealed in statistics. In school ethnography, the focus is on everyday hustle and bustle, on what is really going on in the school, rather than, as often in previous educational research, on what should happen. It has been specific in Finland that ethnographic research began to develop alongside and within feminist research. It has been associated from the beginning with the feminist principles of ethics: the pursuit of respect, equal interaction, and reciprocity in the research relationship.

Simola: Yes, I can agree with all these speakers, of course. I was in the first generation of primary school teachers. A lot of work was done, it was clear. The Finnish Comprehensive School has been a success story but the political significance of societally-oriented educational research has been minor as Leena [Koski] said. I think the greatest success has been in bringing gender equality into the context of education. Of course, this is also a big question of our time, but I think sociological

research in education has been able to answer it well. This was my perception of this in addition to everything others have said.

Rinne: Unfortunately, Ari [Antikainen] is not here and I would have liked to answer him but as Leena [Koski] also represents Joensuu, the province, I could continue my previous comment about what has been really relevant as we haven't gone to the second question yet. A rather big controversy between Ari and me that has been going on for 10 years, 15 years—in the early days more vigorously and later more adaptable—is this relationship to benevolent politics. I could also point out the politics of the Social Democrats, which has been very well deserved for the implementation of the unified [folk] school back in the 1920s and into the unified [comprehensive] school of the 1970s. First, compulsory education and then to the unified school. And there were the Social Democrats, the Agrarian League, and the Finnish People's Democratic League running all this. It is said this way in the Joensuu paradigm, there are different paradigms as you have seen, I understand you [Leena Koski] represent more Antikainen's view and it is insane and wrong and brutal that I ask him a question and he cannot answer [because of his absence from this roundtable]. There has been this goodwill to make a big structural change to put all the children in a unified comprehensive school. After that, as if we had resolved societal problems. And you don't see what that basic nature of school is, this machinery of violence and so on. Now, if Leena [Koski] wants to answer, or Leena says if she agrees, whichever?

Koski: Right, I do not recognise this Joensuu paradigm concept at all. I can, of course, agree with Risto's [Rinne] idea in a certain way, I have taken up with Ari Antikainen on this same question several times. [...] But I agree with Risto that it's maybe more than the Joensuu paradigm, it's maybe a political issue.

Antikainen: *The editors contacted Ari Antikainen after the debate. His comments on this critique were as follows:* Maybe I'm not as strictly Eastern Finnish or North Karelian in my thinking about the nature of school knowledge as Risto Rinne claims. In fact, I am in favour of a compromise in this case. The other side of school knowledge is what we call Bildung. There is information independent of the social context in addition to the symbolic violence of Bourdieu. This is well illustrated in Michael Young's "Bringing Knowledge Back".¹³ Its subtitle explains the change in his curriculum thinking: "From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education". Michael's "powerful knowledge" corresponds, to my understanding, to our Finnish and continental European concept of Bildung. [...] My earliest memories of the influence of the researcher on education policy is the Sortavala-born Annika Takala's influence on education policy and education policy makers.

Ahonen: Well, if I answer to Risto [Rinne] then. We have discussed this before, I have always been of this opinion, let's say this Foucauldian¹⁴ pessimistic view then, and we have on the other hand this Habermasian¹⁵ conception, which sees school and knowledge as emancipatory. In the end, if we think of our comprehensive school, it had this common content of liberating knowledge. So, isn't this an emancipatory effect on society instead of compartmentalisation and prevention?

Rinne: I just keep on referring to this, because the biggest ideological documents throughout Finland are curricula. And I am referring only to this concept of the hidden curriculum and to the fact that what the school says it is doing, even by emphasising or increasing major structural reforms and equality and justice, is in any case only one side of the truth. It can be called curriculum poetry, it means that it more effectively prevents you from seeing what the basic nature of the school is, beneath its visible and desired surface. School is a very cruel tool. People go there, as to any job, under certain power relations. And it really depresses others permanently, pushes some into special education, pushes others into inconsolability, cuts off their life chances. And for others, it creates bliss and legitimacy to climb to the top of society. But I don't deny, Sirkka [Ahonen] has been a very important teacher over the years.¹⁶ The Habermasian idea that you have a school, and there were a lot of such thoughts at the birth of the comprehensive school that now we are changing the world and giving people opportunities and so on, I cannot deny it completely. There is no one true truth in this.

Lahelma: Yes, you just said it last that there's no one truth. What is important in sociological school research is precisely to understand that there are contradictions that are then struggled with. There is no single truth about school, it is not only good and not only bad, but it is both, it is complex. Exploring the school's everyday life is a way to see it behind the surface.

The discussion continued on how much research had impacted education policy in Finland, and there was no clear consensus about the possible policy effects. This debate frames and slightly relates to the second discussion topic addressed to the emeriti professors: the biggest mistakes and errors that had been made in the field of critical studies in education in Finland:

Antikainen: I haven't noticed any major mistakes. In fact, however, two things that are linked to each other come to my mind. The first is that there are quite a few amongst our researchers who do not know and recognise the importance of pedagogical knowledge and its connection to societal analysis. I belong to this group. Though I learned its significance, especially in the Noste project for adult education in 2003–2009.¹⁷ Our observation and interpretation of the deep-rooted attitude toward schooling, which we call non-secondary education, called for the creation of material and symbolic resources that enabled people to gain recognition and experience it.

Lahelma: Perhaps I could mention the lack of cooperation between statistical and register-based research on the one side and ethnographic and other qualitative research on the other. That has been one reason why decision makers have not listened enough and understood the complexity of the school. Now I have the impression that quite a lot of progress has been made here, it has taken a lot of work to create cooperation structures, but the editors' [referring to the editors in the room] generation has been more successful than we have been.

Simola: The biggest mistake for societally-oriented education research, I think, has been remaining in a marginal role in teacher education. I was involved in it for one year only at the turn of the millennium in Hämeenlinna [university town] Department of Teacher Education. This may not be understood if one does not know

that I have always been a comprehensive school teacher by heart, as its first generation. That decade was a generational experience for me. Sociology of education could have emerged like educational psychology and rise as to its challenger but perhaps we were trapped in a tradition of critical-analytical research, snared by the hidden curriculum. Sociologically, the systems of school space, time, and rituals, the grammar of schooling, were seen, but only as restrictive. We should also have seen their enabling power. Gender studies did not fall into this trap but instead also made policy recommendations which inspired activism. Sociology of education should get rid of dark sociologies, the mere analysis and criticism, and go for a “sociology of the possible”. I mean that the sociology of possible must be based on an extremely rigorous critical analysis of reality but it should go forward. [...] I think one should have gone to Hämeenlinna and set up a sociologically focused teacher training there, taken a dozen students, as Maijaliisa Rauste-von Wright did in Helsinki with Educational Psychology. And probably Hämeenlinna would have agreed to that, but I didn't have such an idea at the time. But if I were there now, I would do it this way. This is about the mistakes, rather personal than general, though.

Koski: This is a terribly difficult question, about the worst mistake. I don't know what the worst mistake would be. I think it would suggest that some major research would turn out to be a fake or something. And everyone would have started doing research based on it. But there is no such thing or at least no one has noticed it yet [laughter] [...] or I haven't noticed. One problem a bit has been this fragmentation. However, there is quite a lot of such a genuine discussion among critical educational sociology coming from different directions. [...] It has been this kind of parallel play sandbox that everyone has their own bucket and their own sand molds, and each makes their own sand cake with their own molds. And then there is what I said at the beginning, what Antikainen probably referred to, that pedagogy is not explicitly studied in educational sociology. Namely pedagogical practices, pedagogical procedures and pedagogical aspirations, in the same way that curricula are analysed and so on. Pedagogy could be one optimistic solution to this question of how school could be something else than the production of mere suffering. With pedagogy we could find such procedures there. But pedagogy is hardly sociologically analysed, at least in Finland. Hannu [Simola] what you said, sociology has lost its status to psychology, yes, because psychology is the science of the policies of neoliberal individualisation policy. Psychology is harnessed to it and it will certainly gain relevance in politics. I think it's bad, that psychology in a certain way implements this Margaret Thatcher idea that “there is no such thing as society but rather individuals”. This as some first ideas, not maybe as a mistake as such, but kind of what could have been done better.

Rinne: My starting point is pretty much like what I produced as a response to the best features in societal research is, revealing true realism there. And which is the worst, or disappointment or error in this case, it is this kind of acceptance of various reforms, ideas and aspirations: denying the facts, bona fide, pure-mindedness and, in a way, emphasising one's own position that everything will turn out to be good, decontextualisation. And if you think of three examples, then one of them is economy of education research. So, all this, I confronted with [Professor of Education Economics] Roope [Uusitalo] once in a seminar where I criticised very strongly the

[commercialised antibullying programme by university] KiVa school project.¹⁸ And Roope said that it was the only good educational research that has had a significant impact on the Finnish school system. Then we locked horns a little about this, but not too much. But first, this KiVa school research project, as one example when you make an arrangement, which gradually moves to the private market, or which becomes an international trend and it is sold abroad and so on. Everyone believes that it cures bullying from our schools, which does not correspond with reality at all.¹⁹ The second, if someone still remembers, I was then a young man, was a community education experiment related to Makarenko²⁰ and many other things. Investing was heavy to all directions and everyone thought that now we are improving schools and no question about it. But what was the result? Nothing, maybe a book by Kalevi Kaipio,²¹ but little else. And third, which is related to this same dull reality, is the relevance of politics, which began in the 1990s or in the twenty-first century. We proceeded consciously from the funding and appreciation of pure analytical basic research, step by step towards these top research units. And towards another type of policy-relevant research, to which the largest batches of funding from the state were directed. And yes, it feels bad to just wait for and look at the policy recommendations, which could have been written in advance. They were completely ready, the political stuff, and then we do research. The University of Turku, and many other universities, have a lot of these ongoing projects, while the funding of the Academy of Finland is declining. [...] The present and depressing starting point is the fact that what educational science, or social science research more broadly should take seriously is how the school system and different kind of reforms and other factors affect reality.

Ahonen: Well, I'd really like to talk about this now: why haven't sociologists intervened more concretely about what's happening now, to criticise the outsourcing of basic education. There are these Tutor Houses [private supplementary tutoring enterprise] and then there was this KiVa School, which is a product, of course. [...] Well yeah. I'll tell you what I think. I've been recently very active in Historians Without Borders.²² And they have been engaged in a dialogue with different groups in Finland that are in a conflict with the majority population. And in this context, I've come to think that we education researchers, we have not really taken the diversity of Finnish society into serious account. Roma and the Sámi people and the new migrants, they are self-evident, but then there's much more other diversity as well. And the internal diversity of these groups. I feel at the moment that we should give up this kind of categorisation when we study how education reaches different people. [...].

Societally-oriented researchers in education have been involved and in interaction with [...] researchers of disadvantage, other social scientists, for example [professor of social and health policy] Juho Saari. So, when I was thinking of education, it was enlightening to read his work. He was showing how diversity is changing from the perspective of population research. Or evolving and increasing. And then again, I maybe enter the side of pedagogy now. This multiculturalism, which has been promoted [...] in schools in very imaginative ways. But this whole multiculturalism is a very essentialist notion. If you now think there are these and these cultures and then somehow bring in knowledge about them through playing, singing, or acquiring

information for teaching, it doesn't support the impression that people are constantly changing and borrowing cultural stuff from each other and so on. There is a constant state of change and a state of diversification which, interestingly enough, seems to require some coping. So—no more useless categories. And maybe I count as a mistake in societally-oriented educational research that it has not collaborated enough with other social sciences. Especially this, and I gave the example of disadvantage researchers and demographers.

In addition to the mistakes and errors, the emeriti professors ended up reflecting on how the changing environment of the Finnish universities had affected work in the field. The role of the universities has changed along the past decades. Discussants pointed out that a market-shift in Finland materialised with the University Act of 2009. In the literature scholars have seen this as a change at the universities towards a “neoliberal NPM doctrine” from the previous “management by results and competition” era.²³ The roots of this change are in how Finland became more a part of the international community and how the self-understanding of higher education institutions were re-understood as tools and objects of international competition.²⁴ Of course, the shift towards managerialism,²⁵ new hierarchies,²⁶ and the broad structural reforms²⁷ are European mainstream. The emeriti reflected this through the shifts in their work and their research:

Koski: I think it's a problem that university is targeted with such strong interests. The fields of research which are connected directly to industry, like medicine, physics, science, are useful for them [the industry]. [...] It's an aspired policy by those in power. But the problem is that for socio-humanistic research this does not fit at all. We don't have any products. We don't come up with new medicine, with corona vaccination, with waste-management systems or substances. What we invent is an understanding of this world.

Lahelma: Perhaps it could be continued that the goals and policies of these hard sciences at the university have clearly flowed into the field of social sciences. We are required to do the same. We are required to, of course, provide article-based PhD theses...

Koski: ... and products for sale.

Lahelma: ... and products for sale. Probably the humanists and social scientists haven't been able to pinpoint enough that we're different. That our research fields are different.

[...]

Koski: Yes, but I don't think the problem is that we would search some ideal Snellmannian-Humboldtian *Bildung* university (*sivistysyliopisto*) lost in the past, which never was...

Rinne: Someone defended a thesis on this! [Referring to Leena Koski's dissertation.²⁸]

[...]

Koski: ... Yeah but you can't hope for this *Bildung* university, it was patriarchic, and it was...

Rinne: So, you've written.

Koski: ...absolutely a university of the swords of symbolic violence and decapitation and all that.

[...]

Koski: We show how things are, not like they should be.

Simola: Now we've shown that, so what? This is the eternal question.

Koski: I tend to think that it is no longer our task.

Simola: Indeed.

Koski: It is your task! [*Points at the editors, there is laughter*] Starting from what is it at the moment: how things are experienced and lived today. The generational experience that you have.

Finally, the emeriti were asked to indicate some notes and possibly advice for future generations of researchers conducting critical research in education in Finland:

Koski: I think you could continue with the strengths that we all agreed very much about. You pursue them in a new kind of societal situation. The problem with sociology is that when something is found out, society has already turned to another position. In a way, it never ends, and you can always build on what is known so far. And how things have changed and review it. And in a way, also develop the theory going forward, [Pierre] Bourdieu or [Michel] Foucault, or whoever everyone now wants to develop. I don't think it's worthwhile to reinvent the wheel, and it's not necessarily worth navigating unknown waters, at least without preparation. If a question leads to something theoretical or something unheard of, well then. But always claiming that this is something new, starting from here and forgetting what has been, [doesn't work]. [...] But most of all, I think it's important to stay vigilant about what's happening in society.

Rinne: I would say exactly the same thing that you actually said for a junior researcher: never compromise the truth and truthfulness, dare to study and publish everything meaningfully. And take part in the societal debate, doubt everything, don't keep quiet. [...].

Simola: And activism is allowed, even necessary.

From the Editors, a Closing 'Thank You'

The discussion eventually finished after several hours during which the emeriti navigated effortlessly through British, Finnish, French, German, Swedish and Soviet research debates while reflecting on the past decades of Finnish societally-oriented education research.

How the map of critical studies in education would be drawn in Finland may seem clearer today, but at the time when these professors started their work, it was mostly blank.

A central theme in the discussion was that all of the emeriti professors thought the most meaningful work done in the field was pushing the academic and political

fields of thinking towards questions of equality and equity in the Finnish education system, drawing on strong basic research.

Now looking back, they also recognised that there could have been greater achievements on this front if the different subfields of educational research, such as sociology and pedagogy, had worked together more.

Knowledge of how equality and inequality emerge and may be studied at the macro, meso and micro levels, however, remains a strong legacy in Finnish and international research.

Years and indeed decades of work, as reflected in many of the chapters in this book, are attempting to take this task forward, and this continuity, amidst change, was cherished by the emeriti.

Overall, there is much to challenge new academics and how they will find resources to continue their thought work despite the changes in academia is not yet clear.

Under the circumstances, collaboration has become all the more important in critical studies in education in Finland—we hope this book with its many contributors bodes well for the years ahead.

Notes

1. Martin Thrupp was unable to attend due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.
2. Svingby, G. 1979. *Från läroplanpoesi till klassrumverksamlighet*. Malmö: Liber.
3. Broady, D. 1981. *Den dolda läroplanen*. Göteborg: Krut.
4. Bourdieu, P., and J.C. Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage.
5. Antikainen, A., R. Rinne, and L. Koski. 2021. *Kasvatustieteologia*. WSOY. 6th Ed.
6. Seppänen, P., M. Kalalahti, R. Rinne, and H. Simola. 2015. Lohkoutuva peruskoulu. Perheiden kouluvalinnat, yhteiskuntaluokat ja koulutuspolitiikka. Research in Education Sciences 68. Jyväskylä: Finnish Educational Research Association.
7. Johan Vilhelm Snellmann (1806–1881) was a professor of philosophy and statesperson. He contributed to societal debates and to the Fennoman movement in promoting Finnish as cultural and governmental language. One of his key ideas was that education of the population in Finnish is the main means for achieving national success and change. See <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/3639>
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