Doctoral-Level Teacher Educators in Finland

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Abstract Teacher education in Finland has reached a respectable 160 years of age. However, only for the past fifty years teacher education has been a part of the university institution. Before that, teachers were educated in teacher seminars. The changing educational needs of the welfare society caused teacher education to become part of the university institutions. The academization process of teacher education has not been smooth as the historical conditions of Finnish teacher education have emphasised strict norms and teachers' practical skills have clashed with the need to train teachers who can do research and understand educational theories in relation to society. This push-and-pull process of practice versus theory provides even today ground for debates in Finnish teacher education. During the time that teacher education has been a part of universities, the relationship between training doctors and teacher education has varied. First, teacher educators were trained to become doctors mostly out of their own interest. In the second phase, teacher education had a strategic need to become more academic through training doctors. In the third, and current, state, teacher education departments all around Finland are systematically training Doctors of Education to meet the needs of changing society. Teacher educators of today are expected to both teach and research, and training doctors in education is at the heart of this process. Indeed, Finnish teacher education departments are trying their hardest to find answers through research-based methods to answer the needs of society, to advance teacher education and to make education in general better. In addition, larger and more complex funding programs have made it possible to have national and international collaboration between teacher education departments. Hence, we think that the future of Finnish research-based teacher education revolving around Doctors of Education is positively open.

Keywords Finnish teacher education – Doctor of Education – research-based education – phenomenon-based education

Promovierte Lehrpersonenbildnerinnen und Lehrpersonenbildner in Finnland

Zusammenfassung Obwohl die Lehrpersonenbildung in Finnland bereits ein beachtliches Alter von 160 Jahren erreicht hat, ist sie erst seit fünfzig Jahren den Universitäten angegliedert. Zuvor wurden Lehrpersonen in Lehrerseminaren ausgebildet. Die sich ändernden Bildungsbedürfnisse der Wohlfahrtsgesellschaft führten dazu, dass die Lehrpersonenbildung Teil der universitären Institutionen wurde. Der Akademisierungsprozess der Lehrpersonenbildung verlief jedoch nicht reibungslos, da die historischen Bedingungen der finnischen Lehrpersonenbildung, die strengen Normen unterliegt und die praktischen Fähigkeiten der Lehrpersonen in den Vordergrund stellt, mit der Notwendigkeit kollidierten, Lehrpersonen auszubilden, die forschen und Bildungstheorien in Bezug auf die Gesellschaft verstehen können. Dieses Spannungsfeld zwischen Praxis und Theorie sorgt auch heute noch für Debatten in der finnischen Lehrpersonenbildung. Seit die Lehrpersonenbildung an den Universitäten angesiedelt ist, hat sich das Verhältnis zwischen der Ausbildung von promovierten Lehrpersonenbildnerinnen und Lehrpersonenbildnern und der Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung allgemein unterschiedlich entwickelt. Anfänglich doktorierten Lehrpersonenbildnerinnen und Lehrpersonenbildner hauptsächlich aus eigenem Interesse. In

einer zweiten Phase entwickelte die Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung ein strategisches Bedürfnis, durch die Ausbildung promovierter Mitarbeitender akademischer zu werden. In der dritten und gegenwärtigen Phase bilden die Lehrpersonenbildungseinrichtungen in ganz Finnland systematisch Doktorinnen und Doktoren der Erziehungswissenschaften aus, um den Anforderungen der sich wandelnden Gesellschaft gerecht zu werden. Heute wird von Lehrpersonenbildnerinnen und Lehrpersonenbildnern erwartet, dass sie sowohl lehren als auch forschen, und die Ausbildung von promovierten Mitarbeitenden im Bildungswesen steht im Mittelpunkt dieses Prozesses. In der Tat bemühen sich die finnischen Lehrpersonenbildungsabteilungen stark, durch forschungsbasierte Methoden Antworten auf die Bedürfnisse der Gesellschaft zu finden, die Lehrpersonenbildung voranzubringen und die Bildung im Allgemeinen zu verbessern. Darüber hinaus haben umfangreiche und komplexe Finanzierungsprogramme die nationale und die internationale Zusammenarbeit zwischen Bildungsinstitutionen für Lehrpersonen ermöglicht. Wir sind folglich der Ansicht, dass die Zukunft der finnischen forschungsbasierten Lehrpersonenbildung, die das Doktorat in den Erziehungs- und Bildungswissenschaften in den Mittelpunkt stellt, im positiven Sinne noch offen und weiter ausbaufähig ist.

Schlagwörter Lehrpersonenbildung in Finnland – Doktorat in Erziehungs- und Bildungswissenschaft – forschungsbasierte Ausbildung – phänomenbasiertes Lernen

1 Introduction

Teacher education in Finland has become world-renowned, mostly because of the high-level Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in the 2000s. Finland's master's-level teacher education has largely been credited for the Finnish pupils' success in PISA (e.g., Sahlberg, 2015) though making such a direct connection is not possible simply based on the PISA data (Kivinen & Hedman, 2017). Nevertheless, teacher education has played a key role in the Finnish education system since the 19th century, especially after the Second World War, when the building of a Finnish welfare state based on ideas of equality and justice began. In welfare-state ideology, education is a promise of a better future for all citizens, and qualified teachers act as professionals redeeming this promise.

Teachers are highly respected professionals in Finnish society. Consequently, primary and special-teacher education programmes are popular among university applicants (see Education Statistics Finland, 2022). The MA-level qualification supports the general respect for the teaching profession and plays an integral part in the idea of research-based teacher education. In practice, research-based teacher education means that teacher education's curricula and teaching are based on relevant research on education, which is also carried out by teacher educators themselves. Indeed, Finnish teacher educators belong to the university community, and their work contains both teaching and research. Therefore, nowadays, many teacher educators have a doctor's degree. To be sure, highly qualified teacher educators having doctoral degrees have played an essential part in the development of research-based teacher education for decades.

In this article, we first describe some of the historical developments that have led to many teacher educators having doctoral degrees – we call this development the «academisation process of Finnish teacher education». Indeed, as Finnish teacher education has a long history of being based on strict norms and practical skills of the teachers (see, e.g., Ojakangas, 1997; Rantala, 1997, 2010), it is political struggles which have led to teacher education in Finland becoming academic. We can offer only an incomplete description of the academisation process because there does not exist comprehensive research literature on the topic. After giving a brief introduction to the history of the academisation process of Finnish teacher education, we discuss how, in our opinion, the academisation process has influenced teacher education. Furthermore, we do our best to elucidate what kinds of challenges contemporary Finnish education faces and how these challenges are being addressed. More so, we try to fill gaps with our own experiences as teacher educators and additional data that is not directly connected to our topic.

2 A brief history of the academisation process of Finnish teacher education

The roots of publicly financed Finnish teacher education can be traced to the 1850s and 1860s. Tsar Alexander II gave orders to the Senate to improve the school conditions in autonomous Finland, resulting in a plan for a school system for both boys and girls. The emergence of a national comprehensive school system required trained teachers, and the first teacher training seminar for men and women was established in Jyväskylä in 1863. Simultaneously, the education of subject teachers began at the University of Helsinki to ensure pedagogically skilled teaching and teachers in upper secondary schools.

Teacher education remained basically the same (in structure and culture) for a hundred years, until the 1950s and 1960s. Criticism of the school system grew after the Second World War and led to a large reform (nine-year comprehensive school for all) in the 1960s and 1970s. Critique toward the old system was especially strong among leftist parties who stressed the inequality of the old system. For example, people would have different school paths based on whether the family was able to afford tuition or not. The criticism of inequality in the school system was part of the larger transformation of Finnish society towards a welfare society. In 1974, teacher training was reformed as well (Kuikka, 2010). In consequence, teacher training seminars were abolished (in Jyväskylä this happened much earlier in 1934), and new teacher education departments were established at universities in the faculties of education. The new departments were responsible for master's-level teacher education programmes, with sixty European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits for pedagogical studies for subject teachers (see, e.g., Rantala & Rautiainen, 2013).

Teacher education was academised via this reform, which changed the nature of the entirety of teacher education. While the hundred-year history of teacher seminars' culture

had been based on the development of teachers' practical work, academised teacher training began to emphasise the meaning of research and theory, not only as background for teaching but also in practice, as part of master's-level teacher education programmes and teacher educators' work. However, the conditions of teacher education based on teachers' practical work were not immediately ready for this change (see, e.g., Kallioniemi, Toom, Ubani, & Linnansaari, 2010; Kuikka, 2010).

The reform of teacher education was a sum of different factors. First, changing to a nine-year comprehensive school system required a new kind of teacher education. Second, the general reform of university education in Finland affected teacher education as well. Third, the welfare society's idea of highly educated citizens required academically trained, professional teachers. Thus, the reform of teacher education was a mixture of political goals, changes in the university context, and teachers' work. The change created also tensions. As practical skills were emphasised earlier in the teacher's profession, academic status was seen as a threat, causing teachers' practical skills to weaken. In addition, many scholars were critical of the idea of teacher education as part of the academic context – on the one hand, because practical skills were at once at the core of the teaching profession and, on the other hand, because primary school teacher programs did not exist anywhere in Finland. However, distinct universities had quite different relationships with teacher education and educational sciences. For example, at the University of Jyväskylä the transition was easier because Jyväskylä University had strong roots in teacher education and educational sciences (Rantala & Rautiainen, 2013).

Rautiainen, Saukkonen, and Valtonen (2013) interviewed professors who had worked at the department of teacher education in the 1980s and 1990s, asking about the professors' views on the academisation process of teacher education at its initial stage. The professors highlighted the resistance of both students and teacher educators against the reform. According to students, research studies were pointless because teachers do not need research skills in schoolwork. Many lecturers shared this opinion (Rautiainen et al., 2013). Of note, some teacher educators were already doing research. Still, at this time, conducting research was more an individual choice of the lecturer, not a strategy of the institution. As part of the reform, new professor positions were established in teacher education. The qualification criteria for lecturers remained at the master's level. Nevertheless, in the larger picture, as teacher education became a part of the university institution, this pressured teacher education departments to implement the systematic training of doctoral students. As departments needed doctoral-level teacher educators and students had to be offered the possibility of continuing their studies in a doctoral program, it was only a matter of time before the doctoral programs would become more established in Finnish teacher education.

The doctoral training of Finnish teacher educators following the academisation process can be summarised in three stages, as shown in Figure 1. As mentioned, there is quite

a long history of teacher educators having doctoral degrees in Finland, but until the beginning of the 21st century, it was more the teacher educator's own choice to gain a doctoral degree rather than a clear, collective goal of the organisation. Thus, in the first stage, the teacher educator's own will was the main impetus behind completing a doctoral degree. Nonetheless, after the academisation of teacher education, the pressure to raise the number of doctorates in the staff became evident (Rantala & Rautiainen, 2013).

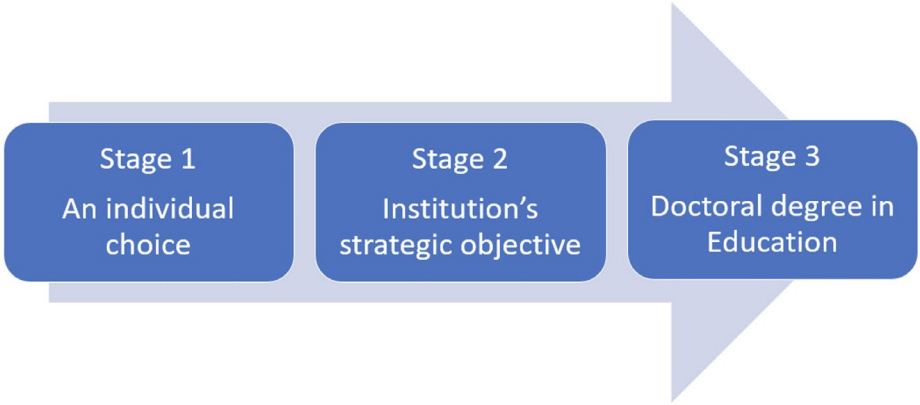

Figure 1: The three stages of doctoral training in the history of the academisation process of teacher education in Finland.

The second stage can be traced back to the early 2000s when teacher education institutions started to promote doctoral studies as part of their strategic planning. The history of the academisation of teacher education at this point had been long enough for professors to have constructed their own research groups. During the second stage, the doctorate itself was appreciated, but the discipline that the teacher educators had focused on in their doctoral training was not necessarily appreciated in the same way. In addition, it was enough to have a licentiate's degree to qualify for a lecturer's position until the early 2010s. The second stage remained short-lived because, in 2010, a radical university reform was implemented. From the beginning of 2010, universities were no longer directly governed by the state. Universities became more autonomous institutions with financing linked to the number of graduated students as well as the quantity and quality of universities' research. Later in the 2010s, universities and faculties were encouraged to profile their work, which meant narrowing down research fields. Moreover, teacher educators' qualification criteria were raised, resulting in the requirement to have a doctoral degree for a university lecturer's position. As a result of the profiling, the doctoral degrees of new teacher educators came mostly from educational science while previously they had been from different disciplines due to the interdisciplinary background of the staff.

Because of the aforementioned developments, the teacher education faculties' work culture all around Finland has been evolving towards a reality in which all teacher educators conduct research. Nowadays, new teacher educators should possess a doctoral degree or at least should have started their doctoral studies when they work as teacher educators. This trend follows the change in the university system in Finland in which universities will get much of their income from the Ministry of Education and Culture based on their productivity. In other words, the more universities and faculties profile their activities along the research guidelines defined by the Ministry, the more highly they are evaluated. Doctoral degrees are part of this model of how the Ministry distributes its resources to the universities (see, e.g., Seuri & Vartiainen, 2018.)

3 Doctoral training in contemporary Finnish teacher education and working paths of doctors after the training

The academization process led to the creation of eight different university-based teacher education paths. Hence, all the teacher education department units (eight in total: Vaasa, Tampere, Turku, Jyväskylä, Joensuu, Helsinki, Oulu, Rovaniemi) provide a path to a doctoral degree but through faculty-centred researcher programmes. For example, Jyväskylä University's Faculty of Education and Psychology consists of three separate departments (Department of Teacher Education, Department of Education, and Department of Psychology) – hence, the faculty offers one doctoral school, which is divided into three different doctoral programmes (Jyväskylä University, 2022a). There are no general prerequisites, such as teaching experience, to applying for a doctoral school in teacher education other than a master's degree. However, there are differences regarding application between departments. For example, at Jyväskylä University, the students must have gained an average grade of three out of five in their advanced studies and master's thesis (Jyväskylä University, 2022a).

During the training, doctoral students are expected to familiarise themselves in depth with their own field of research to develop readiness to apply scientific research methods and create new scientific knowledge independently and critically. In addition to independent research, the training includes discipline-specific and transferable-skills studies (Jyväskylä University, 2022a). There is also a faculty-appointed guidance group that offers coordinated support and monitors the students' progression in their doctoral studies and with the dissertation process in general. However, how the guidance group functions can vary considerably.

Approximately fifteen to twenty people per year graduate with doctorates in education in Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä University, 2022b). A large proportion of the new doctors in education end up working in the university environment. Some go to work somewhere else. To work as a university teacher in Finnish teacher education, teaching experience from schools or university is valued but not a requirement. Truly, to work as a universi-

ty teacher (the lowest level of university workers) a master-level degree suffices. Some people do their doctoral studies during their last working years before retiring, for instance, as teachers. Consequently, there is an ongoing heated debate about the skills that the doctoral students gain during their training and on whether these skills are valuable and useful in other working contexts than university/research. Nevertheless, the nature of the working opportunities that doctoral graduates find in the university varies (see Piironen, Matikainen, & Maunula, 2022). Many find work in research projects, while others become employed as university teachers. In the department of teacher education especially, where the need for teaching staff is relatively large, numerous new doctors become hired as teachers. Most of these positions are for a fixed term, so the general outlook of most doctors in education in academia is precarious (see Nuutinen, 2017). In general, in the Finnish academic world, the competition between different universities regarding funding and work opportunities has become fiercer. This means that it has great influence on your career where you received your doctoral degree and who your supervisors were (Piironen et al., 2022). As a result, an increasing number of employees feel uncertain about their work positions and career paths, and many of them are considering or have considered changing their area of work completely (Piironen et al., 2022).

In the larger context, doctoral training in Finland is somewhat in conflict with the actual needs of teacher education and educational research in general (see Husu & Toom, 2016). As mentioned, different universities and faculties have had to profile their work and research more sharply, meaning that doctoral training is focused on specific research fields. This has caused some research fields and themes to become marginalised. Indeed, even though Finnish basic education students have been able to perform well on PISA tests, other challenges regarding public school education have been reported. For example, many students' low levels of well-being, high levels of fatigue, poor chances to participate in different actions in schools, and feelings of not belonging have been under the scope (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2021; Männistö, 2020; Rautiainen, 2022). The question arises as to whether these developments in schools, which reside at the margins of contemporary educational research, are taken into consideration when training doctoral students in education. This question is highlighted by the fact that at Jyväskylä University's Department of Teacher Education, there are no professors whose research fields consider neither educational philosophy nor social science nor cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, or the arts.

4 Finnish teacher education today

Finnish universities, including teacher education, have autonomy over their organisation and decisions concerning their curricula as well as with regard to how the education is arranged and provided. Legislation prescribes only certain frames concerning the qualifications of different professional groups (e.g., teachers in special education and

primary-school education). In general, the contents of Finnish teacher education are quite heavily determined by the historical background of the Finnish school system and the hierarchies between different disciplines, but the influence of the needs of the rapidly developing society has grown larger over the years (see, e.g., Fornaciari, 2020). Indeed, many of the developments that can be perceived in Finnish society (and in other Western societies as well), such as individualism, the rise of digital learning environments and materials, societal polarisation, and questions concerning sustainable development as well as climate change, place demands on contemporary teacher education. At the University of Jyväskylä, these immense challenges have been addressed by building a phenomenon-based education concept (see Tarnanen & Kostiainen 2020). The idea is to educate teachers who understand educational questions as interconnected phenomena rather than as specific (school) subject contents. Phenomenon-based studies aim to offer future teachers the capacity and competence to understand diverse phenomena regarding education, teaching, and learning. The idea is that students need the ability to bring together and combine varying educational theories and authentic experiences in the schools. These ideas also connect with the broader syllabus of contemporary Finnish teacher education that is guided at least in part by the following elements: i) changed conceptions of learning, teaching, and instruction (inquiry-based and cooperative teaching and learning, new paradigms of social constructionism, phenomenon-based learning, etc.); ii) differentiated learning results and student diversity (multiculturalism, societal polarisation, gender questions and questions of sexuality, socio-economic background); and iii) challenges regarding the efficiency of the school system (well-being, education connecting to working life and economical interest) (see, e.g., Husu & Toom, 2016; Matikainen, 2022; Naukkarinen, Moilanen, & Tarnanen, 2022; Sitomaniemi-San, 2015).

Academic Finnish teacher education has traditionally emphasised the importance of the theoretical understanding of educational questions alongside the importance of the mastery of the contents/information regarding the disciplines taught in primary school. In Finnish teacher education today, the teaching profession is understood more broadly as a mixture of practical pedagogical know-how and wide-ranging knowledge about societal, ethical, and global questions. Moreover, there is a goal to advance our understanding of the teaching profession in cooperation with school units (see Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2018). At the core of the teaching profession are communication skills and the capacity to interact in a multitude of contexts. However, in Finland, where both the teaching profession and the educational system are highly valued, both locally and internationally, primary-school education has been criticised for its lack of flexibility and educational methods and contents that provide grounds for the development of critical thinking. The critics suggest that Finnish primary-school education needs more democratic practices aimed at negotiation, cooperation, and interaction with the surrounding society in order to promote skills needed in today's society (see, e.g., Fornaciari & Männistö, 2017; Husu & Toom, 2016; Männistö, Rautiainen, & Vanhanen-Nuutinen, 2017; Rautiainen, Hiljanen, & Männistö, 2022).

The Finnish education of teachers is taught in an academic frame and provided with appropriate resources to help it fulfil its objectives. The studies consist mainly of lectures, the writing of essays and other academic texts, research, intensive reflection on one's own learning and tasks done collaboratively with fellow students. The ever-relevant dialogue between theory and practice in teacher education is executed via four teaching practices in schools throughout the studies. The current situation concerning teaching resources and funding in teacher education is relatively good, varying slightly between different teacher-education units. This is because the teaching profession in Finland is still socially and culturally respected and getting a degree in education is seen as desirable.

5 Discussion

Developing a well-working and equal educational system is not a simple matter. In Finland, we have seen an increase in the polarisation of learning results based on socio-economic status, gender, and geographical location (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2023; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). This has also been noticed, at least to a degree, in Finnish teacher education. Indeed, some level of national consensus exists that the contents of teacher education should reflect the challenges of the actual society (e.g., Fornaciari, 2020; Husu & Toom, 2016; Sitomaniemi-San, 2015). By researching the challenges of society in teacher education, we can train professional teachers who are capable of understanding their working contexts and the obstacles of education in depth. Furthermore, the ideal of Finnish primary school teachers, who are capable of conducting research independently, is perceived to reside at the heart of quality education (Husu & Toom, 2016; University of Helsinki, 2019).

The idea of developing teacher education through research has created further pressure to train more doctoral students in education. This, we argue, can be clearly seen in the current social reality of teacher education all around Finland since the number of doctoral-level teacher educators has steadily risen. One should be, however, aware of the fact that the historical roots of Finnish teacher education contradict many of the contemporary ideals of teachers as researchers, which causes friction between hopes and reality (e.g., Kinos, Saari, Linden, & Värri, 2015; Sitomaniemi-San, 2015). Indeed, as more and more teacher educators gain doctoral degrees, the amount of research done in teacher education increases. Consequently, the plurality of different research topics causes heated debates concerning what the «right» contents of teacher education are and how the goals of education should be fulfilled. All this means that even though nowadays we have more Doctors of Education, large-scale transformation concerning how we think about education in Finland is an ongoing process. Nevertheless, we do not argue that this is a negative thing per se, as ongoing debates about societal issues are an integral part of democratic societies.

To crystallise our main points and to help the reader to make some sense of the current reality's challenges and developmental needs, we have listed a few critical points that we perceive to be in need of development in Finnish teacher education:

1. Doctoral programmes in teacher education are to a degree disjointed from the needs of society and public-school education.
2. A lack of cooperation and interdisciplinary work (between researchers) exists.
3. Some important educational research fields are underrepresented in the studies carried out in teacher education.

As we want to end our text on a positive note, we would like to say that we think that there exists a will to meet the challenges that we have brought forward in the text and to advance research-based teacher education. Indeed, there appear constantly more projects to develop Finnish teacher education that are being realised or at least coordinated nationally. We argue that this implies that there is a number of intersecting ideas in Finland concerning the important developmental points of teacher education. Moreover, nationwide collaboration makes it possible to advance our understanding of teaching and the teaching profession from differing perspectives.

All the developmental points that we have introduced in the text require a continuing and determined will to rethink education in the fast-changing social and cultural environment. This also calls for different political, scientific as well as academic approaches and endeavours to work together for the sake of a better educational system and better schools for everyone.

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