

Subject Teacher Education in Transition

Educating Teachers
for the Future

Edited by
Eero Ropo and Riitta Jaatinen

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Part I

General Issues in Subject Teacher Education

Introduction

The history of Finnish subject teacher education with special reference to the development at the University of Tampere

Eero Ropo, Riitta Jaatinen and Tero Autio

Teachers in the Finnish school system

In this introductory chapter, our aim is to describe some of the history and context of Finnish subject teacher education. Although our perspective is based on developing teacher education at the University of Tampere, we believe that also national development and world-wide theoretical perspectives are highlighted in the chapters. In this introduction we will focus on the history of Finnish teacher education and also present an overview of the contents of the book. Each of the chapters is concerned with depicting a research and

development project or several projects and considering its or their contribution to teacher education.

In Finnish teacher education, we can distinguish four teacher categories. The teachers in these categories have received a different type of education based on history and educational traditions. *Early childhood education teachers* (kindergarten teachers) have been educated at kindergarten teacher education institutions since the early 20th century. These institutions were combined with universities in 1995 and the early childhood education teacher degree became a bachelor level (3 yrs.) academic degree.

Primary school teachers (class teachers) work in grades 1 through 6 in the Finnish schools. This teacher category originates from the 1860s when the first elementary school teacher education institution ('kansakoulunopettajaseminaari' in Finnish) was established in Jyväskylä. The institutions located in different parts of the country were combined with universities in 1974 when faculties of education were established. *The primary school teacher's degree* was a three-year programme at the bachelor level until 1979 when it was legislated to become a five-year master's degree in educational sciences.

In Finland, *subject teachers*, i.e. teachers specialized in teaching a subject or subjects, have been educated at the university level since the beginning of public education and teacher education in the 19th century. From the very beginning, subject teacher education adopted the teacher training school system ('normaalikoulussa harjoittelu') in which the student teachers practised in special, state owned schools after their university degree. The teacher education in teacher training schools was a one-year internship type of period during which student teachers practised teaching under the supervision of experienced subject teachers ('auskultointi').

The original system prevailed until 1974 when all teacher training schools were combined with different universities. A new master's degree programme for primary school teachers commenced in 1979. All university degree programmes were also reformed, and *Teacher's*

Pedagogical Studies, including both theoretical and practical studies, became a required minor subject for all teachers, including subject teachers. The main content areas of the *Teacher's Pedagogical Studies* were legislated to include three domains, namely, basic studies in education, subject didactics (including subject didactic research), and teaching practice in schools. Universities offering the master's degrees were, and still are, autonomous in designing the goals and contents of teacher education. However, on the national level, it was agreed from the very beginning that each domain should encompass about one third of the total *Teacher's Pedagogical Studies* (currently 60 ECTS, i.e. European Credit Transfer System credits).

The reasons for this type of reform in late 1970s and early 1980s were partly due to the overall reform of the Finnish school system. Since the 1970s the new comprehensive school ('peruskoulu') has offered general 9-year education for all. Earlier, in the dual system, subject teachers had been working with those students who had applied and been admitted to 8-year (lower and upper) secondary schools ('oppikoulu' and 'lukio') giving access to university studies. It was also evident that research in different domains and disciplines had brought a lot of new perspectives to school education and teachers' roles (see, e.g., Mandl et al. 1990; Carretero et al. 1991, Jaakkola et al. 1995).

This same subject teacher education model also spread to teacher education in vocational education. According to the current legislation, in addition to subject studies and/or vocational content studies and work experience, teachers in vocational schools and universities of applied sciences must have 60 (ECTS) in *Teacher's Pedagogical Studies*.

Reforming subject teacher education in the 1990s

In the early 1990s, it became obvious at the Faculty of Education at the University of Tampere that conceptions of subject teaching and teachers needed theoretical and practical updating. This updating focused on those subject teacher education programmes that the University of Tampere offered, namely, languages, history and social sciences, and mathematics and natural sciences. One incentive for this need was the development in the 1980s when *Teacher's Pedagogical Studies* were included as a minor subject in the master's degrees. The traditional way of qualifying as a subject teacher after the degree was replaced with minor subject studies during the 3rd- or 4th-year studies. This development in the way of qualifying was not only practical but it gave an opportunity to complement and intensify the studies' theory vs. practice discourses and to update the studies in the subject didactics based on both the subject-specific studies at subject faculties and in-school training.

The prevailing designing principle was to reconstruct the subject-specific contents into pedagogically relevant and meaningful modules, adjusting these modules to different age and grade levels, and designing learning goals benefitting students' knowledge and aesthetic, practical and moral resources. This simple model is typically called a transmission model in which the teachers deliver the required knowledge. Students are considered as recipients whose duty is to acquire the knowledge, fulfilling the requirements to learn according to the curricula. The teacher is, according to this model, a moral and cognitive authority who should be able to specify what knowledge is worth knowing for the students. This conception of teaching and teachers, which according to current theoretical models was oversimplified and based on incorrect generalizations of the learning processes, was the leading principle in developing theories of teaching and learning. (Autio 2006/2012.)

This traditional thinking about teaching was challenged by at least two theoretical discourses. The first one is related to the developments in the understanding of the learning concept. This development can be summarized as a change from considering learning as acquisition to understanding it as mental and social construction in which students make interpretations based on their own history and autobiography, and the social context of the situation in which the process takes place (see, e.g., Autio 2006/2012; Lehtovaara 1996; Ropo & Värri 2003; Jaatinen 2007). This transformation broke the causal model between teaching and learning, requiring changes in teachers' thinking about instruction. However, basing the curricula and assessment on the idea of causality between teaching and learning is still prevalent in several educational systems outside Finland.

Developments in the learning theories also challenged traditional thinking about subject didactics and curriculum. It was evident that profound understanding of school education was needed in subject teacher education. The first step was a conceptual change from teacher training to teacher education. This change also challenged the previous understanding of school teaching. (Autio 2006/2012; Lehtovaara 2001; Ropo & Värri 2003; Kohonen et al. 2001.) The beginning of new thinking did not lean explicitly on any specific theorization. However, it was recognized that the new postmodern era, as it was described, required new ideas for the education of individuals for the new subjectivity and identities, as well as global citizenship (Doll 1993; Autio 2006). Theoretical understanding of new directions developed quickly in the 1990s, and the progress took different paths in the various domains of subject didactics. (see, e.g., Kohonen 1992a, b, c; Kohonen 2001; Lehtovaara 2001; Jaatinen 2001; Kaikkonen 2001; Silfverberg 1999.)

Anglo-American theorization of educational psychology and emphasis on empirical research were popular in all behavioural sciences since World War II, after the collapse of Germany. Concurrently, Nordic education and teacher education rested on

the ideas of the German didactics and the concept of *Bildung*, in particular. (Autio 2006/2012.) After the first Finnish PISA results in 2000 which indicated that Finland had succeeded surprisingly well, it was not clear what had been the key factors contributing to those achievements. According to some researchers the Nordic traditions of applying philosophy-based thinking in education may have been the most significant cornerstones for the Finnish success (cf. Autio 2006).

Retrospectively, and in respect to the current theorization in the so-called *Curriculum Studies*, the Tampere subject teacher education was avant-gardist in the 1990s. The Tampere programme was an outsider in the mainstream quantitative perspectives of educational sciences and their increasingly recognized restrictions in describing human beings as subjects and individuals having a history, a present and a future. This criticism focused on teacher education and particularly on school education and the limitations in understanding students as holistic human beings. (Ropo et al. 1995.) Outside Finland, this recognition was increasingly present, for instance, in the US where the *Reconceptualization Movement* in curriculum and its developers and followers became more recognized by scholars all over the world, including dynamically progressing China which has reformed its education system based on ideas from the *Reconceptualization Movement*. (Doll 1993; Pinar et al. 1995; Pinar 2012, 2014; Henderson et al. 2015; Autio 2014a, b; Hua 2014.)

In Tampere, the developments starting from language teacher education spread little by little to other subject domains (see, e.g., Lehtovaara 2001; Kohonen 2001). In this movement, it was typical to consider school teaching and learning from the more holistic perspectives, emphasizing dialogical and democratic ideals as goals and methods of instruction. Experiential learning, as well as opening the cultural and contextual aspects of learning, rendered new perspectives to life in the classroom and learning a subject. It also became evident that understanding learning differences required

understanding them from the perspective of the autobiographies and life histories of the students. (Kohonen et.al. 2001.) All these theoretical expansions required new expertise, for instance, in philosophy, back-tracking to the ideals of early Finnish theorists, such as Ahlman, Hollo, and Salomaa in teacher education in the early 20th century.

It can be argued that the development of the holistic approach in which the teacher autonomy and freedom from methodological restrictions of the increasingly mechanistic educational thinking is, perhaps, one of the few key factors in Finnish education success. This movement can also be regarded as a kind of ‘vaccination’ against the ‘teaching to the test’ movement that has spread all over the world. This strong emphasis on testing and test results, often in the form of standardized, national testing as the main evidence of learning achievements, has never reached Finland (Westbury 2000; Autio 2017.)

Assessment as an essential part of curriculum and school teaching was widely recognised in the department of Tampere teacher education in the 1990s. However, the solution was not to develop it in the direction of quantitative assessment but to enhance self-reflection in authentic contexts and develop methods for qualitative evaluation in which autobiographical and interpretative perspectives could be taken into account better. This type of assessment does not aim at informing outsiders about the success and achievements in relation to other students. Rather, its purpose is to enhance personal goal-setting and self-evaluation in terms of learning during the course of one’s life and interpretations of personal experiences in one’s own autobiography. (See Kohonen’s chapter in this volume.)

The chapters in this book illustrate implications and developments of teacher education for 21st-century schools. Teachers should be educated to work for the future and with the generation that will influence that future. Although there are commonly shared conceptions of what the future holds, consensus is lacking on the

global level. Narratives of the future differ on the basis of individual, social and cultural histories, traditions, and expectations. Teachers as part of the global community and as representatives of education are in a crucial role in ensuring that the complex dialogue and search for solutions to increasingly complicated questions continue in ethically and morally responsible ways and directions. The developments in teacher education that we have briefly outlined above have been successes – however, nothing is final.

Organization of the book

In their chapter, **Perceptions on collaboration, time management and meaningfulness: Millennials' innovations in the subject teacher education programme**, Marita Mäkinen, Johanna Annala and Jyri Lindén present the highlights of current student teachers' perceptions of the subject teacher education programme (STEP). They argue that student teachers represent one of the key groups that must be heard in order to maintain the efficiency of teacher education when facing 21st-century challenges, and suggest that the notion of social practice that builds on the connection between the practices of the programme and the social nature of the student teachers should be a driving force in the design, implementation and updating of teacher education programmes. The chapter aims to deepen the understanding of student teachers' perceptions of teacher education through the lens of generation theories. By listening to and understanding these teachers' voices, teacher educators can eliminate misunderstandings based on intuitive and tacit generational differences.

Viljo Kohonen's chapter, **Advancing language education in the context of developing the European Language Portfolio in Finland**, traces the processes of developing foreign language education and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) within the Council of Europe, Strasbourg. The ELP developments in Finland are examined as part of

'Teachers should be educated to work for the future and with the generation that will influence that future.'

In Finland, teachers specialized in teaching a subject or subjects have been educated at the university level since the beginning of public and teacher education in the 19th century. This book introduces readers to the development, theories and practices of subject teacher education at the University of Tampere during the last 25–30 years – but from the perspective of the future of teaching and teacher education.

The authors are teacher educators and researchers, representing educational sciences, foreign languages, mother tongue, art education, mathematics and science, or social science teacher education.

The book is aimed at domestic and international audiences alike, providing insight to researchers, students and professionals interested in subject teacher education.



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