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Between selection procedures and mentoring: assessment and tutorial structures in teacher education (the case of Finland)

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Structure of presentation

1. Background: Teacher education in Finland
2. Selection of students to teacher education
3. Assessment procedures in subject teacher education



1. BACKGROUND: **Teacher education in Finland**

- **All teacher education** for general education takes place **in universities**
- **All teachers**, also those for grades 1-6 in compulsory education, **take MA level degrees**
 - Primary school teachers (= class teachers) (for grades 1- 6) major in education
 - Subject-specific teachers in compulsory school from grades 7 – 9, and in senior secondary school (=13–19 year olds)
 - [Kindergarten teachers (children 1–6 year) – BA, major in pedagogy)

Teacher education for vocational schools is arranged by **colleges** for vocational teacher training (and in some subjects, in universities)



Teachers' qualifications by school forms in Finland

(based on Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi 2006, 11)

Age	School form	Teachers' qualification
0–6	Kindergarten	Kindergarten teachers (BA)
6	Optional pre-school	Kindergarten teachers (BA) or class teachers
7–12	Basic education (compulsory) grades 1-6	Class teachers (MA), subject teachers
13–15	Basic education (compulsory) grades 7 -9	Subject-specific teachers (MA, MSc)
16 –	Upper secondary schools	Subject-specific teachers (MA, MSc)
16 –	Vocational schools	Vocational or subject teachers

Primary school teacher education

(MA, teaching grades 1–6) (adapted from Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi 2006, 38)

Components of class teacher Education	BA 180 ECTS	MA 120 ECTS	Total 300 ECTS
Main Subject (general education): <i>pedagogical studies; educational research; scientific writing; theses</i>	60 including teaching practice; BA thesis	80 (MA thesis 20-40 ECTS (practice))	140
Curriculum studies (subject studies in school subjects for grades 1 to 6, - short courses in 10 school subjects + crossdisciplinary themes)	60		60
Academic studies, minor subjects	25	0-35	25-60
Other studies (language, ICT...)	35	5–40	40-75



The education of the subject-specific teachers (concurrent model) (= grades 7-9 and upper secondary) (ibid.,39)

Components	BA 180 ECTS	MA 120 ECTS	Total 300 ECTS
Academic studies in the main subject <u>(Arranged by subject departments)</u>	60 (incl. BA Thesis 10 ECTS in main subject)	60-90 (incl MA thesis 20-40 ECTS)	120-150
Academic studies in minor subjects <u>(in subject depts)</u>	25-60	0-30	25-90
Subject teachers' pedagogical studies <u>(in Department of Teacher Education, training school)</u>	25-30	30-35	60 (min. 20 teaching practice)
Other studies	35 - 40	0-30	35-70

The main components of subject teacher education

- **SUBJECT STUDIES:** normally one main subject + at least one minor subject
- **TEACHER STUDIES** (60 ECT credits; can be completed in a year):
 - a) educational studies,
 - b) subject didactics (Fachdidaktik),
 - c) practical training / internship
- [a+b in Departments of Teacher Education; c: in University training schools, Normalschule]



Different paths of becoming a subject teacher

- 1. **MA majoring in some subject**, teacher studies included in the degree (concurrent model - the mainstream in Finland)
- 2. MA teacher studies done after the degree, separate diploma (consecutive model)
- 3. MA as above (1 or 2), but teacher studies done in the teacher education directed to adult education
- 4. MA in class teacher programme (education as major, studies on a school subject as minor, 60 ECTS, qualifies for grades 7–9) → **A NEW TREND – favoured because COMPULSORY EDUCATION IS MORE AND MORE OFTEN FUNCTIONING AS A UNIFIED SCHOOL**
- 5. MA with a subject combination consisting of several subjects (qualification to teach also the minor subject)



Characteristics (both in primary and secondary school teacher education)

- **Internship / teaching practice**
 - **Practical training / internship** is mainly organised in university training schools ("*normal schools*"), which belong to the Faculty of Education
 - Depending on resources, part of internship can be arranged in municipal schools
- **Qualification as a teacher:** directly after graduation



Characteristics 2

Double qualifications:

- Teacher education departments tend to arrange for their students opportunities to qualify for two levels, for instance:
 - Primary teacher + 60 ECTS subject studies → able to teach also at higher grades in compulsory school (grades 1–9)
 - Subject matter teacher + 60 ECTS primary teachers' curriculum studies (→also qualified for 1–9)
 - Primary teacher / subject teacher + special education teaching



2. Selection of students to teacher education

■ Primary school teacher education

- A highly popular study programme (10-15 % of applicants are yearly selected; about 20 % of beginning students are males)
- Entrance tests
 - the **national test for educational programs** (VAKAVA), based on literature [common test for primary teachers and some other programs with general education as major] AND best of these applicants are invited to
 - **local entrance tests** at teacher education departments (variations in test forms: interviews, group interviews, problem-solving tasks, tests on mathematical thinking etc.)



Selection of students to **subject** teacher education

- MAIN STRUCTURES OF SELECTION

1. Step 1: entrance tests to subject departments, and step 2: later on, specific aptitude tests for teacher studies [main alternative]

2. Direct selection to subject teacher studies

- (part of) students are selected at the same time to subject studies + teacher education [**directly aptitude tests + subject matter tests**] – in some universities: languages, mathematics, chemistry, physics; religious education [**not very usual**]
- physical education, household economy, sloyd/handicraft, music, arts [**in these subjects, the main procedure**]

(VARIATIONS between universities and departments in selection to subject studies)



Main elements of the selection procedures to subject teacher studies

- Large variations between universities and subject areas
- SOME MAIN COMPONENTS
 - preliminary selection (in some cases)
 - aptitude tests [normally a board of three university teachers assess the applicants]
 - additional tasks / assignments / performance tests
 - (in some cases) assignments / tasks given in advance
 - (in some cases) written tests, used combined to aptitude tests



Aptitude tests for subject teacher education

Different variations:

- Individual interviews
- Group interviews
- Presentations (applicant has for instance task to be done in advance and to present in test situation)
- Group discussions; problem-solving tasks in group
- Combination of a written test and aptitude test



Examples

- **University of Turku** (students from the faculties of humanities and sciences):
 - To be eligible for teacher studies, minimum requirement: 50 ECTS in main subject (further specifications in some areas)
 - Participation in aptitude test, which consists of
 - a) group discussion (alternative themes / material) **AND**
 - b) individual / group interview;

Selection is based on this test (a person can get max. 5 scores from each sub-tests; if the total score is ≤ 3 , s/he is discarded).



Example: the structure and criteria of the aptitude test (Turku example)

1. GROUP DISCUSSION (about 15 minutes, 5-6 students / group)
 - group chooses its topic from 2-3 themes given by the board, in the beginning of the test
 - (in HISTORY: topics about school life, history teaching, current political issues or ethical dilemmas); sometimes short texts or pictures are used as basis for group discussion



Example (Turku), criteria for assessing group discussion

- The board of examiners follow the discussion and each applicant's capacity to interact, to present logical argumentation, and to reflect;
 - a) **ability to listen** (not taking too much psychological space; participating in common discussion, being "alive", encouraging others)
 - b) **ability to take responsibility** (trying to involve others, makes specifying questions to others, relevance of contents, friendliness,)
 - c) **self-reflection** (realistic, self-conscious)



Example (Turku) individual interviews

- **MAIN THEMES:** life history (studies, work); motives for becoming a teacher, conceptions of teacher profession and work, commitment to teacher studies and teaching)
- **RELIABILITY**
 - shortness of time; tests perhaps do not give enough evidence of individual candidates' aptitude
 - risks of misinterpretation (many interfering factors, eg. test anxiety, verbalism)
 - difficult to anticipate, how an individual would develop as teacher in the future
 - in group tasks: groups differ; a student's success may partly depend on the quality of the group



Other examples

- University of Helsinki:
 - main procedure: text-based interview (text has been sent in advance);
 - in religious education: written test + text-based interview;
 - in adult education teacher programme: interview + text-based presentation



the number of graduated subject teachers (2005-2007) / year, related to the estimated need of teachers up to 2020. In selection of subjects (Ireport by the Ministry of Education).

subjects	graduated /year 2005 - 2007	Annual need, estimate / year by 2020	difference
math, physics, chemistry, ICT	263	321	-58
biology + geography	97	66	+31
Finnish language	168	107	+61
Swedish language	84	82	+2
Other languages	244	309	-65
History, social studies, religious education, philosophy, psychology	188	54	+134
Music	76	22	+54
Arts	71	42	+29
Sloyd	80	81	-1
Physical education	66	93	-27
Household economy	43	71	-28



3. Assessment procedures in subject teacher education

Studies in general education and subject didactics

- Assessment as in any academic studies:
 - Course evaluations (examinations, assignments, seminars, portfolios)
 - Both formative and summative assessments
 - Scale 5–1, or pass/fail
- Internship / teaching practice
 - Scale: pass /fail
 - Assessment closely connected to feedback and supervision
 - A teacher student can get a description of the contents of internship [e.g. of specific skills trained]



Authentic assessment in teacher education

- **Purpose:** to support the students' professional learning and development, reflection of one's own development and learning
- Elements of this both in teaching practice and subject didactics (portfolios, written reflections on one's own development, analysis of previous beliefs and own school history; analysis of one's own goals; analysis of own teaching);
- Linking theory to practice, general education and subject didactics to own school practices and professional learning



Examples from history didactics

1. beginning of the autumn

- DESCRIBE your teachers (good teacher, bad teacher, teacher who had an influence on you...)
- What kind of teacher would you become

2. during the autumn

- YOU AND HISTORY
 - how did you become interested in history; how did you study at school and in university; what have been important learning experiences for you
 - describe your 'philosophy of teaching history' now (your goals as teacher)
- OBSERVATIONS FROM LESSONS; “anatomy of a history lesson”
- OBSERVATIONS FROM HISTORY LESSONS IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSES



3. during the winter and spring

■ CONSTRUCTING THE PORTFOLIO

- selections from previous essays and other work
- early reflections revisited (e g 'philosophy of teaching')
- NEW THEMES
- THEME 1: your development as a teacher (reflections on development and learning during teacher studies, critical incidents during the year)
- THEME 2: history and social studies teachers' competence; what is it – where are you now; - here also practical examples: lesson plans, teaching materials + analysis of them

PRESENTATION IN SEMINARS; written feedback



Examples from teaching practice

(assessment & mentoring)

- Criteria for assessment (for example): students' commitment, interaction skills, subject knowledge, goal orientation, assessment skills; responsibility; goals and criteria become more challenging towards the end of practicum
- FEEDBACK is a form of assessment; interactive assessment; assessment discussions (elements of mentoring and tutoring included)
- SELF-ASSESSMENT; PEER ASSESSMENT



- REFLECTION BOOK in teaching practice
- Contents:
 - student teacher's reflections on his/her experience, ideas and feelings during the practicum, about the lessons, successes and failures
 - written feedback from supervisors
 - lesson plans and other stuff created during the practicum
- can be used as a basis in discussions with the supervisors



The purpose of assessment in teacher education

- Assessment is not art for art's sake but instrumental in supporting other purposes; has a double duty in teacher training: both assessment of learning and for learning (feedout / feedback/feedforward). FOCUS more and more on 'for learning' purposes
- → Preparing for a profession, professional development, life-long learning
- → sustainable assessment (cf. Boud 2000)



Sustainable assessment – something for teacher education

- Sustainable assessment can be seen as assessment for the learning society
- Essential:
 - confidence in the learners' capacity to learn; telling about strengths – not emphasising weaknesses →
 - assessment – promoting learning and development, not preventing it
 - emphasis on self-assessment and peer assessment; self-monitoring; assessing is not (only or mainly) a domain for external assessors
 - effective self-assessment requires the clarification of criteria and standards
 - → capacity to assess and to think critically

SEE: Boud, D. 2000. Sustainable assessment: rethinking assessment for the learning society.
Studies in Continuing Education 22(2), 151-167

