

# Chapter 7

## Unmentioned Challenges of Finnish Teacher Education: Decontextualisation, Scientification and the Rhetoric of the Research-Based Agenda



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**Abstract** Finnish teacher education has emphasised that academic standards and a research-based agenda are followed in the everyday activities of training teachers. Finnish teacher education has been recognised as a prime example of how to carry out teacher training. In our chapter, we reach beyond the myths and hype about Finnish teacher education with three interconnected concepts: decontextualisation, scientification and rhetoric. With these concepts, we expose unwanted side effects that have followed from pursuing academic standards. We also illustrate the swift transformation of Finnish teacher education.

Finnish teacher education reviews seem to have the same recurrent message: Teacher education in Finnish universities has the same position and status as traditional academic subjects like history, mathematics or social sciences. Thus, research is central to the function and identity of teacher education, and every student teacher must pass a master's degree to gain the status of a qualified teacher. As it stands at present, these views are reassuring that teacher education is an indisputable part of academia in Finnish higher education institutions and that Finnish teacher education is following academic guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

Finnish teacher educators consider that teacher training has embraced the research-based agenda as the central organising theme which is considered in administrative decision making and day-to-day academic activities including all the tasks performed in basic studies and even in teaching practices. They see research-based

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reasoning as a kind of adhesive that connects educational practices to educational theories. The relationship between theory and practice is another often-repeated tenet of Finnish teacher education. It follows that research-based thinking should associate theory and practice in a compact connection so that schoolteachers can work out daily teaching problems based on their theoretical knowledge gained in teacher education. Thus, theoretical reasoning does not stop when neophyte teachers commence their practice in education.<sup>2</sup>

The career development of Finnish teacher educators seems to support the idea that research-based thinking is truly the operative agenda in Finnish teacher education. In Finland, recruited teacher educators are expected to have a doctorate which was not true a few decades ago. Nowadays, Finnish teacher educators are publishing in international publications and mainly identify themselves as researchers.<sup>3</sup> They also appreciate the research-based approach.<sup>4</sup> It is no wonder that this academic look seems to lure those seeking academic opportunities. This does not question that occasionally Finnish teacher educators may feel the term 'teacher' is better applied to their professional identity. Furthermore, since theory and research are fused in Finnish teacher education discourse it provides a good basis for divergent identity-based interpretations. The same academic appeal has made teaching an attractive career choice for young people in Finland. The popularity of teacher education programmes has ensured that teacher students are often highly motivated. Like their university teachers, student teachers appreciate the research-based approach, and they can detect it in most of their courses.<sup>5</sup>

It seems that Finnish teacher education is managing excellently. And to make the story even more favourable, Finnish education has been basking in the glory of PISA success and teacher education has naturally received its share of this international adulation. So, it is no wonder that this small nation, whose inhabitants are famous for being introverted and modest, has risen to the occasion, become proud of its achievements, and produced such volumes as *Finnish lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?*<sup>6</sup> and *Miracle of education: The principles and practices of teaching and learning in Finnish schools.*<sup>7</sup>

The same praise continues in Finnish teacher education reports. In international comparison it has been declared that although Finnish teacher education is in an excellent position, 'it is always possible to make good even better' and that Finnish teacher education programmes have been acknowledged 'as a desired goal for other countries'.<sup>8</sup> In these laudatory views, Finland often takes the role of the educational forerunner in education, as Finns are depicted as having an almost sacred relationship with education. This mission obliges Finns to show the way to other nations struggling with their educational issues.<sup>9</sup>

Finnish teacher education can also be seen from a different standpoint. Some ask whether research-based teacher education in Finland is more rhetoric than reality.<sup>10</sup> The fact that teacher education belongs to academia does not guarantee that a research-based approach is enacted plausibly. On the other hand, the same teacher training institutions that have professional school functions (to educate masses of teachers) must at the same time meet expectations imposed by international research communities. There are also still some teacher educators who mainly identify with

their roles and mission as teachers and see their researcher identity as secondary.<sup>11</sup> As well, while Finnish teacher educators have improved their academic achievements, departments might be tempted to recruit top-notch researchers from other disciplines to enhance research output.<sup>12</sup> Another problem is that not every student seems to understand the research-based approach.<sup>13</sup> A further issue is that large-scale empirical research about the reception of research-based approach amongst schoolteachers is still lacking and one must contend with indirect indications and personal knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

Research-based teacher education is by no means a Finnish national treasure, but an approach widely found in international recommendations.<sup>15</sup> Unsurprisingly, it is enacted differently around the world.<sup>16</sup> While we see that research-based teacher education is definitely a favoured and largely assumed approach in academia, we think that there are still many questions to be studied. We have referred above to studies and views which clearly promote research-based teacher education and a Finnish way to do it. We have also provided views that criticise these studies. Both lines of inquiry could reflect tendentious and goal-directed intentions. Still, the fact of the matter is that research-based teacher education is a complicated process. We are also aware that to many other academic disciplines it can appear a bit strange to criticise a research-based approach. But in education, there are some serious and intrinsic reasons which should be considered. First is the rather brief history of the academisation process of academic teacher education which is also true in Finland. Another issue is the rather complicated relationship between theory and practice in education.<sup>17</sup>

In this chapter we study ideas, developments (whether intended or not) and repercussions, that may have hindered or complicated the fulfilment of the research-based agenda. Furthermore, we scrutinise unwanted side effects that may have followed when complying with the research-based approach. We apply three different views to present our point of view. First, we consider whether or to what degree the story of Finnish research-based teacher education is more rhetoric than reality. Second, with the idea of decontextualisation, we demonstrate how the research-based approach has alienated teacher education from the school environment and the rank and file of education and how teacher education studies have missed so-called contextual studies. Finally, we discuss scientification of Finnish teacher education in the changing context of university work.

## **Another Version of the Finnish Teacher Education Success Story**

In this section, we examine the transformation of Finnish teacher education during the last half-century. Based on an analysis of national committee and evaluation reports the rhetorical emphasis of Finnish teacher education can be divided into four periods: 'The retreat from tradition' (the 1960s), 'Academia calling' (the 1970s and the 1980s),

'Rhetorical academisation' (the 1990s and the 2000s) and 'Real academisation?' (the 2000s and the 2010s).<sup>18</sup> Each period has its characteristics. In the 1960s teaching was mainly seen as craftsmanship. Thus, the message of reformers was quite clear: more theory is needed because the theoretical basis of teacher education was inadequate, and the traditional idea of teachers' work was outdated. However, the same reformers warned against providing an overly theoretical education for prospective teachers. Practice, i.e., connection to day-to-day schooling was seen as an important, if not predominant, part of a teacher's education.

When teacher education was on the verge of achieving full academic status in the 1970s, the emphasis on theory strengthened. The ability to think scientifically was presented as being characteristic of a teacher, as encapsulated in the suggestion that 'practical decisions should derive from research-based facts, not beliefs'.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the committees of the time admitted that teachers were not supposed to be 'real researchers' and that there was not (as yet) any generally accepted theory of education or instruction.

The third phase, 'Rhetorical academisation', embodied the need to accelerate the academisation process. At the beginning of the 1990s, Finland was suffering deep economic depression and questions arose as to whether class teachers needed studies at the master's level. Furthermore, it was questioned by some in academia whether the university was the right place for teacher education. The defensive reaction was to stress the theoretical aspects of teacher education: now the teachers were to be not just schoolteachers but 'educational experts'. The rhetorical shift was connected to a simultaneous change in the teacher education curriculum. This was supported by the fact that schoolteachers achieved true authority in local curriculum work at the same time. More theory and research methodology were added to teacher education to promote the teacher-as-a-researcher attitude to student teachers.

Closest to the present day, the concern about a gap between theory and practice has vanished. Even though teaching practice periods became shorter in the 1990s, the relationship between theory and practice has become less and less seen as a problem. Unlike earlier decades, teacher education reports from the 2000s and 2010s do not recognise any ambivalence. On the contrary, a report from 2007 declares that 'a research orientation and teachers' day-to-day work are inseparable'.<sup>20</sup> Here, the key element is said to be personal practical theory (PPT), that every teacher trainee is encouraged and expected to develop. The concept of PPT, as well as some analogous labels, refers to the interaction between the knowledge, beliefs and practices in the minds of teachers. The stated aim of PPT is to combine different elements experienced by students during their education. Yet, PPT is rarely elucidated and the vagueness of PPT raises questions of how scientific elements are separated from mere personal experiences and if PPT can offer any universal tools that go beyond the personal experience of a teacher.<sup>21</sup>

When one reads Finnish texts about teacher education that are written after the millennium, the overall impression is that the academisation process is complete and the decade-long challenge to combine theoretical and practical parts of the education

has been solved. At the same time, Finland's education system has gained international attention or even hype because of excellent PISA results. In these circumstances, selective use of two facts, the fact that Finnish primary teachers have required a master's degree since the 1970s and the fact of the PISA results, have created a narrative of the growth story of Finnish teacher education finally culminating in excellent learning outcomes. However, any more thorough history is more complicated.

First, there is some evidence that Finnish teacher education discourse has been selective, and goal directed. In the 1990s a Finnish version of the report summarising an international review did not refer to the reservations that the international team had about the lack of time and other resources schoolteachers would have if intended to conduct research during their careers.<sup>22</sup> However, all the other observations of the international team are listed in detail. Similarly, a committee report of 2007 declaring the merging of research orientation and teachers' daily work ignores international studies in which teachers question the role of theory in teacher's work or stress the rather complicated relationship between theory and practice in education.<sup>23</sup>

Second, a constant theme in committee and evaluation reports is criticism towards teachers who work in schools. School teachers are said to have a limited understanding of educational research and to show reluctance towards educational science. What is striking is that even in the same reports Finnish teachers are said to be top-notch in their profession when compared internationally but only a few lines later are accused of lacking research motivation.<sup>24</sup> In this vision of a good teacher, research-based teacher education is applauded, and the work of actual schoolteachers is suppressed. Teachers are presented as half-educated researchers, who should be able to do research, but who are not real researchers.<sup>25</sup>

Third, the rhetoric praising the research-based agenda presents teacher education only as the education of teachers who study education as their major. While the success story fits nicely to the development of primary teacher's education and their internationally uncommon master's degree, it overlooks subject teachers who teach at both lower and upper secondary levels and who have subjects like history, geography or biology as their major. This is despite PISA measuring 15-year-old students who are taught by subject teachers and it can be estimated that there are more subject teachers than primary teachers in Finland. While we acknowledge that there may be several reasons for this lapse of memory, the education of subject teachers does not fit the success story. Subject teachers study their future teaching subject as their major, spend on average only one year in Education faculties, and so absorb their academic orientation from their subject major. Their education has been fully academic since the nineteenth century and can be characterised by strong continuity and stability when compared to the education of primary teachers. Hence, the subject teachers seem a poor fit for the story.

To sum up this section, the self-rhetoric of Finnish teacher education has constructed a coherent narrative of success. The success story is built around the research base of teacher training as well as the reputation of the Finnish education system. The narrative acknowledges primary teachers' education and its development but ignores subject teachers and pays no attention to the connections between

teacher education's theory base and practical schoolwork. This has created a seedbed for decontextualisation, which we introduce next.

## **Decontextualisation—Teacher Education Without School and Society**

We have argued that the strengthening of the research-based orientation of Finnish teacher education has been possible under the rhetorical shield, and this, in turn, has intensified decontextualisation. By decontextualisation, Hannu Simola means a discursive break in the 1970s in which the sociohistorical and institutional context of teaching and learning in school vanished from official texts on education in Finland. Simola links the decontextualisation process to other simultaneous school discourses. Firstly, while the school is still run for masses the idea of individual pupils had been emphasised in the school discourse. At the same time, ubiquitous learning which may occur everywhere and whenever has replaced the time-bound and contextual school education. The third simultaneous discourse is the tendency to fall silent about the compulsory nature of schooling. Finally, decontextualisation has also made possible the scientification of teachers and teacher educators (discussed in the next section) which are epitomised in the research-based agenda.<sup>26</sup>

How has decontextualisation been manifested in Finnish teacher education? To begin with, it seems that in Finnish teacher education so-called contextual studies like history or sociology of education have fallen away, or when accomplished, suffer from uncritical acceptance towards prevailing political views and agendas.<sup>27</sup> The same tendency is seen in Finnish educational textbooks: In the 1970s these textbooks were emphasising how crucial it is for teachers to recognise societal and historical elements when dealing with everyday school challenges. In the latest textbooks, references to these contextual factors have diminished and the focus is at the level of the classroom. Wider societal issues, when mentioned, are mainly about school development and unfocused pressure from society to change.<sup>28</sup>

Decontextualisation is also noticeable in the imagery around an ideal teacher. In the wake of the academisation process of Finnish teacher education presented above, the Finnish teacher profile has also gradually transformed from a rather practical and didactical thinker to a research-based professional who is expected to also undertake research tasks as part of daily duties. The autonomous position of teacher education in academia has made it possible to strive for this rather ambitious teacher ideal. The problem becomes clearer when two Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, are compared. In Sweden, the state has controlled teacher education. Thus, Swedish teacher education policy has oscillated between political orientations and teacher ideals. When Social Democratic governments have been in power, Swedes have pursued a progressivist orientation with the teacher as a social reformer. Under centre-right liberal governance, the prevailing teacher ideal has been the academic orientation in which the teacher is a subject expert.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that Finnish teacher education has been largely free of party politics and government control has made it more feasible to follow academic and science-based guidelines. From the academic point of view, this is an advantage. However, the lack of political guidance has reduced the awareness of the political, societal, and sociological issues in teacher education and fostered the tendency to view education in a depoliticised way free from normative pressures and political agendas. There are reasons to believe that this has strengthened decontextualisation in Finnish education and especially in teacher education. In contrast, political agendas in Swedish education and teacher training have been salient and under vivid debate. Nowadays, Sweden has also started to follow the research-based agenda.<sup>30</sup>

Finnish teachers' awareness of political pressures is related to other normative expectations to which they have been obligated. The traditional Finnish teacher ideal cherished patriotic and Christian virtues linked especially to primary school teachers. These normative virtues were overt and binding and teachers were expected to act and live accordingly. The traditional teacher ideal was seen as outdated in the 1960s, after which Finnish teacher educators chose to follow the research-based agenda as depicted above. This change of outlook happened during the period when the Finnish welfare state was created as part of the goal-oriented modernisation process of the whole society and education. In this development, teachers were expected to have a crucial role.<sup>31</sup>

The research-based agenda is said to epitomise the ideas of neutrality and objectivity. Thus, it is considered to be free from normative pressures whether political or ideological. Nevertheless, new research-based teachers are not exempt from normative pressures. While traditional normativity was allowed to be obvious, the newer normativity is cunning and at the same time seductive: it asks teachers to study and develop themselves continuously and not to get stuck in the past as they are supposed to be dynamic agents of change. Furthermore, they are supposed to have extensive networks and international partnerships. It may be a coincidence, but these virtues are usually associated with researchers. Of course, readiness for change and broad-mindedness can be seen also as desirable. But it is problematic if these virtues mean an uncritical stance towards administrative decisions and readiness to embrace various school reforms for fear of being called a 'diehard', 'dinosaur' or 'luddite'. This may be the case if teachers are not aware of political and ideological pressures on and within education (see also Juvonen and Toom in this book).<sup>32</sup>

Decontextualisation can also be seen in the relationship between theory and practice. It seems that the separation of theory and practice is visible in teacher education, which is mainly appreciated by student teachers. Still, the relationship between theory and practice is all too muddled for many of them.<sup>33</sup> Teacher practice provides a promising opportunity to study theoretical questions in concrete educational contexts. Unluckily, as a consequence of the research-based agenda teacher educators have pulled back from guidance on the practice of teaching. This has meant two things: first, much theoretical knowledge has withdrawn from periods of teaching practice and it has put University-based training school teachers increasingly responsible for disseminating theoretical understanding under the simultaneous pressure to take care of practical school issues. Second, teacher educators

have lost opportunities to see what is happening in classrooms. These repercussions have increased decontextualisation and minimised opportunities to bring theory and practice together.<sup>34</sup>

Finnish teacher educators have made a lot of effort to convince us that they have found a workable solution for combining theory and practice. Even more, this coexistence of theory and practice should also be true in a teacher's daily work.<sup>35</sup> While there is still the need to undertake large-scale empirical research on how the research-based agenda is approached amongst practicing teachers, some case studies are indicating that Finnish teachers are challenged to keep up with their theoretical knowledge. In other words, teachers do not read educational journals. As well, although teachers mainly do appreciate academic and research-based education, educational science is unable to provide analytical tools and theoretical perspectives for teachers. Teachers demand quite concrete tools, which would help them to understand students and their behaviour. According to teachers, these were absent in their academic education. It seems that research-based education does not provide a solid, critical and theoretical basis for teachers. Thus, teachers are not able to theorise their work and recognise complex interrelationships, which further promotes decontextualisation.<sup>36</sup>

More than thirty years ago, two Finnish educational scientists Osmo Kivinen and Risto Rinne wrote a provocative article to arouse debate around Finnish teacher education, and they succeeded.<sup>37</sup> The researchers accused Finnish teacher educators, amongst other things, of concentrating on studying their students, namely pre-service teachers, and making conclusions about the state and the needs of schools and schoolteachers with this evidence. The same may be true even today. This is a burning issue since the predominance of research-based culture in Finnish education can be studied in no other way than studying the actual context.

## **Scientification of Finnish Teacher Education and the Changing Context of University Work**

The rhetoric and decontextualisation of Finnish teacher education discussed so far can be seen as the consequences of a rather consistent and steady scientification process, which is the common thread in the transformation of teacher education and how it has succeeded to settle within academia. The main reason for scientification of Finnish teacher education can be related to the general scientification of professions in modern societies. Living and working as a professional in the so-called knowledge society requires continuous self-development as well as the ability to interpret and apply the latest scientific research.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, one reason for the scientification of Finnish teacher education in the 1970s was to ensure that the teachers working in the new comprehensive school would be equipped with the latest research knowledge and continue updating their skills during their work career.<sup>39</sup>

The scientification has had many welcome and widely recognised consequences for Finnish teacher education. Getting affiliated with universities has attracted more



students to apply to teacher training programmes and it has also raised the academic requirements for people working as teacher educators. The scientification of teacher education has thus improved the professional status and autonomy of both Finnish teachers and teacher educators. However, several studies are pointing out the problems related to the professional identity and autonomy of teacher educators working in universities.<sup>40</sup> Balancing between scientific and educational expectations seems to be hard also for some Finnish teacher educators.<sup>41</sup> While some problems and solutions could be found from the organisational culture of teacher education departments,<sup>42</sup> one should also pay attention to the difference between the university context where the scientification of teacher education first started and the university context where it is supposed to continue happening. In other words, it would be worth reflecting on how changing societal expectations related to universities serve or challenge the existing teacher education practices.

When class teacher training and elementary training schools entered Finnish universities in the 1970s, two groups of professionals encountered the situation where there were plenty of opportunities for both groups to develop. On the one hand, there was a small and established group of scholars coming in mainly from other fields of science such as psychology and subject departments. For this group of researchers, the teacher education represented uncharted territory with the possibility to establish new vacancies and training programmes. On the other hand, there were also a large group of people having a background as a qualified and merited teacher but with no experience of scientific work. From the 1970s until the early 2000s teacher education units consisting of teacher education departments and training schools supported the latter group of teacher educators to participate in doctoral studies, do excursions abroad, and develop their professional identity as science-based practitioners. As a result, both the total number of staff, the number of professors, and the share of people having doctoral degrees increased steadily between the 1970s and early 2000s.<sup>43</sup>

What characterised the Finnish university politics during this scientification of teacher education in the 1970s and 1980s was the importance of regional politics and the steady growth of funding by the state. Growing public funding, however, meant also growing resource control of universities, which intensified especially in the 1990s. While in the 1980s the funding of universities was still solely based on the number of starting students, in the 1990s Ministry of education introduced various performance indicators to monitor the scientific output of universities.<sup>44</sup> The relationship between state and universities changed in 2009 when the new University Act gave Finnish universities stronger financial and administrative self-control. What this new independence meant also was that the amount of public funding and regular personnel declined while the importance of external funding increased.<sup>45</sup> What also happened at the same time was the shift from quantity-based public funding into performance agreements where scientific quality was also taken into consideration.<sup>46</sup>

For many teacher education units and teacher educators, the last decades of changes have meant confusing times. As a result of decreasing influence of regional politics and increasing influence of economic self-management, the majority of the Finnish universities ended up closing teacher education units located in different towns than the main campus at the beginning of the 2010s. Centralising teacher

education into bigger units has meant new research possibilities for teacher educators but it has also opened the door for policies where budget cuts could be done for example by integrating studies and staff of different training programmes. On the plus side, some teacher students have probably experienced more academic freedom in their studies than before, but at the same time, the studies are not necessarily well-targeted for the context where teacher students are expected to work in the future.

Besides the questions related to the content of teaching, there are also some concerns about how well the new policies aiming to increase the scientific productivity and external funding in universities meets with local and national needs of teacher training.<sup>47</sup> Even though research communities have been officially advocating for versatile teaching and research activities, evaluation practices such as the Journal Ranking by The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies encourage researchers to hunt performance points for their home units. This applies particularly well to researchers having short-term contracts and whose ability to perform as scientifically productive researchers are evaluated in staff recruitment processes and tenure track models.<sup>48</sup> Increasing scientific expectations and dependency on external funding has also changed the way how teacher educators participate in developing teaching and teacher education. Instead of long-term cooperation with the people working in the field, constant scanning of resources leads easily to project-hopping and short-term development policy.<sup>49</sup>

## **Conclusion: The Need to Acknowledge the History, Challenges and Tensions of Teacher Education in Finland**

The Finnish teacher education system has followed a research-based agenda since the 1970s. One clear but unintended repercussion of the development from vocational training to full academic and research-based activity is decontextualisation. In our analysis, decontextualisation takes place in the content of teacher education, and at the same time, there are processes through which teacher education is in the danger of losing its connection to school realities. Rather ambitious visions concerning teachers' work as quasi-researchers should be also reconsidered. The rhetoric of Finnish teacher education has offered a shield to proceed with the research-based agenda, which has welcomed academic development. At the same time, this process has isolated teacher training from school contexts, and as a consequence decontextualisation has gained a firm foothold in Finnish teacher education. Science policy which underlines research activities at education's expense and promotes short-term and global-oriented projects has been especially problematic for teacher education, which is also in need of local thinking and long-term commitment.

In this chapter, the political and ideological consciousness of Finnish teacher education has been concealed under the decontextualised culture. It is problematic if teacher education is just reacting to the pressures of science policy and trying

to convince, maybe with louder rhetoric, that it is in shape and can handle both the scientific and practical educational issues without problems. We do not want to keep up dichotomies between research and teaching-orientated teacher education, nor deny the usefulness of the scientific method when solving practical problems. Instead, we criticise the discourse in which scientification is seen as a solution without problems and where dilemmas emerging in everyday practices and policies of teacher education are actively silenced.

Finnish teacher education can salute its achievements with good reason. But in the celebration, it has forgotten to recognise complicated consequences. As a general rule, one-sided praise has been done mainly by teacher educators who have also represented the schoolteachers' voices rather lightly. It is quite clear that the academisation process of Finnish teacher education has been a favourable project for teacher educators and teacher education institutes. The same process has also provided schoolteachers with real analytic and academic skills needed in the daily school context, not forgetting the distinguished status and professional authority it has granted.

On the other hand, there is still the need for a more detailed examination of what the research-based agenda means for teachers in their day-to-day schoolwork. The few case studies done, indicate that the rhetorical promises of research-based agenda do not get realised in their daily schoolwork. This is reflected by teachers' lack of familiarity with educational research or the way they seem to lack analytical tools to analyse the institutional or societal settings of schooling. Research-based teacher education aims to educate teachers not simply as the recipients of professional knowledge, but as autonomous actors who also participate in knowledge production.

Teacher education aims to offer academic tools and broaden students' thinking to help them generate context-free knowledge and thus understand individual classroom situations and personal experiences in a wider context. While there would be little point criticising the Finnish aim to support making theorising and reflection visible by emphasising PPT, it would be a mistake to think that merely vocalising one's private theories would create a better practice. Theory in the form of 'school-free pedagogy' may not offer meaningful tools for a practitioner. Hence, based on the historical development of Finnish teacher education, we argue that the decontextualisation of educational knowledge makes it hard for an individual teacher to meaningfully combine scientific knowledge and one's own experiences.

To conclude, the history of the academisation process in Finnish teacher education is rather exceptional. In the 1990s it was still being questioned whether the university is the right place for teacher education. It was blamed for sustaining the old teacher college culture. It took only a decade to change the situation dramatically, not least because of the high rankings in PISA testing and swift and consistent measures to foster the academic culture in teacher education. Since the turn of the millennium, teacher education has been a widely known success story of Finnish higher education.

At the same time, spurred by the scientification process, Finnish teacher education has been busy in pursuing academic goals. First teacher education had to catch up with the rest of academia and show that it can follow true academic standards. When this finally happened, it was necessary to adapt to the new science policy. Both

situations have imposed demands which may be irrelevant, if not detrimental, to the old necessities of teacher education like teaching practice and practical dimensions of teacher's professional skills. When adapting to varying academic cultures teacher education has been very agile. Still, we should examine more closely whether the approach of Finnish teacher education has reflected more the eagerness to please academia and ministries than a critical stance and readiness to appeal to the particular needs of teacher education, which it certainly possesses. Maybe the truth lies somewhere between these extremes.

We have earlier introduced the idea of the marriage of convenience between theory (teacher educators) and practice (teachers at work in schools) in Finnish teacher education.<sup>50</sup> If the teaching profession is regarded as truly research-based the status of teacher educators in Academia is assured. Besides that, teacher education can provide academic prestige and distinctive authority which separate teacher educators clearly from teachers working in schools. At the same time, it is good if teachers in schools are also at least somewhat academic 'half-researchers' but who come in any case from a good academic family.<sup>51</sup> We sincerely hope that the communication is active and diverse in this utilitarian marriage and that the genuine academic spouse also lets their teacher partner have a say. We also hope the latter is not demanding the impossible from the union either.

## Notes

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