

Developments in Teacher Education in Finland. In-service Education and Training

Razvoj izobraževanja učiteljev na Finskem. Stalno strokovno izobraževanje in usposabljanje

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Abstract

The paper starts with summarising effects of the Bologna process on the structural and content development of the teacher education curriculum in Finland and makes a short presentation of the structure of pedagogical studies in teacher education at Jyväskylä University. It reflects excellent results of Finnish students in international comparisons from a perspective of the system of teacher education and in particular from a perspective of in-service teacher education and training. New types of in-service training are analysed and some future challenges in the field of teacher education and teachers' qualifications are addressed.

Key words

teacher education in Finland; implications of the Bologna Declaration; in-service teacher education; new types of in-service training

Povzetek

Članek na začetku povzema vplive bolonjskega procesa na strukturi in vsebinski razvoj kurikulumov za izobraževanje učiteljev na Finskem in na kratko predstavi strukturo pedagoškega študija v izobraževanju učiteljev na Univerzi Jyväskylä. Članek reflektira odlične rezultate finskih učencev, dijakov in študentov v mednarodnih primerjavah iz vidika sistema izobraževanja učiteljev ter še zlasti z vidika stalnega strokovnega izpopolnjevanja učiteljev. Analizira nove vrste stalnega strokovnega usposabljanja ter obravnava nekatere prihodnje izzive na področju izobraževanja učiteljev oz. kvalifikacij učiteljev.

Ključne besede

izobraževanje učiteljev na Finskem; implikacije Bolonjske deklaracije; stalno strokovno izobraževanje učiteljev; nove vrste stalnega strokovnega usposabljanja

Introduction

Jyväskylä has a significant role in Finnish cultural history. The first training college for Finnish-language teachers was founded in Jyväskylä in 1863 (Viljanen 1992). Since then, there have been many stages in the development of teacher training. The demands for teachers' qualifications have altered many times, mostly due to changes in society and in school organisations. Throughout its existence Finnish teacher education has been paid for by the state, while the school system has also been governed by the National Board of Education. Changes and development of the school system have always led to growth in bureaucracy for schools and teachers. This was especially true in the 1970s during and right after the comprehensive school reform. At that time, teachers felt that demands on them had grown but their personal possibilities to develop their work had become more and more limited. Twenty years after the comprehensive school reform the structures of the comprehensive school were ready, yet there was a feeling among teachers in schools as well as the universities as well as at the Board of Education that it was the time for an internal reform of the school. The central school governmental power was breaking down and being delegated to local authorities and schools. This was the case, for example, of the curriculum, methods and assessment. There was a situation when teachers willing to develop their work were asking and looking for possibilities to get together (Asunta et al., 2005).

Since the University of Jyväskylä has always played an important role in the development of Finnish teacher education this article mainly concentrates on the case of Jyväskylä University which is one of the largest multidisciplinary universities in Finland. There are over 100 subject area disciplines and more than 40 degree programmes leading to a master's degree. There are about 16,000 Finnish students at the moment and approximately 700 international students. The Department of Teacher Education has always been very popular among both Finnish and international students.

Effect of the Bologna process on the structural and content development of the teacher education curriculum

To respond to the new demands of the Bologna process and to take account of the information of the Tuning project, a new curriculum was developed basically during 2004 and 2005 at the Department of Teacher Education. The promoters of the national process of developing a new curriculum in Finland have been the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education. It actually started during 1999 but, practically speaking, only in 2002 when the Ministry of Education published its guidelines for the structural development of all educational structures (Jakku-Sihvonen 2005, 12). However, it was in fact

two years later that the process including all universities really started in practice. At the beginning of this reform process, a so-called National Teacher Education development programme was created and an advisory board (VOKKE) was founded to develop and co-ordinate the national process. Professor Hannele Niemi started real discussions in Finland 2004 in a seminar in Helsinki with her presentation '*Future teacher – a challenge for the educational degree structure.*' For example, in her presentation she posed the following questions: what will change, what kind of expert do we want to 'produce', how to teach novice teachers to become an expert teacher, what is the meaning of the scientific base of education, is teacher training based on the same principles we ask teachers to follow in their teaching, how do we guarantee student mobility, what are the key abilities students should gain (internationality, co-operative teaching and learning etc.), and how to deal with pupils coming from different cultures and with different values.

At the same seminar, Director Armi Mikkola talked about the '*educational structure reform in teacher education*'. She laid stress on an open renewal process that would take account of different collaborations with many different partners and possibly create new local renewal forums. For establishing a continuation from basic training and in-service training, she also emphasised: we should have enough courage to decide which basic contents should be included in a basic degree and which contents we should teach as part of in-service training.

After this 'start of our educational reform' I would say it was clear that one of our main aims when working on a new educational structure that would be in line with the Bologna Declaration we should also develop a continuation between basic teacher training and in-service training. Here, we sought to make sure that there would be enough teachers in the whole country, meaning we should arrange teacher training not only in one or two places but in several different parts of the country. It was also well appreciated that we should guarantee that teachers could develop their own work (Asunta et al. 2005).

When students were asked what they thought was important for a future teacher to gain during their education they emphasised it is very important to have an up-to-date education. They also stressed that teacher education should have the same basic structure across the whole country and that students' workloads should be reasonable. They also emphasised the co-operation between universities, flexibility and taking account of different types of learners as well as making use of ICT to ensure more effective and co-operation between schools and parents that is also more spontaneous.

It was also obvious at the beginning of the structural development of the education system that the new curriculum structure should respond to the demands of one's future working life. Therefore, future teachers need to have training in the area of technology education, entrepreneurship education as well

as collaboration between the school and society. Future teachers should have basic knowledge of the demands of society and at least some areas of working life.

The new curriculum structure for teacher education in Finland

Higher education in Finland is provided at 20 university-level institutions, which are also responsible for postgraduate education. Since the outset, teacher training in Finland was ambitious with strong international roots and a training period lasting four to five years. In addition, at the moment Finnish universities have a two-tier degree structure with an obligatory three-year bachelor's degree (as an independent degree qualifying for master's studies or working life) and a two-year master's degree. The duration of doctoral studies after a master's degree is usually three years. Bachelor's and master's degrees are arranged and taken in multi-disciplinary programmes which consist of studies in at least two subjects. Studies are measured in ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). The requirements for degrees in teacher education are 180 ECTS credits for a bachelor's degree and 120 ECTS credits for a master's degree (Department of Teacher Education 2006a).

To be a qualified teacher in Finland one must have a master's degree: qualification upgrading leads to a master's degree that needs to be accredited by the Faculty of Education. This allows the qualification of the holder to be able to get a permanent position as a teacher.

The structure of pedagogical studies of *subject teachers* which either follow the basic degree (in the old model) or are tightly connected to the degree studies (the new model which will in a few years be the only one) and the whole degree structure of *primary teachers* where pedagogical studies are continually integrated in their training programme are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The structure of pedagogical studies in teacher education (Jyväskylä University).

Pedagogical studies for subject teachers, 60 credits (minimum)			
Studies	Bachelor	Master's	Total (minimum)
Pedagogical studies -included either in a bachelor's degree (25-30) and a master's degree (30-35) <u>or</u> totally in a master's degree (min 60) <u>or</u> as separate studies after a master's degree.	25-30 credits, including guided teaching practice	30-35 credits, including guided practice of at least 15 credits	60 credits
Primary Teacher education			
Studies	Bachelor	Master's	Total (minimum)
	180 credits	120 credits	300 credits
Communication skills, orientational studies	15+5	5	25
Main subject studies	60	80	140
- thesis	10	40	
- research methods	10	5	
- other main subject studies	10		
Teacher's pedagogical studies	25	35	
Integrated studies	60		60
Other subject studies, advanced studies, intercultural studies, ICT etc.	40	35	75

The Primary School Teacher Training Programme for a master's degree consists of the following studies:

1) Language and Communication Studies	25
2) Basic Studies in Education*	25
3) Intermediate Studies in Education*	35
4) Advanced Studies in Education**	80
5) Multidisciplinary School Subject Studies	60
6) Minor Subject Studies	60
7) Elective Courses	15
TOTAL	300

* Including 12 ECTS credits from teaching practice

** Including 16 ECTS credits from teaching practice

We have so-called broad-based teacher education. The University offers courses for teacher qualifications at the following school levels (<http://www.jyu.fi/edu/laitokset/okl/en/>):

- comprehensive school;
- upper secondary school;
- kindergarten;
- vocational institutions; and
- adult education.

Students can also acquire a qualification:

- as an inclusive teacher; or
- as a teacher using sign language.

What is different in Finland?

Finnish students have enjoyed exceptionally high results in international comparisons.

Our traditional culture has always favoured education. We have a 140-year tradition in the formal education of our children and we have both social and regional equality across this large country. Our schooling system has always been based on the ‘education for all’ principle and, since 1970, the comprehensive school system. Parents in Finland are also mostly well educated and we have elaborated home language skills.

Compared to many other countries we have a small population and not so many multicultural pupils in classes. We have a very good and well organised inclusive education that starts taking care of pupils who need it already at a very early age and continues as long as needed. We have special teachers available in each school and special classes for pupils who are unable to stay in a general school class. However, this special education system is also flexible so that pupils are easily transferred in both directions from a special class to a normal class and vice versa as often as required.

Among other things, the teacher as a professional has a high status and the entrance exams are demanding. In our training programme we have developed several integrated study modules which are planned and taught by several teachers together. This means quite a lot of work for teachers but it is also rewarding in many ways. As mentioned earlier, Finnish teacher education has always been research-based partly since our teachers at schools and at universities are well trained and partly since the culture at the Department of Teacher Education also favours this type of teaching (Korpinen 1996, 21-30; Lauriala & Syrjälä 1995; Ojanen 1996). We try to emphasise to our students that one’s learning potential is based on the whole group and try to encourage

shared learning and shared expertise during lessons and group work. We also attempt to encourage communication between students and staff.

In-service education and teacher training

As mentioned earlier, to be qualified as a teacher in Finland one has to have a master's degree. That means a different challenge for in-service training in Finland than seen in many other countries where teachers can only have a bachelor's degree and still be a professional. Every teacher has the privilege to attend 2-3 days of in-service training each year as part of their workload. This has been approved by the teachers' professional union. The school director can also force some reluctant teachers to undertake in-service training because of this agreement. If a teacher does not want to attend the director can dock their salary by 2-3 days (depending on schools). This system helps us to take care of teachers' lifelong professional growth. To be honest, it must be said that many teachers in Finland would like to attend more than these two days of in-service training courses but since many courses are quite expensive the schools cannot always send their teachers to attend them. However, the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education also support many of these in-service training courses.

Formally, the in-service training courses are mainly arranged by the schools themselves, the National Board of Education, the National Centre for Professional Development in Education, teacher education departments or other departments of universities. The main aim is to give fresh, up-to-date pedagogical and subject-related knowledge to teachers. Especially during the period of the school curriculum change many national in-service training courses were arranged for teachers and teacher educators. Also when ICT and multimedia applications started to be part of teaching at schools many teachers were willing to go to in-service training courses. Today, teachers also are willing to develop integrated courses and want some training or peer meetings for this. A few examples of the types of in-service training courses offered in the area of science and education are: '*Activity-based science workshop in the primary school*' (Asunta, 2001), '*In-service science courses for primary teachers: Implementation of different types of in-service training courses in Finland*' (Asunta 1997), '*Some chemistry of plastics, coffee and tea*' (Bader, Asunta, & Nick, 1997).

The Department of Teacher Education's in-service training programmes differ from year to year (Department of Teacher Education 2006). However, some of them are offered regularly such as Multidisciplinary Studies in the Subjects and Cross-curricular Themes taught in Basic Education (School Subject Studies) and the Multicultural Counselling Network – developing teamwork.

New types of in-service training

New types of in-service training based on shared expertise have been effectively developed during the past two years. The main idea of this training is that school teachers ‘train’ university teachers based on their professional everyday knowledge and university teachers will tell teachers about the latest research on different learning or methodological aspects, based on their own research findings. The idea is that co-operative seminars and pedagogical days will be arranged together every year. Both teachers and teacher educators can be trainers as well as participants in these events. School teachers can get credits for the workshops and lectures they will attend and can use these credits as part of their degree structures. These credits can also be used for teachers’ postgraduate studies or to compensate for compulsory in-service training. Some examples of the programme offered in the last two years include:

- Multicultural School
- Chemistry Workshop
- Talented pupils – a challenge for teachers
- How to be a media-critical reader
- Do you understand concepts? Use your hands! How to visualise mathematics concepts at pre- and lower primary levels.
- How to face parents?
- Shared thinking model
- Multimedia as a pedagogical challenge of today
- Immigrants at school
- Group work: philosophies and educational aspects
- Schools and internationality

Qualification upgrading

Because of the predicted lack of professional teachers in the area of Mathematics and Science as well as for the English language, the professional development programme started a few years ago in Jyväskylä. Those people who already had a suitable university degree, for example an engineer or an ICT adviser, or who held an old bachelor’s degree, could apply for a two- to three-year professional development programme. The author has been responsible for this programme of educating mathematics and science teachers. Every student has had their personal study plan agreed to by lecturers and students (subject by subject). It may consist of some subject studies, pedagogical studies and school practice studies depending on the applicant’s background. It has mainly been arranged as weekend courses and included a lot of independent work. More than 100 teachers have completed this training so far.

Some responses to future challenges and a conclusion

Today both schools and education face a growing amount of challenges set by societal and international trends. These include, for example, the influences of a stronger EU and globalisation, the expanding of international mobility, increasing diversity within the populations of individual states, alteration of the traditional 'mono-cultural' nation-state, changes in one's working life, the threat of marginalisation and growing international interdependency and worldwide problems. Teachers have to work with groups of students that involve much greater cultural, religious, lingual and social variety than before and they have to be prepared to be able to support the growth, learning and integration into both the school and society of *all* of these students. In other words: How can the school support the development and learning of *all students* so they acquire a solid foundation for a good life, become active participants and cope with the challenges of society? And how can the school have a positive long-term influence on the development of society and the globalising world through all of its actions and its students, i.e., members of society and future decision-makers? Teachers have a key role in this process and this poses a real challenge to teacher education – a challenge that needs to be taken seriously (Nurminen 2005).

Different researchers have paid attention to these and many ways have been developed to respond to these challenges (Banks 1997; Banks 1999; Bennet 1995; Asunta 2005a). The Multicultural Education Studies Programme designed by Nurminen (2005) is one of them. It is a specialisation programme built on the Teacher Education Programme and offers future teachers a chance to further develop their competence to teach multicultural classes and successfully integrate citizenship and international education in their teaching (Finnish National Core Curriculum 2004).

To respond to the future challenges, the Multicultural Education Studies could consist of five modules, each of which focuses on a major theme in the field of multicultural education. The modules could be as follows:

1. The Multicultural School and Multicultural Pedagogy (including, for example, the following topics: *Diversity and Multicultural Pedagogy at School, Towards Expertise in Teaching Children with a Multicultural Background, Educational Systems in Different Countries, Producing Teaching and Learning Materials*).
2. Language issues (including, for example: *Teaching Finnish as a Second Language*).
3. Intercultural Communication and Co-operation (including the topic: *Introduction to Intercultural Communication*).
4. Finland in the EU and the Globalised World (including the topics: *Multidimensional Citizenship, Introduction to International Development Cooperation*).

5. Practice – Intercultural/International Experience (including: *Intercultural Practice /Projects*).

Unfortunately, so far we have only been able to start this Multicultural Education Studies programme due to a lack of money and insufficiently competent teachers.

Another area that more attention should be paid to is teaching inclusive pedagogy for all teacher students. It is absolutely necessary that we raise the amount of inclusive education and plan similar types of programmes as described above in the case of multicultural studies. Also there is a new trend in innovative teaching to connect the school and society as much as possible for which teachers need in-service training. We carried out a new type of innovative, integrated and practical course with the main aims being: to become familiar with school-commercial enterprise models, to study the different models of collaboration between the school and society as well as to enable a number of student teachers to carry out co-operative visits to some commercial enterprises (Asunta 2005b).

Among other challenges we need to appreciate that, since the nature of gaining knowledge has changed – from rote learning to evaluative, critical and more applied directions – this means we have to develop critical reading skills as well as evaluation systems that teachers did not learn in their basic training. Further, we need to face the fact that pupils have different types of learning strategies and study the research in that area as well as base our training on it. We need to develop and use various types of teaching methods so that different types of learners will be addressed. Team work and reciprocal skills are also important but the question is whether we give the tools for future teachers to learn and teach them? In addition, among many other things social and ethical skills should be taught.

So even if the Finnish teacher education has already yielded good results for a long time there remain many challenges for both teacher training and in-service training.

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