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Constructing a school-free pedagogy: decontextualization of Finnish state educational discourse

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The focus of this paper is on the pedagogy constructed in Finnish 'state educational discourse', i.e. in national curricula, governmental committee reports, legislative and administrative texts on elementary and later comprehensive school, and on teacher training. Since the late 1960s, four essential changes in the way of using language about teaching, learning and schooling have been identified. These are characterized as individualization, 'disciplinization', goal-rationalization, and decontextualization. It is decontextualization that makes the other three possible and credible. By sweeping under the carpet the institutional limitations of obligatory mass schooling it is possible to make it seem omnipotent: advanced, fulfilling its tasks, and thus deserving continuous public faith. At the same time, however, Finnish state educational discourse seems to have created a particular 'school-free pedagogy': a kind of abstract and universalistic, nonhistorical and decontextualized concept of pedagogy, answering the question of how the teacher should teach and how the pupil should learn in school – as if it were not school.

In his inaugural lecture at the Sorbonne in 1902, Émile Durkheim (1956: 126) described compulsory schooling as 'an initiation ceremony' that makes of the initiate 'an entirely new man', 'a man and a citizen'. He assumed that the school has the 'effect of creating a new being in man'. Although there is no consensus on the relationship between the 'new man' realized through schooling and the intentions legitimizing this constructive enterprise, the success of the compulsory school as a modern institution has been virtually without parallel (e.g. Meyer *et al.* 1992 b). According to John Boli (1989: 221), this 'extended initiation rite' has developed into a fundamental societal institution promising to transform children 'into modern individuals, capable of the rational calculation, self-discipline, political astuteness, and religious righteousness required to make the national policy both successful and just'. Throughout the world, mass schooling has become the main gateway to fully authorized citizenship.

Thus it is no wonder that the state has always been strongly involved in the construction and development of this institutionalized production of citizens. In fact, according to many scholars (e.g. Ramirez and Boli 1987,

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de Swaan 1990, Meyer *et al.* 1992 a, Green 1992), the rise of the modern nation state and the establishment of mass schooling were intertwined to an astonishing extent, despite great differences in political, economic and cultural circumstances. Although in Western countries, at least, schools and teachers have always had a certain autonomy, the state has also played a major role in defining the 'right' techniques for creating new citizens in the compulsory school. In Finland the main instruments have been centralized teacher preparation, the national curriculum, and control of textbooks used in schools. Only in the 1990s are the neo-liberalist tendencies of marketization, accountability and decentralization challenging this tradition.[1] Despite these intentions, the state might still be seen as 'the holder of legitimate symbolic violence', the 'geometric locus of all perspectives', the 'central bank which guarantees all certificates' (Bourdieu 1990: 137), at least in the European context.

In this paper[2] the focus is on the pedagogy constructed in 'state educational discourse', i.e. in the national curricula, governmental committee reports, legislative and administrative texts on the elementary and later the comprehensive school, and on teacher training. I will try to reveal various essential changes in the use of language about teaching, learning and schooling which have occured since the 1960s.[3]

In a twilight zone of 'truths' in state educational discourse

The documents referred to above – national curricula, governmental committee reports, legislative and administrative texts – are characterized as 'state educational discourse'. They are serious, authoritative verbal acts of state-guaranteed experts who speak as such and who thereby form the official 'truth' on schooling. They are, to quote Michel Foucault (1972: 49), discursive practices that 'systematically form the objects of which they speak'. Although these verbal acts are the products of individuals, they often have, especially when circulating as legal texts, administrative orders and state documents, the appearance of anonymity.

In a Foucauldian sense, we are moving in a 'twilight zone' between or beyond several dichotomies conventional in the history of ideas: those of science vs ideology, internal to science vs external to science, true vs false, logic vs linguistics, words vs things. From the point of view of truth-production, however, the central question is not whether the truth is true or false, scientific or ideological, but how it is produced, circulated, transformed, and used. Foucault's analysis of discourse attempts to illuminate that twilight zone of knowledge, 'to reveal a *positive unconsciousness* of knowledge' (Foucault 1991: xi).

State educational discourse is a truth discourse in many senses. We may say that it possesses at least three kinds of effects: one related to the discourse itself, the second to power and the third to the subject.[4] First, state educational discourse defines what is 'true' but, at the same time, what is 'not true'. It determines what and how one has to speak to be considered an authoritative and serious expert in the state-guaranteed field of education. This effect, producing certain ways to use language, might be called

the *knowledge effect*. Second, official discourse tends to define the 'right' and the 'not right', creating the basis for a certain kind of self-evident, taken-for-granted consensus about what kind of practical decisions and actions are accepted, legitimized and justified. In a modern society, and maybe especially there, this kind of social and moral consensus is also necessary for effective and efficient societal life. This might be seen as a *power effect* of the truth discourse. Finally, the official discourse also seeks to determine what is 'good' and 'not good'. It seems to be able to define the identity of the subjects – what they have been, what they are, and what they will be. This might be called the *subjectivity effect* of the truth discourse.

Where is this truth discourse of modern schooling to be found? In the case of Finland, the institution of government committees is a central instrument for planning and justifying reform policy, and thus for producing and articulating the truth. This is especially so in the case of education.[5] In some cases, committee proposals have become the official curriculum, both in the strict and in the broader meaning of the term. Committee reports have also been legitimated by the important role that educational researchers have attained in the committees, especially since the late 1960s. The material for this study comprises the committee texts on schooling and teacher education as well as the national curriculum documents for elementary and comprehensive schooling from 1925, 1952, 1970, 1985 and 1994. These were written as models for the national curriculum, with the more precise curricular documents to be formulated at the local level – in 1925 and 1952 by the school, in 1985 by the municipal authorities, and in 1994 again by the school. Only the 1970 curriculum was later declared by the National Board of Education (NBE) to be binding also at the school level.[6]

The focal period here is the 1970s, when three important reforms were carried out. First, in the *Comprehensive School Reform* (1972–77), the dual-track school system of an eight-year compulsory school and a parallel grammar school was replaced by the single, mixed-ability comprehensive school in which the whole cohort of pupils was schooled for nine years. Second, the *Teacher Education Reform* was put into practice during 1973–79, and it radically changed the training of primary school teachers (those who teach at the lower level, grades 1 to 6, in the comprehensive school). Their training was removed from teacher training colleges and small-town 'teacher preparation seminaries' to brand-new university faculties of education established as part of the reform. In 1979, the training of primary school teachers was raised to the master's degree level. This dramatically up-graded the role of educational studies in teacher training, and education as an academic discipline expanded rapidly. All this was due, at least in part, to the third reform, the *General Syllabus and Degree Reform in Higher Education* (1977-80), which abolished the bachelor's degree that was brought back only in 1994 (e.g. Kivinen 1988, Simola 1993 a).

Discursive changes accompanying these reforms, both as their product and their producer, were no less dramatic. The comprehensive school presented itself as the New School and did its best to distinguish itself from the old elementary school. Likewise, new teachers and educational researchers distanced themselves from their predecessors. It is not an

exaggeration to say that a new truth about both school and teacher were created. This change can be seen in four processes that I have termed *individualization*, *disciplinization*, *goal-rationalization* and *decontextualization*.

Individualization

Before the Second World War, Finnish curricular and committee texts rarely spoke about pupils as individuals. Although the benefits of mass schooling for the people were mentioned, it was principally legitimated by the needs of society, of the nation, of the fatherland. When a child or a pupil was spoken of in the singular, it was in the sense of the generalized individual, one among the citizens. It was not the individual but a group of children who were to be educated.[7] The aim was to educate pupils in the established religious and rural way of life where 'work and faith were the central concepts of the curriculum, and home and fatherland [its] solid ground' (Rinne 1987: 109).

This so-called moral curriculum code[8] changed to become a civic code after the Second World War (Rinne 1987). Only then did the solitary and original individual emerge alongside society as the legitimate basis for mass schooling. However, the individual was still subordinated to the interests of society. The school was seen as a 'miniature society' and as a 'working place for children'. These features were to be used in moulding 'school life' as totally educative. The main task of the school was to train 'individuals for society' (Curriculum 1952).

Only since the late 1960s has the modern individual surpassed society as the primary source of legitimation for schooling. The curricular code became an individualist code, in which the main ethos was found in the new promise to respond to individual learning needs and the individual qualities of each pupil. While the basic problem of pedagogy until the 1960s was the number of pupils, since the late 1960s it has been the diversity of individual pupil personalities. The 1970 curriculum proposed the core of a new discourse in stating that pedagogic expediency and flexibility were more important than the number of pupils. This way of speaking might be crystallized as a 'family tutor illusion' (Simola 1993b: 179): speaking as if the basic social relation in the school was one teacher–one pupil.

It is no wonder, therefore, that conceptions about the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers have also changed. Discussion about discipline and order in the classroom was replaced first by concepts of 'socially positive order for work'. Since the late 1960s, no reference has been made to social psychology as a necessary element of the teacher's knowledge. The new pedagogical concept was 'differentiation', and it was proposed as a basic tool for taking the diversity of pupils into account in classroom teaching.

Before the late 1960s, the need for individual observation was focused on pupils who were labelled as 'behaviourally problematic' rather than on every pupil. Since the 1970s, however, the teacher has been required to know every single pupil intimately. He or she ought to 'be aware of the

study-related factors in the individual pupil's home environment and 'of the previous learning results, abilities, attitudes, expectations and the health condition of the pupil' – regardless of whether she or he was a primary school teacher with 20 pupils or a subject teacher with 200 pupils (Committee Report 1975: 32–33).

The promise to respond to the diversity of pupils has culminated in the most recent texts, in which the individual-centred task of the teacher is reinforced by emphasizing the ethical character of the teacher's work. In the latest 1994 curriculum, the teacher is seen as a 'counsellor of learning' or a 'designer of the learning environments' of individual learners. The school now carries the rhetoric of 'individual study plans' or even 'personal curricula' , in accordance with the needs and abilities of pupils (Curriculum 1994: 10, 20). While the omnipotence of the school in the 1970s and 1980s was based on pedagogy, it is now leaning on the flexibility of the organizational culture and on a school-based curriculum. The idea in the late 1960s was that the teacher's work was to mould the school life of a group of pupils. Now the whole task is strongly centred on the individual.

Disciplinization

Since ethics and psychology became differentiated from religion at the beginning of this century, the knowledge base of teaching, i.e. educational studies, has consisted of pedagogical, psychological, philosophical, societal and practical knowledge. Until the Second World War, and in certain respects until the 1960s, educational aims were based on ethics and the prerequisites of psychology. The task was to combine these two premises into practical teaching methods.[9] Educational studies in teacher education were ideological in the sense that they were meant, first and foremost, to develop teachers' devotion to and consciousness of their mission. On the other hand, educational knowledge was also expected to be practical and to provide a repertoire of teaching methods to be applied in various teaching situations. Until the mid-1960s, educational studies in teacher training were multiple, pragmatic and ideological, based on psychology and ethics, and in all ways related to the needs of teaching practice – as interpreted by the National Board of Education.[10]

The turning point was the 1967 Teacher Training Committee Report (Committee Report 1967). The model of the teacher as a well-educated handyman was replaced by the model of the research-legitimated expert. In the 1969 report, it was proposed that responsibility for teacher education be wholly assigned to the universities, and the 1975 report suggested that the training be raised to master's degree level. The intention was to transform teaching from 'a haphazard activity into a rational one' by giving teacher education a research base (Committee Report 1975: 40). The new teacher was to become a 'didactic[11] thinker' and 'researcher into his or her work' (Committee Report 1967, 1975). The students of the 1990s would have to grind their way through educational studies five times as long as their colleagues in the 1960s.

Table 1. The relative proportion (%) of different fields of educational knowledge in the state curriculum for teacher training from the 1920s to the 1980s.

	Committee report				
Field of knowledge	CR1922	CR1960	CR1975	CR1978	CR1989**
Pedagogic	39	26	69	78	+ -
Psychological	25	39	9	7	+
Philosophical	11	6	2	0	+
Societal	21	13	16	9	-
Practical	4	16	5	5	-
Total	100	100	101*	99*	

* The deviation here comes from rounding error.

** In CR 1989, the contents are not expressed exactly enough to enable the calculation of percentages. Thus + and - refer to an increase or decrease in the field of knowledge in the text.

From the late 1970s on not only practical and philosophical, but also societal knowledge was almost completely deleted from the knowledge basis[12] for teacher's work (table 1). Since 1970, there has been no sign of contradiction between the pursuit of the individual treatment of pupils and the evident mass character of the school. Considerable attention was given to learning difficulties, but the teachers' unavoidable incapacity to attend to the problems of individual pupils in a full classroom was never mentioned as one of the underlying reasons. Although the vast majority of the primary schools in Finland are small and rural, with fewer than three teachers, their specific pedagogical problems are almost completely neglected in teacher education documents.[13]

This 'disciplinization' of the teacher's knowledge base culminated in the 1989 committee (Committee Report 1989), which saw 'didactically oriented educational science' as the only source of 'true' knowledge for teaching. It mentioned the multiplicity of teachers' work, but there was only one reference to educational psychology, and none to sociology or the history of education. Didactically-oriented educational science formed the core of the knowledge base required for the teacher's work.

Goal-rationalization

The third change in Finnish state educational discourse emerged earlier than the two mentioned above. The first seeds of a certain kind of 'goal-rationalization'[14] were already to be found in the 1952 curriculum, but this did not burst into bloom until the 1970 curriculum.

We may use the distinction between a goal- and a value-rational orientation[15] to question the kind of rationality that was written into the five Finnish curricula for elementary and later comprehensive school. In the first national curriculum of 1925, action in the school was clearly seen as value-rational. The absolute values of home, community, work, religion and the fatherland directed all educational activity. References to goals, to the means of achieving them, and to the evaluation of the efficiency of such

action are very rare. The school completely embraced the mission to civilize the Finnish people. Actually, there was no intention to 'develop' the school in the modern sense of the word, but rather to return it to the 'original idea and spirit' outlined in 1861 by the 'Founding father' of Finnish elementary education, Uno Cygnaeus.

The 1952 curriculum was an intermediate phase that represented a clear step from value-rationalism towards goal-rationalism. The text emphasized the importance of the goal consciousness of teachers, but this was for the purpose of unification rather than for efficacy. The goals were still essentially ethical, and one can find very few formulations of goals for learning. It was explicitly stated that setting general goals would contradict the compulsory character of the school: 'The main task of the teacher is to direct the studies of the pupils rather than to check their outcomes' (Curriculum 1952: 32). We may characterize this notion of educational action in the 1952 curriculum as being increasingly goal-rational, but far from complete.

It was the 1970 curriculum that introduced a completely goal-rational discourse. The general values and purposes of the school were to be operationalized into the parts of a hierarchical goals system. Goals were to be the basis for choosing methods, materials, organization and equipment of teaching. It was also explicitly demanded that measurable and exact objectives for pupils' behaviour be deduced from the general aims (Curriculum 1970: 20-23). In principle, it was seen as possible to measure exactly whether the school had achieved the goals – in as much as the technical instruments for that purpose had been developed. However, this ideal of exact goal-setting was never realized in the other parts of the curriculum. The goals were indeed formulated but not uniformly or systematically, and rarely concerned learning but rather teaching. The 1985 curriculum did not formulate exact goals either, although it declared that 'steering by the goals' was to be the core of the national control of schooling (Curriculum 1985: 7).

The present 1994 curriculum explicitly declares the abandonment of 'the goal-oriented learning ideology' (Curriculum 1994: 10). Ironically enough, it realizes, formally at least, the 1970 ideal of a uniform 'goal system' set in terms of individual pupil learning. While the 130-year history of the Finnish curriculum up to 1994 was a continuum of a more and more sophisticated and exact articulation of what was to be taught by the teacher, the 1994 curriculum effected a dramatic rupture of this continuity. The content has been absorbed into abstract and general notions while the goals take centre stage, stating uniformly and systematically what the individual pupil should learn. It is fair to say that the 1994 curriculum – or more precisely the national 'framework curriculum' – is virtually composed of the goals and the assessment of their achievement.[16]

To conclude, goals have become a paradigmatic starting point for both curricular planning and the administrative control of teaching over the past few decades in Finnish state educational discourse. However, what might be most important here is the relation between these goals and the context of education, since the socio-historically formed institutional context of schooling has virtually no role in choosing and formulating the goals. Thus,

while goal-rationalization as defined in state educational discourse meant an increasing emphasis on goals, it also lead to a decreasing interest in the context in which the goals were to be achieved.

Decontextualization

We may say that it is in the decontextualization of state educational discourse that individualization, disciplinization and goal-rationalization are intertwined. To put it another way, only through forgetting the mass character and compulsion of schooling is it credible to promise to respond to the individual learning needs and capacities of every pupil. Only through the exclusion of the everyday reality of schooling can individual-centred didactics become the core of the teacher's professional knowledge. Only through underestimating the institutional frames of schooling can the formal rationalism of reforms be based on utopian goals.

The institutional context of teaching and learning in schools has disappeared gradually from state educational discourse since the 1970s. The main ways this was realized might be characterized as the following: 'naturalization' of the school, a universalization of school learning, and the concealment of certain institutional characteristics of schooling.

It has been said, and with reason, that it was only through the Finnish comprehensive school reform of the 1970s that a long-lasting system of basic education became institutionalized and came to be a natural part of the normal individual development of every citizen (Kivinen 1988). No wonder then that before this, it used to be common to refer to the arbitrary character of the school, even in official texts. In the 1920s, the curriculum committee cited a rural teacher's lively narrative on the alienation of the school from the rural, agricultural spirit (Committee Report 1925). In the 1950s, schooling was seen as a necessity for civilization, but also as 'unnatural in its actual comprehensiveness starting as early as the age of seven' (Curriculum 1952: 27). It was claimed that schooling, even at its best, 'imposes on the children many strange things that will be resisted by the nature of the child ' (Curriculum 1952). This confrontation between the 'natural' child and 'unnatural' schooling disappeared during the 1970s when the problem of unnaturalness changed into one of pedagogical expediency. The school became a 'natural' environment for children. An example of this 'naturalization' was the changed stance towards the predictive power of school grades and reports. In 1952, school grades or marks were seen as lacking predictive power because of the one-sided character of school life itself; in the 1970 curriculum the only problem was the insufficiently developed technical means of evaluation (Curriculum 1952: 83, Curriculum 1970: 161).

Second, there was an essential shift in the way of speaking about learning. Before the 1970s, it was actually rare to speak about learning in state educational discourse, teaching was being discussed instead. Moreover, the reference to learning in the 1925 and 1952 curricula nearly always dealt with learning basic skills and values. 'School learning' was often

explicitly mentioned, whereas the expression completely disappeared after 1970 from the curricular texts. In the 1970 curriculum, elementary learning was very rarely discussed, and high-level, advanced learning became a constant topic of discourse. The focus shifted to learning abstractions, learning based on internal motivation, creative learning, meaningful learning, and so on. Learning in school become a synonym for general learning. Learning difficulties no longer referred only to learning difficulties in school, but also to difficulties in general, in whatever context. To conclude, learning in school has become the model of learning – it has become the only real learning (cf. Illich 1970).

The third mode of decontextualization was the concealing of certain peculiarities of schooling, especially its obligatory and mass character. One fundamental argument for compulsory schooling was to save children from the disastrous idleness brought about by the labour laws of the late nineteenth century, which limited the opportunities for children to work. This protective 'storehouse function' of schooling remained an explicit and legitimate argument for lengthening compulsory schooling until the mid-1960s, when problems of discipline and behaviour among idle 14- to 15-year-olds were cited (Committee Report 1966). The compulsory character of the school was still an issue of moral reasoning in 1970, but no hint of it can be found in official texts after 1975. The mandatory nature of the comprehensive school seemed to become irrelevant in state educational discourse. The mass character of the school was also explicitly articulated before the late 1960s. In fact, it was seen as a necessary precondition for social education: the school was to be a miniature society and work place for children. Such a function could be realized only in a social context where there were many persons, and thus a one-to-one relationship between the pupil and the teacher was the exception rather than the rule.[17]

The disappearance of the context for teaching and learning culminated in these two last texts: the Teacher Education Committee Report of 1989 and the 1994 curriculum. A distanced reader could imagine the main forms of studying to be individual or small-group teaching. The classroom no longer seems to exist, and the basic social unit is not a teaching group or a class, but the school, envisioned in the 1994 curriculum as 'a versatile learning centre that provides flexible and high-quality educational services' to the 'learners' (Curriculum 1994: 10). The institutional context, determined by certain historical, societal and cultural processes, has almost completely disappeared. As an example, the most important innovations affecting all teaching and learning in schools – the marketization of the comprehensive school and the introduction of a centralized national evaluation system – are not even mentioned in the 1994 curriculum.

Towards a school-free pedagogy

To summarize, a new kind of pedagogic discourse has been constructed since the late 1960s within Finnish state educational discourse. It has four

dimensions. First, *individualization* means that the school's basic commitment is to respond to the individual learning needs and abilities of every pupil. The idea that the teacher's work is to mould the school life of a group of pupils changed in the late 1960s to a new one in which it is considered an individual-centred task. Second, the *disciplinization* of speaking about teachers' work means that, instead of different domains of knowledge, one academic discipline – educational research or, more precisely later, didactically oriented educational research – has taken a monopoly position in determining the true knowledge required for teachers' work. Third, in the late 1960s, a shift from value-rational to goal-rational thinking about action was effected in official school texts. This process of *goal-rationalization* made the official goals of schooling the starting point for both planning and teaching. Finally, the socio-historically formed institutional context of teaching and learning in school has been gradually vanishing from the texts since the 1970s. I have termed this *decontextualization*.

A Swedish scholar, Gunilla Svingby (1979), characterized the literature developed in Swedish school reforms after the Second World War as 'curricular poetry'. She suggested that this way of speaking often loses its connection with classroom reality, and for that reason fails to promote challenges to existing educational practices. The Finnish state educational discourse which has been outlined in this paper has much in common with Svingby's analysis of the Swedish discussion. However, emphasizing its anonymous, rationalist, systematized and research-legitimated character, I have called it the 'rationalism of hopes' or 'wishful rationalism',[18] because it has a rational dimension as well as its 'poetic' one. The processes of individualization and decontextualization discussed earlier as tendencies in Finnish state educational discourse might be seen as this 'poetry'. This way of speaking is not peculiar to education, but belongs to 'a bizarre human tendency that assumes it is necessary to imagine an idealized state as an impetus for taking action', as Herbert Kliebard (1995: 87) recently wrote. However, modern reform discourse is not only poetic, but also rational in the Weberian sense that understanding, motivation and justification of action are based on its consequences. The particular processes of goal-rationalization and disciplinization in Finnish official school discourse might be seen as that kind of rationalism.

What then does this mean for pedagogy constructed in state educational discourse? We may sharpen the picture by using a distinction recently made by Pertti Kansanen (1993) who distinguished the concepts of 'school pedagogy' and 'didactics' as sub-disciplines within education (see figure 1). Both of these 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. According to Kansanen, 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 is consciously seeking to construct a theory of schooling. On the other hand, didactics concerns the individual teacher and pupil. As a discipline, didactics constructs universal models and theories of teaching without taking into account the frame factors of

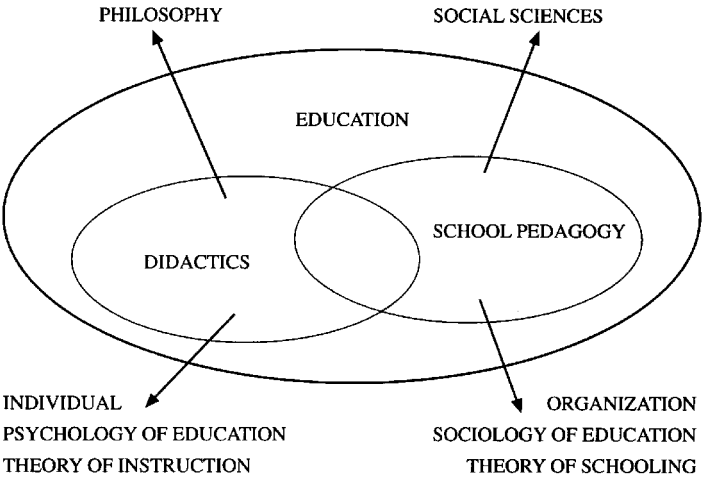

Figure 1. Differences and connections between didactics and school pedagogy. (Kansanen 1993: 24)

schooling. However, as Kansanen (1993: 25) points out, 'whenever we try to apply these models in practice, we need the help of school pedagogy and theories of schooling'.

It is obvious that it is exactly the distinction between 'didactics' and 'school pedagogy' that should be at the very core of a pedagogy mediated through teacher education and the national curriculum to schools, teachers, textbooks and teacher guides. Thus we may ask how much and in what sense have 'the help of school pedagogy and theories of schooling' been used in building the knowledge base for teaching in state educational discourse. According to the analysis above, it is evident that in this respect state educational discourse seems to be empty, at least in terms of 'school pedagogy'. Disciplinization has meant the path towards a pure didactics, a kind of abstract and universalistic, nonhistorical and decontextualized science of teaching. Schooling as an institution for historically formed, obligatory mass education tends to be dismissed as uninteresting. The everyday activities of teaching and learning in school, the sociocultural system of time, space and rituals – 'the grammar of schooling' (Tyack and Cuban 1995) – appears to be out of focus or even absent when improvements in teaching and learning are being planned and propagated.

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the core of the true knowledge of teaching in Finnish state educational discourse 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. Perhaps this is why an extensive national evaluation report of educational sciences by the Finnish Academy characterizes an essential part of 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: 56; emphasis mine).

Concluding discussion

Since the late 1960s, four old truths have changed in Finnish state educational discourse. First, the mission of the school turned away from moulding the school life of a group of pupils. The school became committed to respond to the individual learning needs and abilities of every pupil. This process has been called *individualization* of state educational discourse here. Second, the 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 NBE 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 and evaluation. Finally, it was *decontextualization* that made both individualization, disciplinization and goal-rationalization possible and credible. By sweeping the institutional limitations of obligatory mass schooling under the carpet it was possible to make it seem omnipotent: advanced, fulfilling its tasks, and thus deserving continuous public faith (Weick 1976, cf. Popkewitz 1991: 216). At the same time however, a *school-free pedagogy*, a kind of abstract and universalistic, nonhistorical and decontextualized concept of teaching, seemed to be constructed in the Finnish state educational discourse.

It is reasonable to question whether knowledge for teaching, as assessed from a reading of official documents, only reflects the discursive practices in state educational policy making. Does this also say something about pedagogic discourse in modern Finnish teacher education and schooling practices? One could claim, and with reason, that there is no direct link or one-to-one consistency between the official or planned curriculum and the realized or experienced curriculum, neither in teacher education nor in schooling (see, e.g. Denscombe 1982). There is, however, certain evidence that, at least at departmental curricular level in Finnish teacher education, similar decontextualization tendencies are to be found (Simola *et al.* 1997, Simola in press). There is also some empirical evidence that teachers tend to internalize the reform rhetoric as part of their professional identity, while at the same time seeing the reform itself as unrealistic (cf. Broady 1981, Broadfoot and Osborne 1988, Popkewitz 1991). Nevertheless, for a more complete picture, we need much more systematic and empirical analyses of teacher education, schooling practices and teachers' thinking, analyses which are still to be undertaken from this point of view.

An answer to this understandable critique might be found in an approach outlined at the beginning of this paper, that of the effects of the truth discourse. According to Bourdieu (1990: 136), official, state-guaranteed discourse accomplishes at least three important functions. First, it performs a diagnostic role enforcing affirmation of what a person or a thing is universally, and thus objectively. Second, via directives, orders and prescriptions it dictates what people have to do, given what they are. Finally, it says what people really have done, as in authorized accounts such

as police reports. In sum, the view of official discourse is set up as a legitimate point of view, that is, as 'a point of view which everyone has to recognize at least within the limits of a given society'. Therefore, it is quite evident that the pedagogy constructed in state educational discourse will have its effect as official truth: as a taken-for-granted, self-evident and an unquestioned way of speaking and thinking about, and also acting on, schooling. This is, naturally, not to claim that there is any monolithic discourse on education. In the social arena of education, there is an incessant struggle to establish the borderline between the 'universe of discourse or argument' and the 'universe of the undiscussed [or] undisputed'; between a field of opinion and a field of *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977: 167–169).

This brings up another question: Is the Finnish case just a curious example with no relevance to educational systems in other Western countries? One has to admit that Finland is a rather special case in education. As far as this paper is concerned, at least four facts have to be remembered here. First, Finland was more agrarian and less industrialized than other western European countries even as late as the 1960s but, between 1960 and 1975, Finnish society underwent one of the fastest structural transformations in Europe: it became an industrialized welfare state (Antikainen 1990: 75). Second, Finland is a country with a very strong state-centred political-cultural tradition. Third, the position of didactics in academic education has been exceptionally strong. Finally, all teacher education is organized completely at the MA level. All these traits give Finnish state educational discourse more conforming and unifying force than is the case in most other Western countries.[19]

But while Finland might be an extreme case, she shares the basics with other countries. It might be seen as a condensed case and, as such, as revealing and transparent. It would not be hard to imagine that exactly the kind of tacit discursive principles as the rationalism of hopes mentioned above might constitute a part of the 'world culture of mass education' referred to by John W. Meyer and his associates. Data from the official documents of more than 120 countries show that, in spite of very different socio-economic, cultural and political circumstances, there are striking similarities in both institutional and organizational forms (Meyer *et al.* 1992 b), and in curricular outlines, particularly in elementary schooling (Meyer *et al.* 1992 a). Western mass education has institutionalized a global, trans-national *model*, based on the same legitimational and ontological components (Boli and Ramirez 1986: 84). From this perspective, the Finnish case might well appear to be extreme but, as such, interesting. To find evidence for this claim is, however, an empirical task and far beyond the scope of this paper.

Notes

1. In the late 1980s, the diversification of teacher education was accepted in governmental committee reports, although the emphasis was still on 'structural conformity' (Committee Report 1989). The recent national curriculum (Curriculum 1994) is much briefer

and more general than its predecessors. It is called the 'framework curriculum' around which school-based curricula will be formulated. The task and right of the National Board of Education to approve the textbooks used in comprehensive schools were abolished in 1991.

2. The paper is based on Simola (1995).
3. Because of the space available, I will not refer to societal, cultural and political changes as the context of these discursive shifts realized since the Second World War (for Finland, e.g. Kivinen 1988, Simola 1993 a, 1995 and for other countries, e.g. Collins 1979, de Swaan 1990, Green 1992). This does not mean, however, that I do not see their importance. It is only that the focus is on discourse in this paper.
4. See Simola *et al.* (in press), Heikkinen *et al.* (1996).
5. According to a Finnish study, education 'has traditionally been an area in which government committees have played a particularly central role in the planning and preparation of government action and in drafting government policy for the sector as a whole. It is through the institution of the committee that education has been brought under strict governmental control, and the committee has become a vital instrument of educational policy as practised by the state' (Hovi *et al.* 1989: 243).
6. In accordance with the Finnish state-centred and centralized administrative tradition, national curricula have been very comprehensively documented. They ranged in size from 300 to 700 pages. The exception was the 1994 curriculum with only 111 pages. In 1952, the curriculum was ambitiously defined as 'a series of those experiences that the pupil meets in his or her school work' (Curriculum 1952: 40). The definition of the 1970 curriculum was even more complete. It must consist of 'the explanations of all the most important measures and procedures by which the school pursues the aims that are imposed for education. . . . [T]he curriculum includes all those learning experiences that the pupils have under the guidance of the school, also outside the classrooms' (Curriculum 1970: 56).
7. Even in 1946, the Elementary School Committee saw it as the task of the elementary school to train workers, of the lower secondary (middle) school to train supervisors and of the grammar school (gymnasium) to train managers (Committee Report 1946: 17).
8. Here I follow Lundgren in his definition of 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 organization of knowledge an skills', and third, as 'an indication of methods concerning how the selected contents are to be taught; to be sequenced and controlled, for example'. A 'curriculum code' is for Lundgren a 'homogenous set' of 'principles according to which the selection, the organization and the methods for transmission are formed' (Lundgren 1991: 5).
9. The Finnish pedagogical history is strongly flavoured with so-called Herbartianism. When the fluorescence 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 nineteenth century. The Herbartian tradition in Finnish teacher training was phased out only after World War II in press but remained its influence in classroom teaching much later (e.g. Simola in press).
10. Training and its content were directly and strictly controlled and administered by the National Board of Education (NBE), which confirmed the curriculum and the syllabus, accepted the textbooks and, if desired, even chaired the examinations.
11. 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 where it is very near to the general concept of pedagogy. Kansanen (1995) states that 'in the 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 (Kansanen 1995). In the Anglo-American literature, there are just a few texts concerning the relation between didactics and curriculum theory but see papers on the German *Didaktik* tradition in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 27, issues 1 and 4 (1995).
12. Subject knowledge is not included here.

13. In 1975, a third of primary school pupils were in small schools that constituted 75% of all primary schools (Committee Report 1975, 83, 89). In the middle of the 1980s, nearly half of the school teachers were working in so-called 'combined classrooms' with pupils from at least two different age groups (Kivinen 1988: 263).
14. Choosing an English term here is very difficult. In educational literature, the terms *purpose*, *end* (or *end-in-view*), *aim*, *goal* and *objective* have been conventionally used. Except for the most abstract term (purpose), the rest are often used synonymously (e.g. Saylor and Alexander 1966: 123). According to Robert I. Wise (1976: 280–281), 'educationalists have seen fit, however, to maintain a technical distinction between aims and goals on the one hand and objectives on the other'. The distinction has been maintained with respect to differences in *level of specificity* and *span of time* to which the terms refer.

    I finally decided to use the term *goal* here for several reasons. First, it refers to a desirable consequence that is, in some reasonable sense, attainable and realistic, while the terms *end* and *aim* have the nuance of being something so general and so long-term that they might give only a direction for the action. Second, a *goal* refers to a more general and more long-term consequence than an *objective*. Third, an *objective* does not fit here because it refers to specific cases in the behaviouristic paradigm – i.e. Bloom's taxonomy of objectives and management by objectives (MBO) – which are only parts, though important ones, of something characterized here as goal-rationalization. Finally, a *goal* is a useful term here because of its 'middle range' or intermediate character at the levels of both specificity and span of time.

    In Finnish, and the research material is naturally in Finnish, there is no problem. *Tavoite* is a general term that refers equally well to an end, an aim, a goal as well as to an objective (e.g. Kansanen & Uusikylä 1982: 33–38).
15. It is fruitful to analyse this change by capitalizing on Max Weber's classic formulation of two different rational orientations in social action (1947: 115–118). Weber made a distinction between *Zweckrationalität* and *Wertrationalität*. The first, often referred to as 'instrumental rationality', is characterized by conscious reasoning in which action is viewed as a means to achieve particular ends and is oriented to anticipated and calculable consequences (Murphy 1988: 199). The second mode of orientation, usually translated as 'value-rationality', is characterized by a belief in the intrinsic value of the action, regardless of its consequences, and is oriented to a conscious set of values (Murphy 1988: 199). In Weber's own words (1947: 117), an action is *zweckrational* when it is

    > rationally oriented to a system of discrete individual ends . . . [and] when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relations of the end to other prospective results of employment of any given means, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends.

    According to Weber (1947), the *wertrational* action is based on 'a conscious belief in the absolute value of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behaviour, entirely for its own sake and independently of any prospects of external success . . . ' Using this Weberian distinction, I will call the *zweckrational* orientation *goal-rational* and the *wertrational* orientation *value-rational* thus emphasizing the distinctions between the conceptions of the ends-in-view of these two orientations. For goal-rational orientation, the ends are goals to be reached. The goals not only give a direction for the action – as values do in value-rational orientation – but their realization must also be evaluated. This implies the need to operationalize the ends, and also to change them into the means for further goals. Therefore, we could also speak here about goal- and value-centred rationalities.
16. A centralized goal system has been replaced by centralized assessment system as ironically noted by Lundgren (1991: 62): 'What begins as a change in steering systems, directed towards a distribution of policy making from the centre to the periphery, turns out to be a strengthening of a central steering system.'
17. What is striking here is the late invasion of individualism in Finnish educational discourse in general. In fact, the principle of individualizing teaching did not belong to Finnish pedagogical vocabulary before the 1960s (Lahdes 1966). Linked with the

moral and civic curriculum codes, keywords even in the Finnish progressive 'new school' movement after the 1930s, were *Die Arbeitschule*, work books and social education rather than child-centred individualism (Lahdes 1961). When the strong Herbartian tradition in Finnish teacher training was phased out in 1945 through the introduction of a new textbook of didactics for elementary school teacher training (written by Matti Koskenniemi, a leading academic figure in Finnish education throughout the 1950s and 1960s), it was strongly influenced by a social education mission. Thus it is no wonder that Koskenniemi's textbook was strongly 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 turned to the service of moulding the institutional life of a group of future citizens.

18. For more detailed discussion see Simola (1993 b, 1995, 1996) and Simola *et al.* 1997.
19. On these issues, see Simola (1993 a, 1996, in press), Simola *et al.* (1996).

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