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Significant Trends in the Development of Finnish Teacher Education Programs (1860-2010)

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Abstract: The roots of teacher training in Finland extend to the 1860s. The evolution of teacher training was closely connected to the history of elementary education and changes in educational policy and the Finnish society. Recently, the Finnish educational system and its teacher education programs have fared extremely well in international comparisons. This raises a question concerning the kinds of initiatives and policies that this story has involved. This article will provide some answers, and it also discusses the trends and developmental aspirations that have molded the approaches to teacher training in this country. The article is based on Finnish research literature on teacher training and relevant contemporary developmental reports and laws. The main purpose is to provide a review of the historical development of Finnish teacher training—its significant achievements and the most crucial turning points—and then to discuss their contribution to the educational outcomes in the current system.

Keywords: education; elementary education; teacher training; comprehensive education; compulsory education; educational system.

Tendencias significativas en el desarrollo de programas de formación docente finlandeses (1860-2010)

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Resumen: Los orígenes de los programas de formación docente en Finlandia se extienden hasta 1860. La evolución de la formación del profesorado está estrechamente ligado a la historia de la educación primaria y los cambios en la política educativa y de la sociedad finlandesa.

Recientemente, el sistema educativo finlandés y sus programas de formación docente han ido muy bien evaluados en las comparaciones internacionales. Esto plantea una cuestión relativa a los tipos de iniciativas y políticas involucradas en esos desarrollos. Este artículo proporciona algunas respuestas, y también analiza las tendencias y aspiraciones de desarrollo que han moldeado los enfoques de la formación del profesorado en este país. El artículo se basa en los estudios de investigación finlandesa sobre la formación del profesorado, informes de desarrollo contemporáneos y las leyes relevantes. El objetivo principal es proporcionar una revisión de la evolución histórica de la formación del profesorado finlandés—sus logros significativos y los más importantes puntos de inflexión y, a continuación, hablar de su contribución a los resultados de el sistema actual de educación.

Palabras-clave: educación, educación primaria, la formación del profesorado, la educación integral, la educación obligatoria, el sistema educativo.

Tendências significativas no desenvolvimento de programas de formação docente finlandeses (1860-2010)

Resumo: As origens dos programas de formação de professores na Finlândia começam em 1860. A evolução da formação de professores está intimamente ligada à história do ensino primário e as mudanças na política educacional e da sociedade finlandesa. Recentemente, o sistema de ensino finlandês e programas de formação de professores têm sido avaliadas muito bem em comparações internacionais. Isso coloca a questão sobre os tipos de iniciativas e políticas envolvidas nesses acontecimentos. Este artigo fornece algumas respostas, e também discute as tendências e as aspirações de desenvolvimento que configuram a formação de professores no país. O artigo é baseado em pesquisas, relatórios de desenvolvimento dos professores finlandeses, e as leis contemporâneos e relevantes. O principal objetivo é fornecer uma revisão do desenvolvimento histórico do professorado finlandês,, suas realizações significativas e os pontos de viragem mais importantes e, em seguida, discutir a sua contribuição para os resultados do sistema de ensino atual.

Palavras-chave: educação; ensino fundamental; formação de professores; educação integral; escolaridade obrigatória; sistema de educação.

Introduction

Despite the many whirlwinds it has experienced—or perhaps thanks to them—the Finnish educational system and teacher training programs have succeeded in international comparisons better than many other European countries or, for example, the United States of America (OECD, 2000, 2003; Kupiainen, Hautamäki, & Karjalainen, 2009). Almost all measurements and indicators show that Finland is among the top countries—or “superpowers” (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012)—in the field of education (Kämppe et al., 2012; Lavonen & Laaksonen, 2009; Välijärvi et al., 2007). Recognition for this success belongs mostly to our good teachers and to the teacher training system, which has been the subject of worldwide interest ever since the first results from the aforementioned international comparisons of pupils’ academic achievements have been published. In this article, we will identify some significant phases in the history of Finnish teacher training. Our study highlights the most significant changes that occurred in the Finnish society and educational policy and how they affected teacher training in Finland. The purpose of the review is to provide an

introduction to key points that are interesting and worth highlighting when contemplating the present features—and the success—of the approaches that characterize the system. The article is based on Finnish research literature on teacher training and relevant contemporary developmental reports and laws.

Before going into the historical details, it is worth having a look at the current educational system of the country. In today's Finland, education is a public service, and general education, vocational education, and higher education are free of charge.¹ Basic education, upper secondary education, and vocational education are financed by the state and local authorities. General education and vocational education are provided by local authorities. In Finland, these local providers of education mean basically municipalities who are responsible for arranging education and who can set up their own local curricula with special emphases for example music or languages but which lean on the national core curriculum (Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi, 2006).

At the age of six, Finnish children have the right to participate in voluntary and free preschool education and nearly all six-year-old children—96% of this age group (see Eurydice, 2009) do so. According to the Finnish Education Act (628/1998), all children have to go to school in the year that they turn seven. Primary school begins at the beginning of the autumn semester. Basic education lasts nine years. At the comprehensive schools, general class teachers are mainly responsible for classes 1–6, and most of the subjects are taught by specialist subject teachers in grades 7–9.

Finnish teachers are educated at universities, in teacher training departments and units that are part of the colleges of education. In this article, we consistently use the concept of “teacher training.” In this article, we are interested in discussing what did some of the policies that contributed to the success story of the Finnish teacher training and educational system involve? How did the leading areas of emphasis develop since the establishment of the first teacher training college in Jyväskylä? In this article, in answer to these questions, we review the historical development of Finnish teacher training—its major trends and the most crucial turning points starting from the beginning of teacher training in Finland when the first teacher training colleges were established all the way to the present day, highlighting the crucial turning points such as the start of university-level teacher training in the 1960s, educational decentralization in the 1980s, and development toward the research-based teacher training. Certain emphases have remained important for over a century; for example, teacher training and the teaching profession have always been popular among the youth: although age groups become smaller and smaller, the number of applicants for teacher training has increased so that only about 10% of applicants can be accepted (Räihä, 2010). Especially women are interested in teacher training. Finland had gender quotas for men in teacher training programs but the quotas were abandoned in 1989 because the selection clearly favored men. Men form about 20 % of student teachers in Finland after the law of equality, and thus a salient question was and has been ever since how to attract more men in class teacher training (Liimatainen, 2002).

On the other hand, given the constant pressure for reformation, there have been certain recurrent questions about the system, which are discussed in the conclusion of this article. The main purpose here is to identify the reasons for success, based on the historical development of teacher training programs.

¹ See http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/koulutusjaerjestelmae/liitteet/finnish_education.pdf

Establishment of Teacher Training Colleges

The origins of teacher training in Finland can be traced to the 1860s. The training of teachers was designed in keeping with the viewpoints of contemporary Finnish educationalists. Johan V. Snellman, who was a Fennoman (a supporter and enthusiast of Finnish language and culture; the Fennoman movement aimed at turning the Finns in control and the Finnish language into the mainstream language in Finland which was not the case during the regimes of Soviet Union and Sweden over Finland) and a developer and supporter of the Finnish language, was convinced that the establishment of decent teacher training colleges would ameliorate the quality of education. According to another important personality in the history of Finnish education, who is considered the father of Finnish elementary education, Uno Cygnaeus, colleges should follow strict religious principles. At the time, Christianity had a strong foothold in Finland and formed an important part of educational goals too. He defined the first principle for teachers' college students as follows:

The college should not only arouse religious mind in students and a severe understanding about the important vocation of an elementary school teachers but also prevent them from being proud and overly self-esteeming. (Cygnaeus 1910, pp. 201-202)

Teaching was intended to be educational and to arouse decent characteristics and hobbyism in students (Paksuniemi, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2012a). According to previous studies, teacher training, introduced almost a hundred years ago, was recognized as important and laid the foundation for the teacher training that is still done in Finland at present (Paksuniemi & Määttä, 2011ab; Paksuniemi, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). Those who graduated as teachers served in small two-teacher schools and diligently took care of their educational tasks—their mission—even in the most remote villages (Kilpimaa, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2012; Lakkala, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2012). The national purpose was to distinguish Finland as its own nation because Finland had been under the Swedish and Russian regimes: the pursuit of independency was prevailing and finally succeeded in 1917. Still, the Finnish nation had to work hard to maintain national identity and political freedom (Anttonen, 1998). This necessitated for example the use of Finnish language, literacy. Education was seen as a tool for this (Cygnaeus, 1910). Moreover, it is worth noticing that until the twentieth century, Finland was a predominantly agrarian society, and more than 80% of the population lived in the countryside (Anttonen, 1998). Anneli Anttonen (1998) pointed out that in Finland, “citizenship was thematized in terms of education and enlightened citizens” (p. 358).

The development of teacher training programs was closely connected to the history of elementary education. The first teacher training college for elementary education teachers was introduced in Jyväskylä in 1863, three years before the decree on elementary education took effect (Isosaari, 1966). By the end of the century, seven other colleges were established in different parts of Finland. The law on compulsory education, passed in 1921, entailed a new emphasis on teacher training, and new teacher training colleges were established across the country (Paksuniemi, 2009; Paksuniemi & Määttä, 2011a, 2011b; Paksuniemi, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). Criteria were set for the establishment of colleges. They had to be located in the countryside and function as boarding schools for men and women. Teaching practicums should be carried out in separate teacher training schools, known as model schools, where student teachers could practice teaching (Paksuniemi, 2009).

In Finland, conditions during the war years (1939–1944) made teacher training difficult, and at the end of the 1940s, the authorities tried to compensate for the lack of teachers by introducing exceptional teacher training. The basic situation was that the operation of teacher training colleges had to be temporarily closed during the war years 1939–1945, as several college buildings served as

stationary war hospitals and student teachers served at front or in other defense duties. After the wars, the challenge was to have enough resources and teachers to teach children of baby boomers. More students were taken in teacher training and for example male students who returned training from the front could finish their studies flexibly. In the 1960s, the number of elementary school pupils started to decrease because of people moving from countryside to cities and then also in cities since the nation became wealthier. This meant that the need for teachers declined. Small village schools were closed and more elementary school teachers seemed to be available than the number needed in Finland (Lassila, 2005).

Toward Academic Teacher Training

In the 1960s, the educational system in Finland was reevaluated as the Finnish parliament discussed the need for comprehensive education. Several related bills were introduced and the idea of comprehensive schools that would be free and available for all started to receive more and more support. The ideology of equality of educational opportunities prevailed. Especially in the Nordic welfare states, the educational reforms from the 1960s onward followed this ideology producing, for instance, comprehensive school systems and a considerable increase in the number and availability of institutions of higher education. The purpose was to eliminate educational dead-ends—meaning that everyone would have the opportunity to educate themselves if wanting so—and to open up all educational channels to higher education (Kivinen, Ahola, & Hedman, 2001). Consequently, the Comprehensive School Committee was established and it delivered its report in 1965 (KM, 1965). Simultaneously, the Teacher Training Committee proposed that future teacher training should be provided at universities and should be based on graduation from upper secondary school (KM, 1967). Soon, a Committee on Comprehensive Education Teacher was established (KM, 1969) triggering a painful process for teacher training colleges and culminating with closure of the remaining elementary school teacher training colleges by the so-called abolition law in 1969 (Law 899/1969).

In 1971, the teacher training law transferred teacher training to universities, and faculties of education were established in Finnish universities during 1973–1975. The purpose was to raise the level of teacher training and standardize it. The 1973 Teacher Training Committee delivered its report in 1975 and provided outlines for unified academic teacher training. According to the report (KM, 1975):

(1) Training of teachers for comprehensive schools and upper secondary education schools should be academic; in other words, it should be provided by universities.

(2) Such training should be standardized.

(3) Basic teacher training should provide teachers with relatively broad-based formal competence that could be complemented with continuing education.

(4) Studies of the science of education had to be developed so that teachers would be ready to act as educators; when understood generally, this meant that they would have optimistic attitudes to education, and that they could integrate the pedagogical theory and practice better than before,

(5) Teacher training should be infused with societal, educational, and political substance.

In 1978 and 1979, new degree requirements for teacher training were confirmed. The new departments of teacher training were responsible for teacher training and research on teacher education, teaching, and learning (Kansanen, 2012; Krokfors, 2007). To standardize and “academize” teacher training in Finland, it was decided that all comprehensive school and upper secondary school teachers had to complete a master’s degree. The jobs of class teachers and subject teachers were considered demanding although their training had different emphases. The curricula

of teacher training programs were unified and based on either the science of education or the subject to be taught. In practice, it meant that class teachers majored in the science of education, whereas subject teachers had their subject-matter field as the major component. As teacher training led to a master's degree, all student teachers had to produce their master's theses. The purpose was to provide all teachers with as high a quality of knowledge as possible, based on the latest research. In addition, teachers had to be prepared to follow and exploit the newest research findings in their teaching. This laid the foundation for the idea of seeing teachers as researchers in their own field of work. Teachers were expected to work with an open and critical mind and to contribute to the development of their profession.

Because teacher training was being provided by universities, methodological studies formed a part of the curriculum. Class teachers had to familiarize themselves with research methodology from as early as the initial phases of their training in order to be able to work on their theses. The nature and level of methodological studies, which should form part of teacher training was highly debated at the beginning of the university-based teacher training. Some of the former teachers from teacher training colleges were of the opinion that methodological studies were not their field. Likewise, some of the students complained that they did not see the connection between a teacher's work and methodological studies, nor the necessity for a master's thesis (Niemi, 1992).

This criticism has been modified along the way through advancement of teacher educators in research work and the incidence of such educators graduating as PhDs. The change has occurred along with the development in research studies. Still, at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, many of the student teachers' studies were empirical surveys that were seen as useless and trivial. Research results that were reported on the basis of correlations, factor analyses, and laws of averages seemed to have little to do with the reality of the teacher's work (Lauriala, 2008).

Little by little, research methodology also incorporated qualitative methods. The spectrum of qualitative research was broadened to include methods all the way from biographical and narrative studies to ethnographic studies, and first and foremost, action research (see e.g., Kivelä & Siljander, 2007). This methodological expansion produced studies in which student teachers could participate in projects aimed at developing teaching or schools. Because of the inclusion of more versatile research methods, research on teaching and education became wider. As students and teachers could write papers telling about their work, they became more conscious of their educational views and actions and those of their colleagues (e.g., Kallioniemi et al., 2010; Kansanen, 1989). This enabled increased critical reflection and teachers became more self-aware which, together, constitute the core of professional development. At the same time, the common professional language as a distinctive feature of the field developed (Lauriala, 2008). In the 1990s, students also started to appreciate the depth of teachers' studies (Niemi & Kohonen, 1995). Methodological studies were important also, because with them, teachers were eligible for PhD studies. From an international perspective, this was a clear advantage in the Finnish approach to teacher training (Niemi, 2005).

More Flexibility and Scope through Local and Regional Profiles of Teacher Training

Administration of the system was decentralized in the Finnish society at the end of the 1980s. The intention behind this was to improve the quality of education by increasing flexibility and by introducing new evaluation mechanisms. According to Rinne, Kivirauma, and Simola (2002), the statements of education policy in the 1990s repeated the strong belief in social progress through the continuous development of education. The Finnish approach to schooling had been centrally planned, but with decentralization, local decision-making and responsibility were emphasized. Even

teacher training units had to be profiled according to their unique strong areas (Tella, 1996). Rinne, Kivirauma, and Simola (2002) summed up these developments in this way: “While previously it was believed that the goals of education could be achieved by strict norm steering, it was now believed that they could be achieved by setting national core goals and evaluating the achievements afterwards” (p. 646).

First, the school-specific freedom in regard to curriculum development was increased based on the principle of regionalism, and later on, the responsibility for the development of teaching and curriculum was transferred to school boards. Teachers’ work was no longer centrally directed and teachers had more and more responsibility in planning and development. The 1994 National Core Curriculum for Basic Education supported this aspiration. It emphasized the responsibility of teachers and schools in curriculum planning and stressed collegial cooperation at the local level. This also necessitated new emphases in teacher training.

The development of Finnish teacher training was also influenced by national and international research and developments in the essential nature of teacherhood and the teacher’s role as a researcher. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Finnish teacher training system started to embrace the idea of considering teachers’ work as constant research. It was thought that the work itself required conscious evaluation and reconstruction of the school. The realization of these goals does not necessarily happen easily or at once in practical teacher training. The reconstruction has supposedly been enhanced by numerous national and international evaluations of Finnish teacher training (Buchberger et al., 1994).

The standards for teacher qualification were further reformed at the turn of the 1990s when the Teacher Training Development Committee (KM, 1989) suggested new changes. The leading principles of education were flexibility, availability of optional courses, and a wide scope. Obligatory general studies as part of the class teacher’s training were decreased and, concurrently, the portion of optional studies was increased. It was suggested that the assessment of teaching skill should be discontinued, thus making the teaching practicum a more flexible part of didactics.

Evaluation of teaching skills had been one of the culminating stages in Finnish teacher training (cf. Paksuniemi & Määttä, 2011a) and the score attained for teaching skills had been viewed as a special indicator of a student teacher’s value and competence. Because of this, the atmosphere during teacher training practicums was stigmatized because of its association with competition and individuals “performing” to impress assessors (see Poulou, 2007). It also reflected in the way teachers performed on the job, strengthening the ideology of maverick teachers; this was based on the perception that, traditionally, teachers’ work in the classroom consisted of individualistic actions.

Along with the aspiration to turn teacher training into programs resembling adult education, teacher training for various school levels was to be unified. A central goal was to clarify the roles of basic and supplementary training and to develop forms of continuing training. Teacher training was intended to provide student teachers with wide-ranging professional competence, flexibility in terms of mobility and opportunity for continuing training, professional development, and appreciation of the teaching profession. Other less central goals were to enhance connections between work life and teacher training and to promote opportunities for international interaction (KM, 1989).

Plenty of societal changes took place in Finland during the 1990s. The economic depression that started at the turn of the decade of the 1990s directed the state authorities’ attention to reductions in costs, and the axe fell upon teacher training, as well. On the other hand, Finland joined the European Union in the early 1990s, which was part of the political change of that time. Rinne, Kivirauma, and Simola (2002) describe the change as follows:

The old Nordic welfare state model, sometimes called the Social Democratic model, has had to give way to new ideologies and models of activity. Just as national

decision-making power over financial policies was renounced to the international market, in educational policy the autonomy of the end-users of educational services at the municipal level was increased at the expense of national control. (p. 646)

As the purpose was to improve efficiency, various ideas were discussed, like for example the idea of transferring part of the teacher training from universities to polytechnics as the polytechnics were introduced in Finland as the new part of tertiary education system (Uljens, 2007). The reason was also common European visions regarding higher education policy and aspiration to develop polytechnics (Jussila, 2009). Likewise, discussion concerning the position of teacher training schools was stirred. Nearly 20% cuts and savings of public resources were made in education during the 1990s (Rinne, Kivirauma, & Simola, 2002).

New Evaluations and Pressures of Abolition of Teacher Training Departments

In the middle of the depression at the beginning of the 1990s, the ministry of education launched a project involving the evaluation and development of educational degrees. The purpose of the project was to produce practical suggestions for “the structural development” of programs for teacher training and development of the science of education. In practice, this meant measures for cutting the costs. The project was expected to compile suggestions for development of degrees, student selection, and teaching, and for work distribution and evaluation and surveillance of the quality of education (OPM, 1994). The project also included self-evaluation, visits to universities and faculties, and an international evaluation component. As many teacher training departments felt that their continued operation was threatened, they were on the defensive. This did not lay a very fruitful foundation for the self-evaluations by the faculties and departments (Jussila, 2009). Nevertheless, the outcome was that departments maintained their right to operate but had a new task: they had to define their own profiles and project the areas in which they had unique strengths.

The evaluation report highlighted several principles to guide development including, for example, paying attention to students’ own goals, strengthening research activity, increasing technology and communication, addressing cultural differences, increase in inequality, and confronting the need for change. Juhani Jussila (2009) noted that the goal setting was, however, based on relatively superficially defined objectives. The demand for profiling made faculties of education and teacher training departments alert, which was manifested in the “rushed” pursuit of various trendy concepts, for example, “adventure education,” “change agents,” “encounter skills,” or “the new teacherhood.” Yet, the invocation of the new technology and the orientation to the future brought a breath of new air into the objectives of teacher training and concretized the rapid change taking place in the Finnish society.

Once again in 1995, new regulations for degrees and for training in educational sciences were imposed. Soon after that, a new evaluation of teacher training was arranged—this time initiated by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). In addition to that, an evaluation was performed by a panel of international experts. Many objectives, some of which were already familiar, were presented as recommendations to improve the national system. Among the principles that received special emphasis were the social nature of education, cooperation among various partners, the ability of teachers to work with a variety of pupils, internationality, multiculturalism, connections with working life, teachers’ coping skills, thematic educational content, and diversified teaching practicums (Jussila, 2009).

The numerous evaluations and demands for specialization led to the development of specific strategies in teacher training. Each teacher training department pursued creating their own special

profile that would emphasize the special features of each department: some had emphasis on arts, others on sciences, early education, or for example, international cooperation. This was due to the extensive project carried out at the end of the 1990s to meet the teachers' needs for basic and supplementary education. The task of the project was to create a model that would help forecast the quantitative and qualitative needs in teacher training (Luukkainen, 2000). Dozens of goals concerning teachers and their basic training were introduced in the project report. The goals were grouped into three areas of development: the changing nature of the teacher's work, everyday work in educational institutions, and the need for change in education.

After that, in the development plan for teacher training (OPM, 2001), the Ministry of Education brought up student selection, cooperation, pedagogical studies, and the teacher's position. The same objectives were emphasized in the following development plans created by the Ministry of Education (OPM, 2006; OPM, 2007; OPM, 2008). During the period 2003–2006, the National Level Coordination Project of Degree Program Development in Teacher Training and the Sciences of Education funded by the Ministry of Education had the important task of cooperatively developing a two-tier system and an ECTS-system based on the Bologna Process. Degree programs were developed for all academic teacher training provided at Finnish universities: for kindergarten, class and subject teachers, as well as for early childhood education, education, and adult education. The project gave recommendations for the education of experts majoring in education, that is, class teachers, and suggested pedagogical studies for subject teachers (Jakku-Sihvonen, Tissari, & Uusiautti, 2007). During the Bologna process, from 2003 to 2006, the degree-program reform and the application of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) standards played a central role, but there also were further initiatives to develop a more versatile framework for teacher training in Europe (see e.g., Kozma, 2008). A special European expert group defined academic generic competences and core competences, and established some pedagogical guidelines for developing academic curricula (González & Wagenaar, 2003, 2005). Therefore, the degree programs and curricula to follow the new recommendations but also in facilitating transparency, comparability and the substitution of studies at other universities. Teacher training was designed based on the European Commission's view, according to which a teacher's profession necessitates high competence, life-long learning, mobility, and partnership.

Conclusion

The outcomes and the success of Finnish teacher training can be explained by reference to the continuous evaluations performed by various agencies and the direct ongoing criticism of the systems and processes involved. Traditionally, teachers have been seen as “the guards of plenty” (Simola, 1995) and “future makers” (Jussila & Saari, 1991). Therefore, teacher training has been stretched and challenged. Relentless questioning of the achievements of teacher training programs and continuous seeking of new and better approaches and solutions have kept educators alert and sensitive to the need to consciously and constantly analyze, in each phase of development, what constitutes a good teacher training system. This includes determining the kinds of objectives it should aim at, the methods that are suitable, and the kind of research it should produce.

The Finnish teacher training system has developed into its present form through significant structural changes and evaluations, and constant reforms. And the new challenges facing teacher training will not end, by any means. European integration, globalization, and multiculturalism, the pervasive influence of social media, and the constant changes in the society, in family life, and in working life all necessitate incessant reviewing of schools, education, and teachers. How could we, then, sum up the factors that may lay the foundation of the Finnish pupils' success—especially when

considered the role of the Finnish teacher training in it? We will present some explanations (see also Niemi, 2005).

(1) Research-based teacher training

Being based on research, teacher training supports the new kind of professionalism that teachers experience. Teachers are provided with opportunities to develop readiness to question and renew their work. Teachers can develop in their profession by carrying out practical investigations or by researching their work in the role of practitioner-researcher (see Richardson, 1994; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). At their best, teachers become reflective practitioners as the counterpoint of technical or routine-like performers of repetitive tasks (Campoy, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2000; Lauriala, 2008).

(2) General appreciation of education and high-quality teacher training

Good education is appreciated in Finland. Children are encouraged to go to school and study. Finns believe strongly in the power and importance of education. It is also a matter of cultural tradition and national identity (Niemi, 2005). Teacher training is considered academically demanding and therefore appealing. And it provides eligibility for further scientific studies.

(3) Reverence for the teacher's position and belief in education as a civilizing force

Since its infancy, teacher training has had admirable educational goals. The teachers' task was to civilize the nation. One hundred years ago, the task of school was to guide pupils toward "decency" and diligent citizenship, and teachers' work involved a strong educational and moral dimension (Paksuniemi, 2009; Paksuniemi & Määttä, 2011ab). Europeanized teacher training is still balanced with the Finnish national cultural heritage and respect for civilization, education, learning, and teacherhood. The only difference is that, today, these principles have new emphases that stress the need for sensitivity and tolerance to greater degrees than before.

The teacher's task and position are respected; in fact, they are downright honorable. In the Finnish society, teachers are considered capable of changing the future and enhancing the ethical and social goals as well as the equality of the society (Anttonen, 1998; Simola, Kivinen, & Rinne, 1997; see also Sockett, 2008). The teacher's responsibility for and impact upon pupils' development are seen as remarkable (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011).

(4) The diversified contents of teacher training—"a multiprofessional degree"

Teacher training and the teacher's work provide a chance for multiprofessional activities and a path toward constant development. Teacher training can be considered as leading to the qualifications of a multi-skilled professional, a sort of "super degree." Many of those who apply for teacher training have a special talent as their strength. They are students who are musical, artistic, or athletic, and linguistically, mathematically, or intellectually talented; they are students whose success at school has encouraged them to apply for teacher training. The degree provides them with multiprofessional competence and the ability to develop their own resources and talents as well as those of various pupils.

(5) Teacher training secures the future

The previous achievements of teacher training programs are viewed with respect in Finland, and they encourage and challenge those involved, today, to seize the present and prepare for future challenges. Finland is a part of Europe as well as part of a globalized world, and members of the Finnish society need those competences and educational opportunities described in the Lisbon Strategy. Finnish teachers know they can work independently and as responsible professionals in

education—professionals who, thanks to their training—are able to develop their work and evaluate it from various social and ethical perspectives (see Tatto, 2006). These perspectives act as empowering motivators that support teachers in coping with their work, and they are the most far-reaching in their significance.

In sum, the quality of university teaching can be evaluated according to many criteria: for example, subject matter knowledge, breadth, topicality, orientation to theory versus orientation to practice, necessity versus redundancy, interest versus dullness, difficulty versus intelligibility, fragmentation versus structure, or hastiness versus intensity (Lahtinen & Toom, 2009). In addition, Flynn and Vredevoogd (2010) suggest that universities and colleges have to be more flexible, more thoughtful, and more open to student involvement in decision making. These demands concern Finnish teacher training, too. For example, teachers' collaborative and social skills as well as their subject matter knowledge have been considered important (e.g., Elliott, Isaacs, & Chugani, 2010); but these alone do not guarantee positive learning outcomes from pupils (Parker, Ndoye, & Imig, 2009).

As shown in the previous sections of this article, research on the teacher's changing position and role had gained a foothold in teacher training starting from the 1980s and has strengthened during the twenty-first century (see also Niemi, 1995). Research has been focused on teachers as researchers of their own work (e.g., Elliot, 1991, 1998; Kincheloe, 2006), decision makers and active developers (e.g., Martin, MacLaren, & McLaren, 2006; Nakata, 2011), reflective professionals (e.g., Ashcroft & Griffiths, 1989; Campoy, 2005; Shulman & Shulman, 2004; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1991; Zeichner & Liston, 1987), developers of teaching practices (e.g., McGlenn, 2009; Richardson, 1994), ethically responsible officers (e.g., Tom, 1984; Strike & Soltis, 1985; Niemi, 1988), developers of collegial school communities (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1990; Sagor, 2009), and critical change makers (Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; Liston & Zeichner, 1987).

Professor Hannele Niemi (2005) has pointed out how all these trends have emphasized the everlasting incompleteness of a teacher's profession: teachers are never ready but their work is guided by great responsibility for developing their work and profession. Teachers are not just disseminators of information but have considerably wider communal responsibility. The relationship with increasingly diverse groups of pupils, the ever-changing content of teaching, and the need for multiprofessional cooperation are salient. In addition to planning for education and school work, their responsibility covers societal questions.

However, in the whirlwind of various development projects and requirements, it is important to keep in mind the basic task of teachers. Strong self-concepts and core values are the sources of stability that enable teachers to maintain a sense of purpose in their work (Korthagen, 2004). Furthermore, Korthagen (2004) claimed that "it is important for teachers to learn how they can get (back) in touch with their core qualities" as these qualities are "in danger of being lost when a technical, instrumental approach to competence is employed" (p. 93). According to Blay and Ireson (2009), there is a link between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their classroom practices on one hand, and pupils' success, on the other (see also Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; see also Kuh et al., 2008). Therefore, it is interesting to forecast the future directions of Finnish teacher training and the prospects of their pupils' success.

A decade ago, Rinne, Kivirauma, and Simola (2002) stated that "the market-based rhetoric and practices have not been able to take root in the core areas of the traditional Nordic welfare state—education, social services, and health—as easily as in other areas of society" (p. 655). They noted that changes do not happen very quickly in Finland, but before they do, they are weighed carefully, based on the specific history of our education. According to Webb et al. (2004), the Finnish policy-makers' conception of teacher professionalism is exceptional with the idea of teacher

empowerment. Constructivist theories of learning have led Finland to move away from centrally prescribed national curricula toward the development of school-based curricula with active learning pedagogies resulting in changing roles and responsibilities for teachers (Webb et al., 2004).

Our paper discussed the development of Finnish teacher training. What makes this review topical is the connection with Finland's success in international comparisons of student achievement. Therefore, the purpose was to tie the review to this aspect, to describe what has been and is going on in Finland, and to propose these educational and political changes in teacher training as part of the explanation for the progress of Finland's 5.5-million people as well as the nation's achievement of becoming one of the internationally acknowledged educational superpowers.

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