

OUTI KYRÖ-ÄMMÄLÄ

4. INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will introduce the initial teacher education model of the University of Lapland (UoL) from the perspective of the development of the researching and reflective teacher. Research-based teacher education has a long tradition in Finland, and it is currently considered a key principle of teacher education. However, the research methods and the research itself are often connected in an unstructured manner in teacher education. Thus, neither the students, nor, at times, even the teacher educators see the significance of research in teachers' work or professional growth.

Our teacher education programme aims to integrate research, teaching practices and pedagogical studies. The programme is based on the principles and aspects of the international literature and research studies on teacher education. Using concrete examples, my purpose is to describe the practical implementation stages of our model, and the tools, context and forms of activities it requires. The model has been developed and tested by the University of Lapland's teacher education programme, and the first creator of the model is Professor Emerita Anneli Lauriala (Lauriala, 2013).

I will explain how the initial teacher education programme at the University of Lapland has been organised in order to support the growth of student teachers-as-researchers. The final goal of teacher education is to educate teachers who are active as developers, researchers and reflective practitioners of their own work.

BACKGROUND

Research-based teacher education has a long tradition in Finland. However, the students' motivation and commitment to research activities has been low. Furthermore, students have considered research and pedagogical studies unconnected. They have also regarded research studies as irrelevant to teachers' work, because they fail to see the connection between research and their teaching practices (Hakala, 1992; McKenzie & Santiago, 2005). To fill this gap, the aim of the University of Lapland's teacher education programme is to provide students with opportunities to become acquainted with research and to evolve into reflective teachers.

All teachers complete a master's degree in education studies, which includes both academic studies and practical experience in schools. The main purpose of the programme is for students to come to understand the links between pedagogical

studies, research studies and teaching practices (cf. Kolb's experimental learning theory). This will help them to make good use of their theoretical work, not only during their teaching practice, but also in the future as qualified teachers. To this end, each practicum is connected to one educational course and a certain research method, and includes a pedagogical seminar in which the students reflect on their own classroom experiences.

In this chapter, I will describe the main steps of the process whereby students develop their own teacher-as-researcher identities through the integration of theory, practice and research studies. I will seek the answer to the research questions: "How do student teachers begin to build their own teacher identities during the study years?" and "How can teacher education support student teachers professional growth?"

The aim of teacher education at the University of Lapland is to educate students to become strong experts of pedagogy and didacticism who can work inspirationally and flexibly in a dynamic environment. The student teachers' gain readiness to cooperate with colleagues as well as inter-professional experts. They are supported to build their own teacher identity and own pedagogical theory as well as to work towards developing an extensive, exploratory and dynamic teacher profession. The final aim of our teacher education is to educate reflective practitioners for dynamic school days with diverse learners (Teacher Education Curriculum, 2017–2018).

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHER EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

Research-based teacher education refers to teacher education programmes where the education is based on research and the study courses are integrated with the research (Toom et al., 2010). In Finland, the research-based approach has been considered one of the key factors explaining the high quality of teaching and success in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Niemi, Toom, & Kallioniemi, 2012). At the University of Lapland, combining theory and practice have been approached through a model of teacher education based on an interpretive approach. Student teachers are trained to become reflective practitioners, and researcher and teacher identity formation and professional development are an essential part of the initial teacher education (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2010, 2012; Kyrö-Ämmälä, 2012; Lauriala, 1997a, 1997b, 2013).

The nature of teacher's work and the schools themselves have changed during the last decades (Krokkfors et al., 2011). Teachers are supposed to act as change agents: they are expected to forecast changes in society and to lead the change at schools, such as by taking part in curriculum planning (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012). In addition, multiculturalism and technological developments among others affect teachers' everyday work and force them to research continuously their environment, to reflect on their own actions and to update their competences (Luukkainen, 2005).

The latest Finnish national core curriculum for basic education (2014) has also set modern requirements for teachers. Thus, strengthening the research-based approach