



## DIDACTIC CLOSURE: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND PEDAGOGIC KNOWLEDGE IN FINNISH TEACHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract**—This article concerns the kind of symbolic and strategic value that science-legitimated pedagogical knowledge has in the professionalization of teacher education. The aim is to try to understand certain peculiarities in this body of knowledge through studying the history of the “science of teaching” and of the professionalization of teacher education in Finland. The conclusion is that there are at least three professionalist drifts that produce and reproduce a kind of “decontextualized pedagogic discourse” in Finnish teacher education: the pursuit of science legitimation, loyalty to state educational reforms and a striving for distinction from rival disciplines. The analysis shows that, at least up to the present day, the science-legitimated knowledge system for teacher education has served as a very successful strategy in the struggles on the field of Finnish higher education. © 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

### Introduction

The professionalization of teaching has become one of the self-evident prerequisites in Anglo-American academic discussion on school improvement. Two U.S. reports from 1986 (*The Nation Prepared* and *Tomorrow's Teacher*) have been especially influential in constructing the almost unanimous conviction that teaching should be regarded more as classic professional work, like that of the physician for example (see Darling-Hammond, 1990; Labaree, 1992). In Britain, even formerly critical scholars are arguing for the reassertion of professionalization as an effective weapon against Conservative education policy (Avis, 1994; Montané, 1994). Although it is clearly accepted by the mainstream, some scholars have questioned the self-evident rhetoric of the good intentions of professionalism<sup>1</sup>

David Labaree (1992) has claimed that those most eager to promote the professionalization of teaching are not the teachers themselves, nor even their unions, but the academic teacher educators. He argues that the professionalization of teaching is first and foremost an extension of the efforts of teacher educators to raise their professional status by developing a science of teaching based on a formal rationalist model. Labaree claims that U.S. teacher educators began to adopt a formal, rationalist world view in the 1960s, and to apply it to the task of constructing a “science of teaching”. He eloquently describes how teacher educators, looking for “the most powerful form of intellectual technology that was available”, “naturally” turned towards empiricism and positivism as “an intellectual approach that over the centuries had proven effective for understanding social life and guiding social practice, and that have

accumulated an enormous reservoir of cultural legitimacy." Labaree also claims that it was educational psychology that offered a suitable pattern because it had already established a model for carrying out academically credible and scientific research in education. (*Ibid.*, 141).

What kind of symbolic and strategic value does science-legitimated pedagogical knowledge—which could be characterized as the "science of teaching" or "educational science for teacher education"—have in the professionalization of teacher education? The aim here is to try to understand certain peculiarities in this body of knowledge by studying the history of the "science of teaching" and of the professionalization of teacher education.

#### A Perspective on the Professions

Raymond Murphy (1988) elaborated the Weberian approach towards a theory of "social closure". Social closure includes the processes by means of which an occupational group attempts to regulate market situations in accordance with its own interests. In this perspective, professional status is understood as a result of the successful strategy of collective occupational groups seeking to exclude other competing groups from the market and to achieve a monopoly in their fields of activity. In a historical context, it is a question of how an occupational formation can succeed in gaining social status, privileges, and finally a monopoly position in the market.

This article analyzes the field of education as a social field, as a multidimensional space of positions, dispositions and relationships, in which the way of life and the expert discourse accepted as authoritative are produced, reproduced and transformed. Individuals, groups or even occupations do not move around in social space in a random way, because they are subject to the forces which structure this space or because they resist the forces in the field with their specific inertia (Bourdieu, 1984).

Teacher education is seen here as a social field within the field of higher education. In this context, the field is analyzed as a network or configuration of objective relations between positions. Actual or potential state in the division of power and capital formation, which are

needed in order to access the profits distributed in the field, and the objective relation of one position to others, determine the whole existence of the positions, as well as their occupants, the agents and the institutions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 97–98).

The capital—be it cultural, economic or social—only exists and functions in relation to the field. In this way, too, the capital of teacher educators only exists and functions in relation to the prevailing field of higher education. The transformations in the social field, such as the general growth of education, affects the composition of the university field. The rapid expansion of the student population, as well as the diversification of university faculties, has led to a growth in the professorial body especially since the 1960s. The increasing number of faculty posts led to accelerated careers, at least in new disciplines and new faculties. We would like to suggest, quoting Pierre Bourdieu (1988), p. 30) "as a general law" that, this also happened "apart from the purely mechanical effects of crowding". Social agents inevitably also get lost in the crowd and exercise the social processes of "anonymization" and "irresponsibilization" with their special effects through the specific logic of the field. Thus we would like to know what these specific effects are, especially in the new faculties of education and new units of class-teacher<sup>2</sup> education which came into being in Finnish universities in the 1970s.

Three important issues will be taken up in applying the social closure approach to the sociological study of professions. First, the role of the state is essential. As Magali Sarfatti Larson (1977) put it, in corporative capitalism the ideal of a free and autonomous profession is nothing but an ideal. At the same time, it serves as an ideology which mystifies the real social structures and relations. In the European continental model of professions in particular, the state has traditionally been "the holder of legitimate symbolic violence", the "geometric locus of all perspectives", the "central bank which guarantees all certificates" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 37). Second, a prerequisite for a successful professional project is to arrive at a cognitive consensus and to create a body of knowledge that is legitimized by science. The authoritative expert discourse has to be

constructed (Larson, 1977, 1990; cf. Rinne & Jauhiainen, 1988). Lastly, for a professionalization project to succeed it is necessary to exclude competing groups by means of social closure mechanisms. It is obvious that the pursuit of isolation and distinction rather than solidarity and co-operation characterizes relations with the nearest occupational groups in the field.

In the following, we will first analyze the relationship between the state and teacher education. We will then move to the problematics of the knowledge on which teacher education is based, and finally, we will scrutinize Finnish teacher educators in the field of higher education.

#### Teacher Education for State Service and National Curriculum Design

When analyzing the pedagogical discourse, teacherhood and the profession of teacher educators in Finland, one has to keep in mind the strong traditional relationship between the state and the civil servants. In this respect, Finland resembles the continental model of professionalization (see e.g. Collins, 1990; Konttinen, 1989). The state has guaranteed and legitimated the right for professional groups to carry out their work and to exercise power. That was the situation under the Swedish crown (until 1809), under the Russian tsar (until 1917), and also thereafter during independence. Rulers have come and gone, but the connection between state authority and the civil service professions produced by the university has been quite stable. In the field of education, the state authorities have the monopoly for accrediting teachers in Finnish primary schools, which in turn have been owned by the municipal authorities since the church lost its power in the educational system.

The state is a kind of field of fields, a place where struggles about legitimate symbolic violence are fought. It is "the great fount of symbolic power which accomplishes acts of consecration, such as the granting of a degree, an identity card or a certificate—so many acts through which the authorized holders of an authority assert that a person is what she is, publicly establish what she is and what she has to be. It is the state as the reserve bank of

consecration, that vouchsafes these official acts and the agents who effect them and, in a sense, carries them out via the agency of its legitimate representatives." (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 12).

It is quite obvious that the changes in teacher education have been very closely linked with the general education reform policy of the state. The 1970s have sometimes been described as the "Golden Era of Reforms". In the case of education, this might not be so much of an overstatement. Three important reforms concerning teacher education were realized in Finland. First, in the Comprehensive School Reform (1972–1977), the 8-year compulsory school and the parallel grammar school were replaced by the modern comprehensive school, comprising nine years of compulsory education. The class-teachers occupied more space in the comprehensive school context by teaching whole age groups from grades 1 to 6. Second, the Teacher Education Reform (1973–1979) concerned the training of teachers for both comprehensive and upper secondary schools. The reform affected class-teacher training most radically, which was moved from colleges and small-town seminaries to the brand-new university faculties of education established by the reform (Rinne, 1988b). Finally, in 1979, the training of class-teachers was rather surprisingly raised to the master's degree level. This dramatically increased the role and extent of educational studies in teacher education<sup>3</sup>. All this was linked with the General Syllabus and Degree Reform of Higher Education (1977–1980), which abolished the bachelor's degree. From then on, the first academic degree in Finnish higher education was to be a master's-level higher degree<sup>4</sup>. In terms of numbers, teacher education is one of the largest tracks in the Finnish university system. More than one in ten university student is studying for some sort of teacher training, and one in five enrolling students plans to be a teacher.

It is not only the development of teacher education, but also that of education as an academic discipline in general, which have been strongly dependent on state policy. The evaluation report on educational research by the Academy of Finland focuses on science as providing useful knowledge for the state: "The strong growth in the educational sciences has

largely been a result of its becoming a part of state improvement and evaluation activities and great hopes have been invested in it as such" (Educational research in Finland, 1990, p. 32). It was the Comprehensive School Reform in the 1970s that finally offered Finnish educational science the possibility of gaining the political-administrative as well as the societal legitimacy needed for its expansion. For educational scientists, the "academization" of teacher training meant state-guaranteed expansion in the academic field; for teacher educators, it was elevation to the position of a science-legitimated profession. (See Simola, 1993, pp. 78–183)

At the end of the 1980s, after almost two decades of academic class-teacher training, it was Jaakko Numminen, Chancellor of the Ministry of Education, who was one of the first persons to evaluate the new training. His question was: "The great number of university teachers and researchers in the field gives us the right and the obligation to ask, in what respect does educational research help to manage the national educational policy in practical teaching duties and educational administration." (Numminen, 1988, pp. 251–252). The instrumentalist stance of the state apparatus with regard to educational science is also clearly articulated in Numminen's assessment of the essence of educational research: the reason for the existence of educational science in universities and research institutes is simply to "improve education, the training of educators, and the teaching process itself—the whole educational process" (Numminen, 1987, p. 252).

Under strict state control in the field of class-teacher training, the academic freedom and Humboldtian conception of *Bildung* have had a special meaning. Whether taking place in seminaries, colleges or universities, teacher training has remained a school-like process with highly standardized compulsory curricula and study programmes. The freedom of choice allowed to students has, until very recently, been minimal compared with many other disciplines. By the very careful process of recruiting members of the teaching profession through its educational monopoly, the Finnish state has succeeded in engaging an extremely loyal civil servant army of primary-school workers. Neither the Finnish class-teachers nor their rather strong union have

ever been very radical. On the contrary, compared with most other national teacher unions and their members, Finnish teachers have been one of the most loyal conservative allies of the state. This tradition and close connection with state service may also partly explain why teacher educators are not very interested in analyzing the social and historical frames of the teacher's work, or in trying to educate would-be class-teachers to be socially reflective (Kivinen & Rinne, 1994, 1995).

The focus of this article is on the very special Finnish discipline of educational science for teacher education, *didactics*<sup>5</sup>, because it has proved to be the core legitimating point in Finnish teacher education, as so many developers of teacher education have stated (see, e.g., Lahdes, 1987; Kansanen, 1989; CR, 1989a). The official standardized curriculum of the comprehensive school has become one of the most important frames in the development of Finnish didactics. In this respect too, the relationship between didactics and the official state curriculum is the essential issue. According to Pertti Kansanen (1986), one of the leading Finnish didacticists, the ever-broadening formal and official, statute-defined curriculum of the comprehensive school has, in practice and in itself, veered towards didactics, and both the textbooks and the lectures on didactics are bound to explain and justify the national curriculum. Kansanen characterizes didactics as normative ethics, or the justification of the official curriculum. Didactics is linked to the nation-wide curriculum in such a manner that it cannot be understood as a descriptive science or as a theory of teaching. On the contrary, Finnish didactics might be seen as a normative and political steering mechanism.

Another authority in the field, Erkki Lahdes<sup>6</sup> (1986, p. 87), also emphasizes the close intertwining of didactics and the official, written curriculum. He defines didactics as the general presentation of those means by which one seeks to realize the precedent curriculum. While the curriculum is more a strategic means, didactics is more tactical. In itself, there is nothing in principle to prevent the merger of curriculum and didactics, so that they would be seen only as different levels of one or the other.

In the late 1960s, the time of the comprehensive school reform, may be characterized as a point of rupture in the way of using language

in official educational texts. Four “old truths” had to give way to new ones in Finnish state educational discourse. (Simola, 1995; Simola et al., in press; see also Rinne, 1984.) First, the mission of the school changed from one of moulding the school life of a group of pupils to focusing more on the individual. The school became committed to responding to the individual learning needs and abilities of every pupil. This process has been called *individualization* of state educational discourse. Second, the “true” knowledge base of teaching changed through a kind of *disciplinization*. A multiple, pragmatic and ideological combination of ethical, psychological, pedagogical, historical and content knowledge determined by the National Board of Education was replaced by the “new” truth, whereby a didactically oriented educational science forms the knowledge base for teachers’ work. The third shift concerned the rational orientation of the discourse: the former value-rationalism changed to *goal-rationalism*, where the predetermined goals became the basis for all educational procedures—methods, materials, evaluation etc. Finally, it was *decontextualization* that made both individualization, disciplinization and goal-rationalization possible and credible. One might say that only through sweeping under the carpet the institutional limitations of obligatory mass schooling was it possible to make it seem omnipotent: advanced, fulfilling its tasks, and thus deserving continuous public faith (Weick, 1976; cf. Popkewitz, 1991, p. 216). At the same time, however, it might be fair to question whether this “*rationalism of hopes*”—this curious combination of utopian, well-intentioned wishes and linear, top-down rationalism—constituted a discursive basis for the predictable failure of educational reforms (Simola, 1996).

Lundgren (1991) conducted an interesting analysis of the relationship between psychology-based pedagogical thinking and the state-centred school reforms. He claims that there are two basic notions behind the curriculum reforms of recent decades. The first is “the progressive notion that the curriculum ought to centre on the individual child’s demands and experiences”, and the second, “the pragmatic notion that the objectives for education should be precisely stated and

founded on demand analysis”. (*Ibid.*, p. 46) He sees a very close connection between this and the fact that psychology was established as the basis of most educational research, and that goals should be formulated in order to specify the behaviour expected. (*Ibid.*, p. 47).

The narrow, psychological individualism of didactics and educational reform policy, where goals are formulated as the behaviour of the individual learner, constitutes the basis for consensus on curriculum design. Lundgren (1991), p. 50) claims that there were mutual interests among educational scientists and educational politics. For the decision makers it was important to have scientific legitimation of their efforts and reforms. For the researchers it was also equally important to legitimate simple, isolated, empiristic studies, educational ideas or innovations, as scientific research. This means that when educational researchers are standing as innovators, they are easily at the same time serving as loyal and uncritical legitimators of state educational reforms. Educational research tends not to result in critical explanations of the educational system or curriculum, because knowledge gained mostly concerns what the individual learner can do, rather than how the educational systems function. In the stream of never-ending educational reforms there is neither time nor necessity for researchers to ask how to create conditions for the individual learner, or what the constraints on and possibilities for change are. (Lundgren, 1991, p. 49; see Popkewitz, 1991).

#### Towards Psychology-based, Decontextualized “School-free” Pedagogy

The Finnish pedagogical history is strongly flavoured with so-called Herbartianism. When the flourescence of the pedagogy founded by the famous Swiss philosopher Johan Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) was already mostly over in the rest of Europe, it began in Finland just at the end of the 19th century. Although Herbartianism in academic pedagogy was *passé* by the 1920s, the only textbook of didactics that was taught in all teacher seminaries until the Second World War was the Herbart-Zillerian one (Isosaari, 1966, p. 216; Lahdes, 1969, p. 21). What is interesting here is the

strong emphasis Herbart gave to psychology as the science that forms the very basis of didactics. In his pedagogy, the goal which was built on the pillars of ethics, and didactics was to create the means for education. The famous "Herbartian triangle" is to be found in official Finnish teacher training documents until the 1960s, when ethics disappears, psychology turned into educational psychology, and educational sciences became the scientific basis for educational studies in teacher education (Simola, 1993). The Finnish pedagogical tradition therefore has a very strong connection with psychology as the basis for didactics, especially concerning teacher education.

The Herbartian tradition in Finnish teacher training was phased out in 1944 through a textbook of didactics written by Matti Koskeniemi, a leading academic figure in Finnish education throughout the 1950s and 1960s. During this era, the psychology-based tradition continued but was strongly influenced by the mission of social education. Linked with the moral and civic curriculum code<sup>7</sup>, the key words in the Finnish progressive "new school" movement that started in the 1930s were *Die Arbeitsschule*, work books and social education rather than child-centred individualism (Lahdes, 1961; Simola, 1995, p. 118). The social psychology of the classroom and the school context, with its historically-formed compulsory and mass character, was explicitly present and turned towards the service of moulding the institutional life of a group of future citizens.

The "psychologization" of educational sciences was strongly connected with the orientation towards dynamic "gestalt" psychology, "deep" psychology and intelligence testing. The first Finnish psychological laboratory was founded at the University of Turku in 1921, and the first professorship in 1936 at the Educational College of Jyväskylä. (Rinne, 1988a, p. 27). The educational sciences had many problems in taking control of the new educational psychology, because the field was strongly associated with "pure" psychology and "pure" philosophy. After the Second World War, Finnish educational sciences became to an increasing degree psychologically- and didactically-oriented applied sciences, and at the same time began to make use of mathe-

matically and statistically based psychological research. The rapid growth of the educational system made it necessary to have more information about classrooms as well as pupils, and large-scale intelligence testing of pupils was made an important field of educational research.

Although the experimental approach was used to some extent in educational psychology before the Second World War, most Finnish research in education was historically or philosophically oriented (Kansanen, 1990, p. 281). In the 1950s, the educational sciences began to struggle for academic recognition, and in the 1960s empirical didactics achieved the dominant position (Päiväsalo, 1980, p. 233). The model of didactics was to be found in connection with educational psychology. The close relation of didactics to psychology also becomes clear when Finnish didactics is put into context of Anglo-American educational literature. Kansanen compares U.S. textbooks on educational psychology to those of Finnish didactics: "It becomes quite soon apparent that (...) textbooks [of educational psychology] contain two parts: educational psychology, in the strict sense of the word, and a part with normative advice, which is very much like didactics" (Kansanen, 1990, p. 278).

The comprehensive school period has thus far been dominated by one text-book on didactics above all others—that written by Lahdes, Emeritus Professor of Didactics and the first Secretary of the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee. The book has reached its 10th edition and has been rewritten twice (Lahdes, 1969; Lahdes, 1977 and Lahdes, 1986). The revisions have been based on changes in the conception of educational psychology. The clear behaviourism of the late 1960s was flavoured with influences from mastery learning strategies and the structural ideas of S.C.T. Clarke in the late seventies. In the eighties, Lahdes announced a "modern" turn in the psychology of learning from behaviourism to cognitivism. He characterizes the approach of the latest book as constructivist, and refers to the Swiss scholar and student of Jean Piaget, Hans Aebli, as the most influential figure<sup>8</sup>. It remains to be seen if this will mark the dawn of the historical return of Finnish didactics to the continental tradition after 40

years of Anglo-American hegemony. The psychology-based background of Finnish didactics has strongly bound the whole legitimation of Finnish teacher training with psychometric theory and statistical testing, which have been the core contents in educational methodology (Kansanen, 1990, p. 282).

From the historical analysis of state educational discourse presented above, it is fair to conclude that there has been a tendency towards "pure" didactics, a kind of abstract, non-historical and decontextualized science of teaching. Schooling as an historically formed institution for obligatory mass education tends to be ignored as uninteresting. The everyday activities of teaching and learning in school, the socio-cultural system of time, space and rituals (Kivinen, Rinne, & Kivirauma, 1985)—"the grammar of schooling"<sup>9</sup>—appears to be out of focus, or even absent, when the improvement of teaching and learning is being planned and propagated. The "true" knowledge of teaching in the Finnish state educational discourse could be characterized in its decontextualization by the term "school-free pedagogy": the science of how the teacher should teach and how the pupil should learn in school—as if it were not school (see Simola et al., 1996, in press, forthcoming).

Bearing in mind that this picture concerns the Finnish state educational discourse, one may ask how it describes the "didactics" taught and learned in practices of teacher education. A systematic analysis of the changes in department-level curricula in class-teacher education at Finnish universities during the 1980s and the 1990s has been presented elsewhere (Simola et al., 1996)<sup>10</sup>. The changes which have taken place in teacher training discourse show clearly that the path has lead towards the same kind of decontextualized didactics in department curricula, too. It is hard to find any reference to the need for the sociology or history of education in the state educational discourse since the late 1970s. Up to the early 1990s, there were only a very few obligatory courses with some potential reference to the socio-historical and institutional character of the school context in class-teacher degree programmes and they comprised less than 5% of the educational studies. The focus is

on what the school ought to have been rather than on what it has been. Institutional education appears in curricular texts only as a neutral, natural and well-intentioned mission. The school as a socio-historical, institutional context for teaching and learning does not exist in teacher training. In these curricula, "educational science for teacher education" really appears as a kind of "school-free didactics". Perhaps this is why the national evaluation report of educational sciences by the Finnish Academy characterized Finnish didactic research as studies which are often "for school teaching", but not, however, concerned "with teaching and learning in school" (Educational research in Finland, 1990, p. 56).

#### The Rise of Didactic Closure Through Isolation, Exclusion and Distinction

The oldest faculties in the Finnish university system were the faculties of humanities and law. The first university, the Turku Academy, was founded in 1640, but only the 20th century saw the broadening of the university system. Among other nations, Finland saw an expansion of the higher education system at an ever-accelerating speed after the Second World War. That was also the time when faculties of social sciences became established in universities. A strong regional decentralization policy was exercised in Finland, and the higher education system spread all over the country. In this connection, class-teacher education was also raised to university level in the 1970s with eight brand new faculties.

Although the first Chair in education was established as early as 1852, the growth in the number of professorial chairs was very slow for 100 years. At the beginning of the 1970s there were only seven full professors, but in the early 1980s there were already more than 30, following the inclusion of class-teacher education in the higher education system. In 1995 there were 50 full professors and 83 associate professors of education. The growth in faculty staff numbers in teacher education has been very fast in Finnish higher education since the 1970s, and comparable only with that in economics. The total number (133) of profes-

Table 1

*Professors and Associate Professors of Education in Finland in 1995, by Department*

	Professors		Associate professors		Total	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Departments of Teacher Education	28	56	60	72	88	66
Departments of Education	22	44	23	28	45	34
Total	50	100	83	100	133	100

sors in education in Finland is five times the number of comparable posts in Sweden, or double the number of posts in both history and sociology in Finland.

The main struggle for symbolic power and power relations in any academic field centres around the naming and filling of the highest academic posts, the professorial chairs. The division of professorships in the field of education and academic teacher training is thus considered next. In a way, the following tables show how the process of didacticization is realized and embodied by the most eminent representatives in the field, the agents having the professorial chair.

Table 1 shows how professors and associate professors are distributed in the departments of "pure" education and teacher education.

In 1995, two out of three professors (88) worked in teacher training. At the dawn of the reform in 1975, when the faculties of education were founded, the corresponding proportion was half and half, and the number of professors in teacher training was slightly more than 30; so the amount has tripled.

Table 2 shows how the proportions and numbers of professors are divided among different sub fields of education.

As one can see, more than one third of these professors (36%) in 1995 directly represented the field of didactics (amounting to 48 professors). It is also striking that the vast majority of those are not full but associate professors. The percentage share (26%) accounted for by "general" education is clearly smaller. Moreover, basic fields such as educational psychology and the sociology of education, which are attempting to keep up the connections with the old "basic" sciences outside the faculty, have only minor representation in the professoriate.

Table 2

*Professors and Associate Professors of Education in Finland in 1995, by Sub Field*

	Professors (n)	Associate professors (n)	Total (n)	Total %
Didactics	6	42	48	36
Education/ Pedagogy (General)	21	13	34	26
Adult education	6	5	11	8
Special education	3	5	8	6
Psychology of Education	1	6	7	5
Pre-school Education	–	5	5	4
Sociology of Education	2	2	4	3
Others	11	5	16	12
Total	50	83	133	100

In recent years, special education and adult education have taken rather large steps in widening their fields and interests in the broad area of education. The composition of the professoriate has changed rather dramatically from what it was in 1975. The numbers and proportions of professors in didactics has increased much more quickly than the corresponding numbers and proportions in general education or fields connected with the sciences outside the faculty of education. In sum, the tables show it is didactics that has gained most ground inside the expansion of teacher education.

The teacher education programmes at universities have also opened up appropriate opportunities for new "mandarins" in the new academic field. Another outcome of this reform has been an extraordinary "appoint-



ment game”, where the winner has secured a pleasant future for her/himself and success for her/his discipline. At the beginning of the game, it may be necessary to invent a name for a strange, previously unknown field of research<sup>11</sup>. After that, “new” academic achievements may have to be squeezed out of the mandarins by means of more or less forceful persuasion, as qualified experts are needed to assess the qualifications of applicants in the newly named field. Foreign experts can rarely be invited, since most of these new fields are unknown elsewhere, and in any case the writings of the applicants are mostly in Finnish. The next phase is actually finding suitable qualified applicants for the posts, which is not always an easy task. Finding qualified incumbents is hard, and the competition is always not only about scholarly merits, but also about credibility. In a small country like Finland, the rapid invasion of posts has led to strategies where social capital (“contacts”) plus the opinions of a few energetic mandarins may carry a disproportionate amount of weight alongside rather modest scholarly merits. (Kivinen & Rinne, 1990, 1992).

Accordingly, an evaluation group appointed by the Academy of Finland has reported great difficulties in filling some academic posts in education. The statements submitted by the invited experts seem to indicate that the universities have lowered the relevant requirement levels (cf. Educational research in Finland, 1990). Furthermore, the group reports that “only a few tenured professors continue intensive research in their own specific field, or supervise a research group. (...) The integration of teacher training into universities and the formation of specific education faculties, has weakened the connections of educational research with related fields” (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

Compared with other Nordic countries, as with other fields in Finnish higher education, the number of professors seems astonishingly high. Compared with the number of students or the degrees completed in education, however, the number is not so high, which says something about the mass character of Finnish teacher training. Unlike many other traditional university disciplines, teacher education concentrates heavily on training, and not as much on research. In fact, the class-teacher

training professors are “mass higher education” professors, who do not have much in common with the old “elite university” professoriate (cf. Trow, 1974) in terms of their orientation, positions, disposition and *habitus* in the field of massifying and diversifying higher education.

Even if the state, with its educational reform policy, is a central force constituting the social space for teacher educators, it is in the academic field where the new group has to struggle for a position among other disciplines. In various studies (see e.g. Lanier, 1986) on the status of teacher educators in the U.S. academic arena, they seem to be the low-status group, and their socio-cultural background is also lower than that of other academic groups. The distinction between education (especially educational policy and the administration of education) and teacher education has been crucial in the U.S., and the latter has clearly been below the former in the hierarchy.

In Finland, both students and professors in teacher education also have a lower social background than most of their academic colleagues in other disciplines. The social background of professors of education is far more often in labour and farming than that of other Finnish professors. According to Ari Antikainen & Arja Jolkkonen (1988), more than half of the fathers of professors of education were blue-collar workers or farmers, while among the fathers of history professors, for example, the proportion was less than one in five. Sakari Ahola (1995) similarly found in his correspondence analysis that the factor which is typical of professors of education is the blue-collar father. This is partly due to the fact that, even today, many of the professors in education began their career by being (primary school) teachers. (Cf. Rinne, 1988b).

In terms of the Bourdieu (1984, 1988), cf. Broady, 1990) concepts of capitals in analysing the position of teacher educators in the field of higher education, the cultural capital of teacher educators and professors of didactics is considerably lower than that of university chair holders, on average. They more seldom have a trans-generational cumulative cultural heritage, but are often like “parvenus” in the field in which the old mandarins of the social and cultural elite try to exercise the power accorded to their inherited privileges. (Cf. Ringer, 1969).

Their closest neighbours in the field are the representatives of the old subject disciplines (e.g. history, languages, mathematics), as well as the rival social sciences (philosophy, psychology, sociology), both of which carry more traditional academic-cultural capital. In other words, the teacher education professors are almost entirely first-generation novices in the cultural games played according to the rules determined by academic tradition and the academic mandarins. The new teacher trainers do not have much economic capital for their use either, because they do not have much to do with the private market economy sector; their students are also mainly employed in lower-paid posts in the public sector (Rinne, 1986).

In the academic field, a relatively low social background may make it difficult for educational scientists to fight their way and occupy a strong position related to academic excellence and prestige, so typical of many other professional groups in the field (cf. Bourdieu, 1988). If this is the case with traditional educational scientists, whose discipline, nevertheless, occupied the first Chair of education in Finland as far back as 1852, and who have been organized in their own departments since the 1940s, the position of teacher educators, as academic newcomers, must be even worse. In the early 1970s when class-teacher education was transferred to the universities, virtually all seminary staff became in practice members of a university faculty. Obviously this did not raise the "academic credibility" of teacher education, or of teacher educators, among the old and honorable academic disciplines.

Since the 1980s, there have been various critics of the isolation and paucity of interdisciplinary relations in teacher education and the educational sciences in general. The establishment of scientifically narrow faculties of education—as "teacher education units"—has been said to be the basic reason for this tendency (e.g. Numminen, 1987; Päiväsalo, 1980; Educational research in Finland, 1990). The evaluation report on Finnish educational research by the Finnish Academy claims: "Establishing independent faculties of education [such as teacher education units] has signified the narrowing of educational

sciences, a more central position for teacher education at present as compared with former decades, and a growing gulf between education and its neighbouring academic disciplines" (*Ibid.*, p. 4).

There are at least two "fronts" on which teacher education and didactics have to fight for distinction and academic existence in their own right. The first is between the new didactics and the old social sciences, the sub-disciplines of education, i.e. philosophy, sociology and the history of education. The second front is against the differentiated old subject disciplines, split between humanities and the natural sciences: i.e. the didactics of history vs. history, the didactics of physics vs. physics etc.

Closure appears to be complete on the first front. A look at the sub fields of professorial posts reveals that in 1995, none of the nearly 90 professorships dedicated to teacher education was defined as a post for the sociology of education, the history of education or the philosophy of education. The majority were assigned explicitly to didactics, with its various branches, and only a few to educational psychology and special education. The same kind of profile emerges clearly in other teaching posts too. Finnish teacher education does not seem to require any competence in social sciences at all. There is no need for any kind of scholarship in the socio-cultural context of teaching and learning in school.

This phenomenon of isolation does not only concern teacher education. The evaluation report on educational research by the Finnish Academy very strongly criticizes research in educational psychology as a whole for being isolated from general psychological research, and for falling behind its development (Educational research in Finland, 1990, pp. 61, 65). Similar remarks were made by an international teacher education evaluation group. According to this group, the roles of both developmental psychology and the psychology of learning were seen as minor, and connections with departments of psychology were observed as being non-existent (Buchberger et al., 1994, p. 5).

The struggle for domination on the second front, against the subject disciplines, reached a

turning point in 1972 when posts in subject didactics were established in the brand new teacher education departments, and not in the old subject departments. This victory has led step by step to the situation in which more and more power to decide about subject teacher training has been transferred to the teacher training departments. We may call this tendency the “didacticization of subject teacher training”. The role of the representatives of subject disciplines in teacher education committees has also been more and more marginal since the 1970s. The 1989 committee report (CR 1989a) promoted the didacticization tendency so far as to strongly recommend subject teachers to complete their master’s theses in “Subject Didactics”, and no longer in the traditional disciplines of their teaching subject. The committee even proposed the creation of a separate Ph.D. programme in didactics. In the recent committee reports, however, there is evidence of symptoms of conflicting interests and of potential challenges to the monopoly of subject didactics as the only competent and legitimate speaker for school teaching (see e.g., CR, 1989b, 1992, 1993).

### Concluding Remarks

The point of departure in this article was Labaree’s notion that we can understand teacherhood better if we see it in relation to the professionalization of teacher educators. We have seen that the development of didactics as a “science of teaching” in Finland has in a way followed the U.S. model. This can be seen most clearly in the psychology-based background and commitment to empiricism. There is, however, differences, too. While the science of teaching is still bound up with and dominated by educational psychology in the U.S., a more and more powerful, separate academic discipline, didactics, is gaining ground as the sole educational science for teacher education in Finland. According to the analysis of state educational discourse and some other documents, Finnish didactics seems to be searching for an omnipotent and total monopoly over both subject and contextual knowledge of teaching.

At least two other characteristics of Finnish

didactics seem to be peculiar and important here. First, didactics has been strongly dependent on, and intertwined with, the official state curriculum. Leading Finnish teacher training professors define the concept of didactics as analogical with the curriculum, or with its justification and theoretical explanation. Second, the context of teaching and learning, the school as a socio-historical institution, is of no interest in didactics. It rather seems to pursue models and theories of universal, context-free teaching and learning, focusing clearly on the individual teacher and learner. This individualist and universalist approach has veered towards the abstract, non-historical and decontextualized study of how a human being *ought* to be taught and how *s/he should* learn. In a curious way, it has become a kind of *school-free pedagogy*.

The conclusion here is that, there are at least three professionalist drifts in Finnish teacher education that are producing and reproducing the decontextualized pedagogic discourse. The first may be characterized as the professionalist pursuit of science-legitimation. A prerequisite for a successful professional project is to arrive at a cognitive consensus and to create a body of knowledge that is legitimized by science. Thus, the image of autonomous, genuine and self-satisfied didactics may be very attractive to teacher educators who are struggling for legitimation as newcomers in the field of higher education. In this respect, it may be more understandable that didactics rejects “help” from the old neighbouring disciplines, such as sociology or history.

The second drift might be called professional loyalty to state educational reforms. From the professionalist point of view, the clear mission in state service—i.e. a strong commitment to state educational reforms and to the official curriculum—has been valuable and productive for teacher educators and for didactics. This can be seen in the very rapid increase in professional posts. While serving professional interests, this close relationship with the state will easily turn teacher educators into loyal and uncritical legitimators of never-ending educational reforms. This endangers, on the other hand, the “field credibility” of didactics as a critical, autonomous academic discipline.

The third professional drift concerns the

striving for distinction from rival disciplines. While the pursuit of appropriate theories of school teaching and learning inevitably needs the help of neighbouring disciplines, the professionalist drift of teacher educators in fighting for a monopoly and distinction in the field tends to work against this obvious need. There have been numerous examples of exclusion and closure, not only against the social sciences, the old humanities and natural sciences, but even against the old core of didactics itself—psychology.

One should also bear in mind that class-teacher education—even in its academic form—has been stuck in its old seminar traditions. In other words, it has not drastically changed its practical approach towards academic traditions, academic freedom or university autonomy. The tendency has been more to engage in the school-like practices of the old seminars, and to put a lot of weight on the occupational training of would-be teachers. Although mass higher education as a field has also had its “labour market drift” with the trend to be more oriented to occupational education and school-likeness, teacher education has still remained like Alice in Wonderland. It still does not quite know how to play the new game in the new academic field, or what the changing rules of the game really are.

The relatively low cultural and social capital and the lower middle class *habitus* may also have determined the isolationist strategies in the struggle in the academic field. Since the 1980s, there have been various critics of the isolation and the paucity of interdisciplinary relations in teacher education and in the educational sciences in general. It is clear that isolation cannot be a very good strategy in the struggles of the field of higher education, at least not in the long run. It might be assumed that the lower social background of academic teacher educators in Finland makes it problematic to occupy top positions in the academic field in general.

Rolf Torstendahl wrote some years ago on the relationship between the professions and knowledge:

The crucial characteristic of the knowledge system of professionals (...) is to what extent they really serve problem-solving purposes which in turn give prestige and power to the owners of this capacity, or to what

extent the knowledge is a symbolic value that serves the purposes of being something that can be brought forward in other people's eyes as important but which has no clear relation to the problem-solving capacity of professionals. (Torstendahl, 1990, p. 3)

In the light of this analysis, at least up to the present day, the science-legitimated knowledge system for teacher education has been a very successful strategy in the struggles of the field of Finnish higher education.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Sykes, 1987; Popkewitz, 1987, 1991; Weiler, 1988; Noddings, 1990; Glazer, 1991; Burbules & Densmore, 1991; Labaree, 1992; Avis, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> By *class-teacher* we refer to primary school teachers who work mainly in grades 1 to 6 of the Finnish 9-year comprehensive school.

<sup>3</sup> Up to the 1960s, educational studies covered roughly 10% of all the pre-service studies in Finnish class-teacher training. In the reforms of the 1970s, this proportion increased to 30%. While the study programmes lengthened from two years to nearly 5 years, the time used for educational studies increased 5-fold. (Simola, 1995, p. 40)

<sup>4</sup> In the middle of the 1990s, however, BA degrees made their comeback, but a class-teacher still needs an MA degree to be formally competent.

<sup>5</sup> The term didactics is a very problematic one in English. It is used here in the meaning it has in the educational literature of Germany and the Nordic countries. Kansanen (1995) states that “in UK as well as in US frameworks for education, the sub-area of didactics seems to be lacking. (...) [M]uch of its content belongs to educational psychology.” In Germany and the Nordic countries, didactic problems define an independent sub-discipline of education. The scope of didactics covers that of Anglo-American curriculum theory and educational psychology, also including much philosophical and theoretical thinking. (*ibid.*) In Anglo-American literature, there are just a few texts concerning the relation between didactics and curriculum theory but see, e.g. articles on the German *Didaktik* tradition in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* vol. 27, issues 1 and 4 (1995).

<sup>6</sup> The fact that Lahdes has often been mentioned as “the leading representative of educational scientists” is evidence for the strong position of didactics in Finnish education (see e.g., Numminen, 1987, p.257).

<sup>7</sup> Here we follow Lundgren in his definition of the curriculum as, first, “a selection of contents and goals for social reproduction, that is a selection of what knowledge and skills are to be transmitted by education”; second, as “an organisation of knowledge and skills”, and third, as “an indication of methods concerning how the selected contents are to be taught; to be sequenced and controlled, for example” (Lundgren, 1991, p. 5). A “curriculum code” for Lundgren is a “homogenous set” of “principles according to which the selection, the organisation and the methods for transmission are formed”. (*Ibid.*; see also Lundgren, 1979)

<sup>8</sup> Aebli's main work (*Grundformen des Lehrens: ein Beitrag zur psychologischen Grundlegung der Unterrichtsmethode*) was translated into Finnish in 1991, although the original was written in 1961.

<sup>9</sup> Tyack and Cuban (1995), pp. 85, 165) explain their neologism of the grammar of schooling as follows: "Practices such as age-graded classrooms structure schools in a manner analogous to the way grammar organizes meanings in verbal communication. Neither the grammar of schooling nor the grammar of speech needs to be consciously understood to operate smoothly. (...) Both schools and language are, of course, in flux—for example, as new words or institutional features are added—but we are arguing that changes in the basic structure and rules of each are so gradual that they do not jar. "Grammar" in this sense might be thought of both as descriptive (the way things are) and prescriptive (the way things ought to be)."

<sup>10</sup> One has, of course, to be careful and to admit the old truth of the hidden curriculum tradition, that there is no direct link or one-to-one consistency between the official curriculum and the realized, experienced or hidden curriculum of teacher education, either (see e.g. Denscombe, 1982). Furthermore, a coherent picture of the pedagogical studies in Finnish teacher education would need an analysis of the textbooks in use, for example, and that is yet to be done.

<sup>11</sup> Sub-disciplines have been created for virtually all the subjects taught in comprehensive school, regardless of whether research in the area was scarce. Thus there are professorships, e.g. in the didactics of technical work, in the didactics of home economics and in the didactics of textile crafts.

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