

Decontextualizing Teachers' Knowledge: Finnish didactics and teacher education curricula during the 1980s and 1990s

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ABSTRACT *The subject of this article is the pedagogical knowledge which is seen as essential and 'true' enough to be offered to students in the course of modern, academic class-teacher training. In the first section, didactics will be analysed as the hard core of Finnish pedagogic discourse. Then the changes in the Finnish state educational discourse will be related to recent developments in department-level curricula in class-teacher education at Finnish universities during the 1980s and 1990s. The analysis of changes which have taken place in Finnish teacher education discourse shows clearly that there has been a tendency towards pure didactics, a kind of abstract, non-historical and decontextualized science of teaching. Although contextual studies have been increasing in some departments since the middle of the 1990s, the historical dimension of schooling in particular still appears to be lacking.*

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s, many scholars (see for example Denscombe, 1982; Schön, 1983; Barrow, 1984; Carr & Kemmis, 1986) noted that the curriculum theories conveyed in teacher education appeared simply to be so poor and far from the reality of everyday schooling that their influence on the practices of education was questionable. This criticism, however, concerned mainly the behaviouristic paradigm and such voices have been rare in the 1990s, when the so-called cognitive constructivism is in a position of paradigmatic hegemony in teacher education. It is reasonable to ask if this is related only to 'natural' optimism and omnipotence of novelty in the social field or if there is evidence of real progress in the relationship between educational theories and the reality of schooling. Are there still reasons for inquiring about the 'ecological validity' (Neisser, 1976) of the official self-evidences in education and pedagogy?

The subject of this article is the science-legitimated pedagogical knowledge which is seen as essential and 'true' enough to be offered to students in the course of modern, academic class-teacher education [1]. This knowledge has also been

characterized as the 'science of teaching' or the 'educational science for teacher education'. In fact, there is one discipline in Finland almost completely covering this area: didactics [2], with its various branches. In the second section of this article will analyse didactics as the hard core of Finnish pedagogic discourse. Then the changes in Finnish state educational discourse will be related to recent developments in department-level curricula in class teacher education at Finnish universities during the 1980s and 1990s.

FINNISH DIDACTICS—AN EDUCATIONAL DISCIPLINE IN THE SERVICE OF THE STATE AND ITS TEACHERS

The Context

When analysing pedagogical discourse in Finland, one has to keep in mind the strong traditional relationship between the state and civil servants. In this respect, Finland resembles the so-called continental model of professionalization (see for example Collins, 1990). It has always been the state that has guaranteed and legitimated the right for professional groups to carry out their work and exercise their power. 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 ever since the church lost its power in the educational system.

It is fair to say that the changes in teacher education have been closely linked with the general education reform policy of the state. The 1970s have some times been described as the 'Golden Era of Reforms'. In the case of education, this might not be so much of an overstatement in Finland. Three important reforms have been realized. First, in the Comprehensive School Reform (1972–1977), the eight year compulsory school and the parallel grammar school were replaced by the modern comprehensive school, comprising nine years of compulsory education. Second, the Teacher Education Reform (1973–1979) concerned the training of teachers for both comprehensive and upper secondary schools. The change affected class-teacher training most radically (the lower level grades 1–6). Their training was moved from teachers' colleges and small town 'teacher preparation seminaries' to the brand new university faculties of education established during the reform. Finally, in 1979, the training of class-teachers was raised to the master's degree level. This dramatically increased the role and extent of educational studies in teacher education [3]. All this was linked with the third reform, the General Syllabus and Degree Reform of Higher Education (1977–1980), which abolished the bachelor's degree. From then, the first academic degree was the master's level higher degree. However, in the midst of the 1990s, BA degrees made their comeback. In terms of numbers, teacher education is the largest sole teaching function in the Finnish university system in the 1990s. In the late 1980s, more than one in ten university students were studying for some sort of teacher training and one in five registered students planned to be a teacher (see Simola, 1993; Simola *et al.*, 1997; Kivinen & Rinne, 1996).

Didactics as the Hard Core of Finnish Pedagogic Discourse

The special focus here is on didactics, because it has proved to be the core legitimating point in Finnish teacher education, as so many developers of teacher education have stated (see for example Lahdes, 1987; Kansanen, 1989; Committee for Development of Teacher Education, 1989). The official standardized curriculum has become one of the most important frames in the development of Finnish didactics. In this respect also, the relationship between didactics and the official state curriculum is the essential issue. Pertti Kansanen (1987), a national authority on didactics, has noted that the ever-broadening formal and official, statute-defined curriculum of the comprehensive school has, in practice and in itself, veered towards didactics and both textbooks and lectures in didactics are bound to explain and justify the national curriculum. He characterizes didactics as normative ethics, or justification of the official curriculum. Didactics is linked to the nationwide curriculum in such a manner that it cannot be understood as a descriptive science or as a theory of teaching. According to Kansanen, Finnish didactics is entirely normative.

Another authority in the field, Erkki Lahdes, also emphasizes the close intertwining of didactics and the official, written curriculum. He writes:

Didactics is a general presentation of those means by which one seeks to realize the [official] advance curriculum.... While the curriculum is more a strategic means, didactics are more tactical.... In itself, there is nothing in principle to prevent the merge of curriculum and didactics, seeing them only as different levels of one or the other. (Lahdes, 1986, p. 87)

Finnish pedagogical history is strongly flavoured with so-called Herbartianism. When the flowering 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 World War II was the Herbart–Zillerian one (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 goals were built on the pillars of ethics and didactics was to create the means for education. The well-known ‘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, 1993a). 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 1945 through the introduction of a textbook of didactics for elementary school teacher training, written by Matti Koskenniemi, a leading academic figure in Finnish education throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In the present context, it is important to remember that, 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 [4], the key words even in the Finnish progressive 'new school' movement since the 1930s were *Die Arbeitsschule*, work books and social education rather than child-centred individualism (Lahdes, 1961; Simola, 1995, p. 118). Thus it is no wonder that Koskenniemi's textbook was firmly based on the social psychology of the classroom and permeated by the ethos of social education. The school context, with its historically formed compulsory and mass character, was explicitly present and geared to moulding the institutional life of future citizens.

Bonds of Psychology and Positivist Empiricism

The 'psychologization' of educational sciences was strongly connected with the fact that psychology itself was changing to become oriented towards dynamic 'gestalt' psychology, 'deep' psychology and intelligence testing. The first Finnish professorship in psychology was established at the Educational College of Jyväskylä in 1936 (Rinne, 1988, p. 127). After World War II and until the 1970s, the Finnish educational sciences became increasingly oriented towards empirical educational research. At the same time as they were becoming more and more psychologically and didactically oriented applied sciences, they were beginning to make use of mathematically and statistically based psychological research. The rapid growth of the educational system made it necessary to have more information about the schools as well as the pupils and large-scale intelligence testing of school pupils became an important field of educational research (Simola *et al.*, 1997).

Although the experimental approach was used to some extent in educational psychology even before World War II, most research in education was still historically or philosophically oriented in Finland (Kansanen, 1990, p. 281). When the educational sciences began to struggle for academic recognition in the 1950s and when empirical didactics achieved a dominant position in the 1960s (Päivänsalo, 1980, p. 233), the model was to be found in educational psychology. The close relation of didactics to psychology is also clear when Finnish didactics is put in the context of Anglo-American educational literature. Kansanen compares US textbooks on educational psychology with those on 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 textbook on didactics above all others—that written by Lahdes, Emeritus Professor of Didactics and the first secretary of the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee 1970. The book has reached its 10th edition and has been rewritten twice. The third revised version has recently been published (Lahdes, 1969, 1977, 1986, 1997). The revisions have been based on the changes in the conceptions 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 1970s. In the late 1980s, Lahdes announced a 'modern' turn in the psychology of learning, from behaviourism to cognitivism. He characterizes the approach in his

latest book as constructivist and refers to the Swiss scholar and student of Jean Piaget, Hans Aebli, as the most influential figure.

The psychology-based background of Finnish didactics has been strongly connected with the whole legitimization of Finnish teacher training with positivism:

Psychometric theory and statistical testing have been the core contents in educational methodology, and only lately has the picture seemed to change towards a more balanced situation. The positivistic approach based on critical rationalism or empiric-analytical school nevertheless has a strong hold on Finnish educational research. (Kansanen, 1990, p. 282)

Besides the late hegemony of positivist empiricism, there seems to be another evident characteristic in Finnish educational research: the lack of a critical tradition with regard to the state [5]. Therefore it is fair to conclude that the mainstream of educational research in Finland has been positivistic in its methodology, but at the same time it seems to have been normative in its commitment to the values of the official educational policy. One might say that Finnish educational research is a product of two different traditions: that of the old German 'state ethics', which has been influential in Finland since the 19th century, and that of Anglo-American empirical research, which arrived in Finland after World War II. The former tradition has produced the uncritical state loyalty of Finnish intellectuals and the latter has not tended to question it. (Simola, 1993, pp. 182–183).

DEPARTMENTAL CURRICULA IN TEACHER EDUCATION FROM THE 1980s TO THE 1990s

Changes in State Educational Discourse

In a study of state educational discourse from the 1860s to 1990s (Simola, 1995; 1998a), certain modern themes were identified in the post-war period, emerging clearly in the late 1960s at the time of the comprehensive school reform. Since then, four 'old truths' have changed in Finnish state educational discourse. First, the mission of the school was no longer to mould the school life of a group of pupils. The school was committed to respond to the individual learning needs and abilities of every pupil. This process has been called *individualization* of the 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 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 of continuous public faith (cf. Popkewitz, 1991, p. 216). At the same time, however, it might be fair to question whether this *wishful rationalism*—a curious combination of utopian, well-intentioned wishes and linear, top-down rationalism—constituted a discursive basis for the predictable failure of educational reforms.

Kansanen (1993) has recently suggested the distinction between the concepts of 'school pedagogy' and 'didactics' in a way that may sharpen our inquiry. According to him, both school pedagogy and didactics concern the teaching process, but the orientation of school pedagogy is based on the social sciences, especially on the sociology of education, while the perspective of didactics comes from educational philosophy and psychology. The subject of school pedagogy is the school as a social system, with its frame factors limiting the didactical procedures and possibilities of both teachers and pupils. Thus, school pedagogy seeks to construct a theory of schooling. On the other hand, didactics concerns the individual teacher and pupil and involves attempts to construct universal models and theories of teaching. However, as Kansanen points out, 'whenever we try to apply these models in practice, we need the help of school pedagogy and theories of schooling' (*Ibid.*, p. 25).

From the historical analysis of state educational discourse briefly described above, it is fair to conclude that up to now Finnish didactics has not really needed the 'help of school pedagogy and theories of schooling' referred to by Kansanen. The 'wishful rationalism' as a 'tacit discursive principle' of official texts has, on the contrary, produced 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—'the grammar of schooling' [6]—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 (Simola, 1986b).

Up to the Early 1990s: monotonous decontextualization

In the following I will pose the question whether this tendency is also to be found at the level of teacher education department curricula: what is the role of *contextual studies* there? By 'contextual studies', I mean studies that refer explicitly to the ecological, societal, cultural and institutional contexts of the teacher's work. The range of contextual studies is extremely wide from cultural history, ecology and peace education to the social psychology of the school and the sociology of education. Obligatory textbooks have also been taken into account. Thus the analysis covers all the socio-psychological, sociological, political, cultural, historical and even ecological content elements of class-teacher training programmes. The material comprises the curricula of six main campus departments of universities responsible

TABLE I. The means and relative proportions of contextual studies in class-teacher education curricula at six Finnish teacher education departments, in credits and per cent

| | 1981-1982 | 1986-1987 | 1991-1992 | 1995-1996 |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Contextual studies (credits) | 9.8 | 7.3 | 5.8 | 6.8 |
| Per cent of all studies | 6.1 | 4.6 | 3.6 | 4.3 |

for teacher training, representing the vast majority of all class-teacher training in Finland [7].

From Table I the simple conclusion can be drawn that the proportion of contextual studies, varying from 6 to 4% of the whole 160 credits [8] in the class-teacher education programme [9], is actually tiny. In the early 1980s it followed the recommendations of the committee report of 1978 exactly, decreasing from then until the beginning of the 1990s to almost half of that figure. In 1995, the extent of contextual studies began to increase slightly, however, which may be a sign of some kind of culmination point in the process of didacticization.

However, a scrutiny of the changes in the content areas clarifies the picture substantially (Table II). The general decrease seems to come almost totally from a sharp drop in general societal studies. Also, educational policy studies have decreased while the proportion of sociology of education, social psychology and historical studies have remained stable, the latter at a very low level.

In order to answer the final question here about the ways in which contextual studies might 'help' didactics, the aims and contents of the curricula should also be analysed. It is not surprising that the picture was quite clear and uniform until the early 1990s. The academization of teacher education was realized and the ensuing reform process regulated it in a strictly centralized manner (see Lahdes, 1987).

The following moves on to analyse the contribution of different content areas of contextual knowledge in their relation to pedagogical knowledge. As mentioned above, *social psychology* as a discipline disappeared totally from state educational discourse in the 1970s, when it was merged into educational psychology. This absence may be seen at the curriculum level too, with a few exceptions. Social psychological content was included in educational psychology in the

TABLE II. The means of contextual study credits in class-teacher education curricula at six Finnish teacher education departments, according to the sub-fields

| | 1981-1982 | 1986-1987 | 1991-1992 | 1995-1996 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Social psychology | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 1.7 |
| Sociology of education | 2.1 | 1.7 | 2.4 | 2.9 |
| History of education | 1.1 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 1.1 |
| Educational policy studies | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| General societal studies | 5.0 | 3.3 | 1.0 | 0.6 |

form of minor and sparse references to the social character of classroom teaching and learning.

Unlike social psychology, the *sociology of education* was institutionalized with its own 1–3 credit courses in nearly all departments. The aims and contents, however, were clearly emphasized on the macro level and the basic concepts of the discipline with a functionalist flavour. It is illuminating that, for example, Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour*, although a small classic in the sociology of education and translated into Finnish in 1984, was not used as a textbook in teacher education.

The minimal amount of the *history of education* was rarely organized on its own. It was merged with the history of educational ideas and thus, not surprisingly, there were only a few references to the institutional history of education.

In the aims and contents of *educational policy studies*, one may easily read that their function has been to legitimate the current state policy rather than to analyse or question it. In the same spirit, descriptions of the Finnish school system and doctrines of educational planning have been strongly emphasized in the content of the scanty studies in educational policy.

On the most general level, the collapse of *general social studies* in teacher education is an illuminating phenomenon. It is ironic indeed that one of the main points of teacher education reform was to increase the emphasis on societal and education policy issues. Lahdes (1987, p. 10) stated that this purpose was not realized as much as was desired in the 'society-emphasizing atmosphere' of the mid-1970s. He showed his scepticism when he wrote that students had not been very interested in these issues and stated openly that, in fact, 'the times have bypassed this demand' (*ibid.*, p. 106).

In sum, one may conclude that, up to the early 1990s, it was hard to find explicit connections between pedagogical and contextual knowledge in departmental curricula in Finnish teacher education. The ever-decreasing contextual studies tended to remain as a macro-level, state policy-legitimizing and reifying island in the didacticized pedagogical archipelago of the knowledge system for prospective teachers. As far as the curricula go, both at the macro, mezzo and micro levels, from society to classroom, new teachers seem to pass through their academic training as practically illiterate in terms of the socio-historical, institutional and cultural character of schooling. Depending on their educational studies, they would perceive the school as a purely pedagogical or didactical phenomenon. This decontextualization of pedagogical discourse may be seen as an excellent example of the misrecognition of schooling (cf. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This may be crystallized by analysing the academization and scientification of teacher training as follows:

In this way the image of the school is reinforced as a natural institution, external to questions of societal power, where perfectly trained didactic technicians perform their best for the good of all. This misrecognition of the fundamental nature of the school and of teacher training appears, indeed, to be one of operational conditions necessary for the institutional training of teachers. (Kivinen & Rinne, 1990, p. 18)

TABLE III. The credits dedicated to contextual studies in the class-teacher education curricula at six Finnish teacher education departments, by department

| | 1981-1982 | 1986-1987 | 1991-1992 | 1995-1996 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Helsinki | 11.5 | 11.5 | 7.5 | 5 |
| Jyväskylä | 8 | 2 | 6.5 | 9.5 |
| Turku | 8.5 | 6 | 3 | 8.5 |
| Oulu | 9.5 | 7.5 | 5.5 | 9.5 |
| Joensuu | 13 | 9.5 | 7.5 | 4.5 |
| Rovaniemi | 8.5 | 7 | 5 | 3.5 |

Since the Middle 1990s: differentiation

In 1995, a new differentiation process seemed to be emerging (Table III). While three 'traditional' departments continue along the decontextualizing line of shrinking social studies, the other three are doubling the amount of contextual studies.

There is a clear difference, however, between these 'progressive' departments. Oulu and Jyväskylä may be called the 'reflective progressivists'. Both place special emphasis on sociological knowledge. In their curricula there is discussion, for example, of 'the partly contradictory role of the teacher' as a societal actor and as a promoter of the 'hidden effects of schooling'. It is promised that studies will be oriented towards analysis of the 'action culture of the school, its elements and interactive relations'. Many of the textbooks used are fresh and some even 'radical'. It is illuminating and at the same time symbolically meaningful enough that Oulu chose a textbook called *An Introduction to Sociology* as required reading for the 1995 entrance examination.

One of the 'progressivists' (Turku) is an even more curious case. Considering the differences from the 'reflective progressivists', it might be called the 'change-committed' approach. The increase in contextual studies comes from one distinctive source. Since the mid 1980s, textbooks that might roughly be counted as belonging to the framework of so-called school-based development or management have been included in various departmental curricula. What these books have in common is the strong conviction of what kind of place the school ought to be and how to reach this ideal through rational action on the school level. An eminent example of this literature is Michael Fullan's (1993) *Change Forces*, which was recently translated into Finnish. The school-based development movement existed in Finnish teacher education only through a few textbooks until 1995 when in Turku, a course was created that scrutinized 'the principles and management culture of learning organizations', focussing also on 'the teacher and the school as a "change agent" from the perspective of the whole culture and society'.

Thus, while the picture until the early 1990s could be seen as supporting the thesis of the decontextualization of pedagogical discourse in the departmental curricula of teacher education too, the situation in 1995 was apparently more complicated and diversified. Regarding the three 'traditional' departments, the continuity of decontextualization is still clear, while in the case of the

three 'progressive' departments, the picture is more diffuse. As far as both the 'reflective' and 'change-committed' departments are concerned, at least one strong reservation must be expressed, however. The lack of an approach to schooling as an historically formed institution is evident in all cases. A century-long history of school reforms (see, for example, Sarason, 1991; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) still seems to be irrelevant to teacher education.

The belief in pedagogy which characterized the 1970s and the 1980s seems to have been replaced in the 1990s by a belief in organization. One might bet that the omnipotence of didactics will be substituted with that of 'management science'. Use of the concept of the 'learning environment' as one of the current keywords in educational expert discourse provides evidence for this claim. The learning environment is mainly seen—at least in Finnish texts (see, for example, National Board of Education, 1994)—as a rather easily changeable phenomenon without the historically, culturally and societally determined inertia embedded in definitions of time, space and rituals of schooling practices. Thus the teacher is routinely characterized as a 'planner or organizer of the learning environment' (*ibid.*). Especially in the case of 'change-committed progressivism', there is an evident danger that the belief in the omnipotence of didactics will be substituted for that of the organization because of the constant need to encourage optimism in reform.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is reasonable to conclude that the core of 'the true knowledge of teaching' in both state educational discourse and in the departmental curricula of teacher education up to the early 1990s is eloquently 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. However, is this a picture drawn only from official documents or does it also include some clues about the pedagogic practices in modern Finnish teacher education? 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 (see, for example, Denscombe, 1982). Furthermore, a coherent picture of pedagogical studies in Finnish teacher education would need an analysis of actual practices (the textbooks in use, for example) that is yet to be done. Therefore, the conclusions here concern only the official texts, although the nature of this kind of official discourse—possessing a special diagnostic, coercive and determining force as stated, for example by Bourdieu (1990, p. 136)—gives good grounds for assuming that it has certain effects on the reality of teacher training.

This analysis of the changes which have taken place in the department curricula of teacher education shows clearly that there has been a tendency towards pure didactics, a kind of abstract, non-historical and decontextualised science of teaching. Although there has been an increase in contextual studies in some departments since the middle of the 1990s, the historical dimension of schooling in particular still appears to be lacking. Up to the early 1990s at least, the 'educational science

for teacher education', the science of teaching, appears as 'school-free pedagogy'. Perhaps this is why the national evaluation report of the educational sciences by the Finnish Academy characterizes Finnish didactic research as studies which are often 'for school teaching', but not, however, concerned 'with teaching and learning in school' (Suomen Akatemia, 1990, p. 56).

This article began by inquiring about the ecological validity of the official self-evidences in education and pedagogy in teacher education. According to the above analyse, this worry does not seem to lose its topicality, at least in Finland. While pedagogy has had historically strong connections with developments in psychology, a certain optimism may be based on Jerome Bruner's (1990) manifestation of 'contextual revolution' in psychology. However, a kind of educational decontextualism might persist simply because it is societally functional and fitting to the professional interests of not only politicians and other reform *gurus*, but also of educational scientists and teacher educators—such as ourselves (Simola *et al.*, 1997).

NOTES

- [1] By class-teachers, I refer to primary school teachers who teach most subjects and work mainly in grades 1–6 of the Finnish 9 year comprehensive school.
- [2] The term didactics is a very problematical 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, for example, articles on the German *Didaktik* tradition in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 27, issues 1 and 4 (1995).
- [3] Up to the 1960s, educational studies in Finnish class-teacher training covered roughly 10% of all pre-service studies. This was increased to 30% in the reforms of the 1970s. While the study programme lengthened from two years to nearly five years, the time used for educational studies became five times longer. (Simola, 1995, p. 140)
- [4] Here I 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.*)
- [5] The evaluation report of the Academy of Finland concerning educational research refers to this when it observes that there is little critical theoretical study of educational school research and that '[t]here is in the country, in sum, very little such development activity, capitalizing on research, which would deviate from the official development programs for schools' (Suomen Akatemia, 1990, pp. 56 and 48). The Academy report goes on to say: 'Since most studies concerning the institution of schooling are restricted to the official curricula and school reforms, a more critical research attitude and more vigorous, more innovative experimentation are simultaneously needed' (*ibid.*, p. 116).
- [6] Tyack & Cuban (1995, pp. 85 and 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)'.

- [7] The decision to select these years was based on the publication years of the essential national texts related to teacher education policy (The General Structure of Class Teacher Education—Report 1978; Framework Curriculum for the Comprehensive School, 1985; The Report of the Committee for the Development of Teacher Education, 1989; Framework Curriculum for the Comprehensive School, 1994). In these academic years, the influence of these texts should have been reflected in department curricula. The universities studied included Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Turku, Oulu, Joensuu and Rovaniemi, only excluding the Swedish speaking university of Turku. The material includes only the curricula of the 'main' department of each university, the so-called 'filial' departments that are located away from the university campuses in smaller towns (Rauma, Savonlinna, Hämeenlinna and Kajaani) are not included. (For a more detailed presentation, see Simola, in press; Simola *et al.*, 1997).
- [8] One credit refers to one study week credit, i.e. 40 hours of active study for the student. It is roughly equivalent to credits, for example, in US universities. I have followed the customary practice in Finland, according to which reading one textbook in Finnish earns roughly 0.5 credits, reading one textbook in a foreign language earns 1 credit and a one-semester course of one two hour session per week with a final examination including reading one textbook in Finnish earns 2 credits.
- [9] Finnish class-teacher students' major subject is education (or educational science) on which they write their Master's thesis. Educational studies, including practice teaching of about 20 credits (about Finnish 'credits', see [9]) cover an average of 80 credits. The other half of the 4–5 year (160 credits) programme in primary school teacher training consists of minor studies, mainly in subjects to be taught at comprehensive school.

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