



## The Value Teachers Add to Educational Systems: The Case of Finland\*

### Öğretmenlerin Eğitim Sistemlerine Sağladığı Katma Değer: Finlandiya Örneği

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this paper is to provide information for researchers and policy makers aiming at systematic improvement in teacher education in Turkey by highlighting possible lessons to be taken from Finland. To see the value added by Finnish teachers and teacher educators, the paper both reviews the philosophy behind teacher education in Finland and portrays the findings from a six-month qualitative inquiry. In an ethnographic research design, an in-depth analysis of the 'teaching culture' was carried out through interviews, close observations, readings, interpretations, and document analysis. Current practices were investigated through 84 hours of participant observations, 36 hours of assistant teaching; and individual interviews done with 12 in-service teachers, 23 pre-service teachers, and 7 teacher educators. All data were compiled and conclusions were derived. The findings were presented under the headings of (1) philosophy and policy, (2) selection of student teachers, (3) pre-service years, and (4) in-service years. In this context, three main steps could be taken to improve teacher education in Turkey: (a) attract the best individuals to the profession with appropriate selection procedures; (b) provide the right training (no alternative route) with a considerable emphasis on research and practicum; and (c) respect teachers and trust on their autonomy to strengthen their social status.

**Keywords:** teacher education, Finland, high-quality teachers, educational policy and practice

**ÖZ:** Bu çalışmanın amacı, Finlandiya örneğinden yola çıkarak, Türkiye'de öğretmen yetiştirme konusunda sistematik bir iyileşme hedefleyen araştırmacıları ve politika belirleyicileri yönlendirebilecek bilgiler sunmaktır. Çalışma, öğretmenlerin ve öğretmen yetiştirenlerin eğitim sistemine sağladığı katma değeri saptamak için, altı ay süren nitel inceleme sonucunda elde edilen bulguları ve Finlandiya öğretmen eğitiminin arkasındaki felsefe ve politikayı değerlendirmeyi hedeflemiştir. Çalışmada, etnografik araştırma deseni benimsenmiş olup, görüşmeler, yakın gözlemler, okumalar, yorumlamalar ve doküman analizi yoluyla Finlandiya'daki 'öğretmenlik kültürü' üzerine bir inceleme gerçekleştirilmiştir. 84 saatlik katılımcı gözlem, 36 saatlik yardımcı öğretmenlik ve staj uygulaması ve on ikisi öğretmen, yirmi üçü öğretmenlik bölümü öğrencisi, yedisi öğretmen yetiştirmeden sorumlu eğitimci olmak üzere toplam kırk iki katılımcı ile yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla, mevcut öğretmenlik uygulamaları incelenmiştir. Bulgular şu dört başlık altında sunulmuştur: (1) felsefe ve politika, (2) öğretmen adaylarının seçimi, (3) hizmet-öncesi dönem ve (4) hizmet-içi dönem. Bu bağlamda, ülkemizdeki öğretmen eğitimi geliştirmek için üç temel önlem alınabilir: (a) doğru seçme yöntemleri kullanarak nitelikli bireylerin öğretmenlik mesleğine yönlendirilmesi; (b) araştırma ve uygulama boyutlarının vurgulandığı doğru öğretmen eğitiminin (alternatif sertifikasyon olmadan) sağlanması; (c) öğretmenlerin sosyal statüsünün güçlendirilmesi için öğretmen özerkliğine güvenilmesi ve öğretmenlere saygı gösterilmesi.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** öğretmen yetiştirme, Finlandiya, nitelikli öğretmen, eğitim politikaları ve uygulamaları

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education policies and practices in a country having world-class educational outcomes have been an indispensable field of research for many researchers in various educational contexts aiming at an effective education. Therefore, Finland has become an internationally examined example of a well-designed education system (Kosunen & Mikkola, 2002) and aroused an immense amount of worldwide interest owing to its outstanding, consistent success in the PISA - Program for International Student Assessment (Andersen, 2006; Chung, Atkin, & Moore, 2012; Itkonen & Jahnukainen, 2007; Jyrhama et al., 2008). The interest in Finnish system was well reflected both in the media and academic research (Chung 2009;

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Jyrhama et al. 2008; Sahlberg 2007; Tryggvason 2009; Webb et al., 2004). As the quality of teachers is one of the most frequently cited factors explaining the quality of an education system (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012), the quality of Finnish teacher education is asserted to be a keystone for its consistently high performance (Chung, Atkin, & Moore, 2012).

Research in teaching indicates that of all the dynamics shaping learner achievement, the most important is definitely the effectiveness of ‘the teacher’ and the good teachers are essential to high-quality education. According to Kosunen and Mikkola (2002), teachers play a key role in school reform. Numerous educational reports and studies supported the idea that teacher quality accounted for an important proportion in student achievement and that high-performing school systems are characterized by the quality of teachers and teacher education (McKinsey & Company Report, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Sahlberg, 2011; The Learning Curve Report, 2012; Valijarvi et al., 2002). As Professor Robert Schwartz from Harvard Graduate School of Education stated “... the single most important input variable [in education] is the quality of teaching” (The Learning Curve, 2012, p. 22).

McKinsey & Company Report (2007) suggests that “three things matter most: (1) getting the right individuals to become teachers; (2) developing them into effective instructors; and (3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child” (p. 5). Leaders in the world’s best-performing school systems (i.e. Singapore, Finland, South Korea) believe that the “quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (McKinsey & Company Report, 2010, p. 5). Finland being one of the world’s top-performing school systems attributes its success story to numerous variables two of which are by far teachers’ approach to teaching and teacher educators’ approach to teacher education. Because of the international reputation of Finnish teacher education, many countries want to learn from Finnish teacher education policies and practices (Tirri & Ubani, 2013). For that reason, this paper provides information for Turkish researchers and policy makers in teaching and teacher education by highlighting possible lessons to be taken from Finland.

## 2. METHOD

This paper is based on a six-month ethnographic research, which refers to “the description of a culture or subculture” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 272) and promotes an understanding of a culture not by simply doing an interview, but through “a series of interviews structured to elicit insiders’ cultural knowledge” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). As depicted by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), ethnographic research was used “to obtain as holistic a picture as possible of a particular society, group, institution, setting, or situation.” (p. 511). Thus, this study followed an elaborate scheme to document, portray and elicit meanings from events, behaviors, implementations, speeches, narratives, reports, etc. to gather cultural data regarding ‘teaching’ and ‘teacher education’ in Finland.

With the purpose of providing information for researchers and policy makers aiming for systematic improvement in teaching and teacher education in Turkey, this study highlighted possible lessons to be taken from Finnish System. In order to see the value added by Finnish teachers and teacher educators, the paper both reviews the philosophy behind teacher education context in Finland and portrays the findings from a six-month qualitative inquiry. Two essential research questions, which were how perceptions in teacher education are reflected on implementations and what a Finnish teacher makes different, guided this study.

As the ethnographic research suggests, an in-depth analysis of the ‘teaching culture’ was carried out through close observations, readings, and interpretations. Combined with

observations, interviews allowed the researcher to understand the meanings of everyday activities of teachers and teacher educators in Finland.

Starting with the document analysis, the descriptions in educational reports were examined and interpreted to see the viewpoints on teaching profession. As the next step, current practices in teaching were investigated through: 84 hours of participant observations, 36 hours of assistant teaching; and individual interviews done with 12 in-service teachers, 23 pre-service teachers, and 7 teacher educators. The settings for the research were Turku International School and Teacher Education Department at the Faculty of Education at the University of Turku. The data gathered from the interviews were transcribed, coded, and categorized under themes in a qualitative research tradition. All data were compiled and analyzed with qualitative content analysis. The educational issues were examined from general and subject-specific points of views and conclusions were derived.

### 3. FINDINGS

The findings were presented under the headings of (1) philosophy and policy, (2) selection of student teachers, (3) pre-service years, and (4) in-service years.

#### 3.1. Philosophy and Policy

With the purpose of understanding the philosophy behind Finns' teaching culture and its implications on policy making concerning teacher education, two steps were followed: (a) interviews with student teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators and (b) examination of educational reports and other written documents.

The first step brought out that the general understanding among Finns, who are concerned with teaching by some means or other, was highly positive towards teaching profession, because almost all of the participants in individual interviews defined teaching as a prestigious life-long career. Similarly, some educational reports revealed the traditional respect given to teachers in Finland (Carnoy et al., 2009; OAJ, 2008). A Finnish expert states that "people know that if you've been trained as a teacher you must really be something special" (McKinsey & Company Report, 2010, p. 18). Finland, as a country, accords enormous cultural respect and value to teaching and teachers and the society perceives teaching as a high-status occupation (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012; McKinsey & Company Report, 2007; Tirri & Ubani, 2013), which was very well reflected in educational policies, as well. In the light of the policy stating that "every citizen should be able to receive quality schooling" (Carnoy et al., 2009, p. 79), Finland promotes an ideal distribution of qualified teachers around the whole country and gets effective teachers in front of students of all socio-economic backgrounds. With this policy, Finnish educators' developed effective discourses or mottos underlining the educational philosophy of teaching society. To exemplify, a high-quality school needs high-quality teachers and "highly educated teachers are the guarantors of the quality of teaching" (OAJ, 2008, p. 3).

In 1971, the responsibility of teacher education for all teachers of comprehensive schools was transferred from teacher training colleges to universities (Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi, 2006; Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012) in order to develop academically high-quality prospective teachers in Finland. In 1979 there appeared a shift to master-level research-based teacher education (Jyrhama et al., 2008; Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012). These changes in policy towards research-based academic teacher education have led to a general improvement in and contribution to the success of the Finnish school system (Tryggvason, 2009). As Kosunen and Mikkola (2002) state, the "teacher-as-researcher" approach has contributed not only to

teachers' own professional growth, but also to curriculum and school development. Even the whole education system benefitted from this approach with respect to the renewal of the school and the development of educational organizations.

In the interviews, of all the policies the most frequently mentioned was about the teacher education programs in Finland, which defines all teachers in Finland as highly educated professionals, because every qualified teacher is required to have an MA qualification, which is fully subsidized, with the exception of pre-school teachers (Chung, 2009; Holm & Londen, 2010; Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012; Krokfors et al., 2011; Ostinelli, 2009; Tryggvason, 2009). Primary school teachers do their master's in educational sciences related to pedagogical, didactical, or psychological issues and high school teachers write a thesis on a discipline which is their subject area. For example, a chemistry teacher must have an MA in chemistry besides a successful completion of a pedagogical program offered at teacher education departments (Tirri & Ubani, 2013; Ostinelli 2009).

As another important policy of education, departments of teacher education at the faculties of education provide teaching certificates in Finland (Carnoy et al., 2009) and there are no alternative routes to receive a teacher's credential. There are also special training schools of the universities, where practice teaching takes place already from the beginning of the teacher training. These teacher training schools belong administratively to universities and have a continuous interaction with the departments of teacher education at the universities. As Kaasila and Lauriala (2012) clarify, these schools are treated as safe and appropriate environments in which student teachers can practice and try their innovative ideas in pedagogy.

Teacher education in Finland is offered in 8 universities in 11 campuses spreading across the whole country, covering all geographical regions from south to north (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012). The basic feature of Finnish teacher education system was claimed by the interviewees to adopt a "research-based approach", as mentioned also in many papers. When the professors at the department of teacher education were asked about the philosophy of the system, almost all of them stated that the system was based on a combination of research, practice, and reflection, supported scientific knowledge, and focused on thinking processes and cognitive skills. Some teacher educators attached importance to the integration and significance of educational sociology, which was seen as an essential component to be emphasized in order to create a sociological perspective among teacher candidates.

Another key policy was related with teacher recruitment. Finland's teacher recruitment policies are established through national legislation (Carnoy et al., 2009). As highlighted in McKinsey & Company Report (2010), top performing nations recruit 100% of their new teachers from the top third, which is only 23% in the U.S. As a good example, Finland attracts, develops, retains, and ensures the most talented educators. In order to actualize its educational philosophies, the Finnish system adopts innovative successful initiatives and practices and implements rigorous selection standards for teacher certification. The priority is set to attract and retain top graduates to a career in teaching.

Lastly, the policy regarding "teacher autonomy" was a critical point in the whole system, because the Finnish system was not centralized and the Finnish teachers are not inspected or controlled. Instead of following centralized norms, the Finnish school system's approach is to put a lot of trust in teachers and local education authorities to produce good outcomes (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012).

### 3.2. Selection of Student Teachers

Selection of student teachers appears as the most important part of the system in Finland. In principle, the candidates for teacher education departments are selected based on a multi-stage procedure, which consists of a matriculation examination for all candidates, an interview procedure testing the aptitude for the profession, and an observed clinical activity replicating school situations. As stated by Malinen, Vaisanen, and Savolainen (2012), becoming a primary school teacher is very popular in Finland, but it is a very competitive process, because besides academic skills and educational sciences needed in studies, aptitude and suitability for teaching profession are also tested.

Through highly competitive selection procedures, students are first screened on the basis of their performance on a matriculation exam, which usually covers six to eight high school subjects and adopts an essay-based assessment. As the second step, top candidates become eligible to take another exam, which is based on a reading process of selected educational literature. For specific subject teachers, examination is conducted on a specific discipline such as math, biology, theology, etc. Next, they write an essay explaining why they want to become a teacher, and why they are suitable for this occupation. A further step enables the best candidates to go through a series of interviews to judge their fit for teaching, on factors such as motivation and emotional intelligence. Lastly, candidates participate in a sort of micro-teaching, which could be defined as “an observed clinical activity” and categorized as “similar school situations” in order to satisfy evaluators (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012; Hausstatter & Takala, 2008). Eventually, only about one in ten applicants is accepted to teacher education programs (Chung, 2009; Chung, Atkin, & Moore, 2012; Kaasila & Lauriala; 2012; Ostinelli 2009). To exemplify, “in recent years, the nationwide number of applicants for class-teacher education programs has been approximately 7000, when the yearly intake is about 900 students” (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012 p.571). In 2010, 6,600 applicants vied for 660 primary school training slots. More specifically, acceptance rate for the primary school teacher education program at the University of Helsinki is about one in 15 (McKinsey & Company Report, 2010). Another example is from the University of Turku where 900 candidates took place in the first phase, 350 applicants were invited to the second phase, and only 85 of them were chosen in 2008. For all categories of teacher education, about 5,000 prospective teachers were selected from about 20,000 applicants. All these procedures are followed as the result of a direct application of candidates to teacher education departments.

To summarize the selection of candidates for teacher education programs in Finland, it is essential for candidates to complete high school with good high school records and records of out-of-school accomplishments, pass a rigorous matriculation examination, take a written exam on assigned books on pedagogy, have not only good scores and excellent interpersonal skills, but also a deep personal commitment to teach and work in schools, be engaged in an observed clinical activity, where social interaction and communication skills come into play, and to be among top candidates interviewed about why they have decided to become teachers. Candidates are selected from the top 10% of graduates. Despite such a rigorous selection system, the popularity of teaching profession appears as an unusual feature, as it is one of the most admired professions in opinion polls of high school graduates among young Finns (Chung 2009; Chung, Atkin, & Moore, 2012; Ostinelli 2009) and teacher education is a highly valued choice in Finland (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012; McKinsey & Company Report, 2007; Tirri & Ubani, 2013).

### 3.3. Pre-service Years

When asked for the features of Finnish pre-service teacher education, the first thing to be expressed by almost all Finns was its being a research-based education, which is also mentioned as a strong feature of the system in many papers (Jakku-Sihvonen et al., 2012; Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi, 2006; Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi 2007; Jyrhama et al., 2008; Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012; Kansanen, 1991; Kansanen et al., 2000; Kosunen & Mikkola, 2002; Kynaslahti et al., 2006; Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006; Ostinelli, 2009; Tryggvason, 2009; Ubani, 2012; Westbury et al., 2005).

Since the late 70s and early 80s, the central mission of Finnish pre-service teacher education has been determined to provide a research-based professionalism (Westbury et al., 2005), and consequently to equip teachers with research-based knowledge, skills, methods for developing teaching and learning; to make them familiar with the latest research on how something can be taught and learnt (Tryggvason, 2009); to educate inquiry-oriented teachers; and to place an orientation for inquiry in the work of a teacher (Byman et al., 2009, p. 79). With the help of this process, teacher's critical thinking and problem-centered approach to teaching and its social context began to gain weight (Kosunen & Mikkola, 2002) and teachers started to take analytical and open-minded approach towards their work and developed their teaching and learning environments in a systematic way (Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006).

Finns' approach called 'teacher-as-researcher' was reflected as:

*The research-based teacher education that is the heart of Finnish teacher education and formalized by the writing of the master's thesis, is directed at critical thinking and autonomous decision making, and thus for action guided by a gradually elaborated practical theory (Westbury et al., 2005, p. 478-479).*

*Finnish research-based teacher education has four characteristics: (1) the study program is structured according to a systematic analysis of education; (2) all teaching is based on research; (3) activities are organized in such a way that students can practice argumentation, decision-making and justification when inquiring about and solving pedagogical problems; and (4) the students learn formal research skills during their studies (Krokfors et al., 2011, p. 3).*

*The aim is to educate practitioner researchers or reflective teachers who are both consumers of educational scientific knowledge as well as producers of it (Jyrhama et al., 2008, p. 3).*

Parallel with the aforementioned aims, the targets of pre-service years were defined by the teacher educators at the University of Turku as: to educate teachers who are aware of the effects of their actions and factors around their work; to develop teachers who will base their educational decisions on rational arguments; to promote teachers capacity to make use of empirical studies; and to foster teachers' positive attitude towards research. To facilitate this process, teacher educators adopted a long-term policy for teachers' research-based way of thinking and acting, which is observed to launch in the second academic year of the programs. With the help of this system, teachers can have a sound pedagogical thinking and reflect on the educational purposefulness of their teaching from different points of views (Tirri & Ubani, 2013).

Regarding the program details, all teachers graduate as Master's, either majoring in education (class teachers and primary school teachers), or in a specific subject (secondary and high school teachers). The students studying to be a classroom teacher complete a Master's degree (300 ECTS) in teacher education, which provides them with an official qualification to work as a teacher in Finland. They study education as their main subject (140 ECTS), as well as multidisciplinary studies in subjects taught in school (60 ECTS) as their minor subject, and one or two other subjects (60–75 ECTS) as their complementary minor subject studies to profile their expertise as a future teacher. Besides all these, they study communication and orienting studies

(25 ECTS). The main studies of education consist of core content courses of cultural, psychological and pedagogical bases of education (50 ECTS); research methods in education, Bachelor's thesis, and Master's thesis (70 ECTS); and teaching practice (20 ECTS) (Carnoy et al., 2009; Jakku-Sihvonen et al., 2012; Krokfors et al., 2011; Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012; OAJ, 2008; Tryggvason, 2009).

The curriculum of teacher education works as a spiral in which inquiry-orientation, research methodology, and educational theory are deepened step by step (Westbury et al., 2005). The pedagogical program for teachers includes school pedagogy, educational psychology, special education, and pedagogical content knowledge as a prerequisite for purposeful teaching and reflects a holistic, normative and context-dependent nature (Tirri & Ubani, 2013). In Krokfors et al. (2011), the critical components of teacher education were rated as: (1) two levels of education (basic and conceptual) and (2) twofold practice (practicing teaching and practicing researching). Besides academic research, Finnish teacher education includes a strong emphasis on teaching practice as one of the most essential methods for developing student teachers' core competencies (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen; 2012). Teaching practice consists of four practicum, one in a field school and the other three in a training school with the aim of providing pre-service teachers with an overall picture of teachers' work and diverse teaching experiences (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012). As said by Kosunen and Mikkola (2002), teacher education prepares candidates for a profession that entails human relations, interaction and cooperation.

During six months of stay at the University of Turku, it was observed that teacher education programs adopted a successful integration of theory, research, practice and reflection, which stand for inevitable components of an effective program. In accordance with this fact, (1) theoretical foundations for teaching are provided by teacher education programs at the universities, (2) teaching practice is done in training schools with their own staff, (3) research is conducted before and during the master's graduate thesis (as student teachers are expected to design three short and one large research projects and get familiar in practice with qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as with presenting research at conferences), and (4) reflection on teaching is done on practice and research in all semesters of the programs. At the University of Turku, researcher workshops, process writings, and computer-supported learning environments were other important components of the program that were based on teacher-as-a-researcher-movement, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, expert-novice frame of reference, and reduction of the artificial distinction between qualitative and quantitative research methods by utilizing the idea of mixed methods.

In the investigation to find out student teachers' experiences and attitudes towards the research-based approach, it was seen that the perceptions of the student teachers at the University of Turku on Turku Model, were very positive. Student teachers were very satisfied with their learning environment, felt they had learned a lot of methodological knowledge in an implicit way by conducting small-scale studies during three years, and had no anxiety about undertaking their master's thesis as the master's thesis represents a new workshop, not something special for them. In many other studies, attitudes towards research-based teacher education in Finland were positive as well and student teachers appreciated the research orientation in teacher education programs (Byman et al., 2009; Jyrhama et al., 2008; Krokfors et al., 2011; Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012).

### **3.4. In-service Years**

This part includes the results derived from 84 hours of participant observations; 36 hours of assistant teaching experience; and 23 individual interviews done in Turku International School,

which is the teacher training school of the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Turku.

As the most significant findings, teachers in Finland have a lot of responsibility and pedagogical freedom at the school level (since the national curriculum is only a broad guideline); exhibit a good deal of autonomy and power; are not controlled or inspected; and do their jobs based on trust and cooperation. Hence, the Finnish teaching culture could be described as “culture of trust” as it reflects a “trust-based professionalism” (Sahlberg, 2007). Teachers in Finland demonstrate a high degree of autonomy and control on their jobs, which is perceived as one of the most attractive features of teaching profession (Webb et al., 2004) and “the major predictor for well being” among Finnish teachers (Rasku & Kinnunen, 1999, p. 1). As Vaisanen (2001) also put forward, opportunities for stimulation and creativity and to use one’s own particular talents were highly valued features of teaching in Finland. Tirri and Ubani (2013) state that context-dependency of teaching is acknowledged in Finnish system, as it was observed in the study that all teaching processes take place in an institutional context and the national curriculum stands for only a guide.

As a second finding from observations, Finnish teachers take responsibility for multiple tasks and student welfare; know the ways to instill creativity in the kids; do not stand in front of a classroom lecturing for 50 minutes; possess problem-solving capacity; and exhibit a deep social perspective on education. Besides all these, they display an approach of investigating and developing their own work. Consequently, they are provided with a professional working environment and supported for professional development, but they do not receive merit/performance pay. The important thing is that they feel well respected in the society, because they are given the same status as doctors and lawyers.

In relation to the question, how do teachers perceive teaching as a profession in Finland, the participant teachers in in-service showed a positive orientation towards their profession and reflected that they view teaching within the lifelong learning framework. People in Finland generally define in-service teachers’ status through a high level of retention (Ostinelli, 2009), because it is noticeable that after graduation the teachers’ retention in the teaching profession has been high compared with many other Western countries (Malinen, Vaisanen, & Savolainen, 2012). According to Webb et al. (2004), positive influences on teacher retention were commitment to children, professional freedom and supportive colleagues.

The last point was related with the key characteristics of teaching profession. The keywords in the codes and categories derived from all interviews in the study were listed and such a list of keywords were reached: “improvement, commitment, trust, cooperation, responsibility, autonomy, professional freedom, perseverance, purposefulness, ability to motivate others, inner motivation, commitment to school, passion for children, organizational skills, communication skills, ethical values.” Beyond any doubt, these words portray the “teaching culture” in Finland.

#### **4. DISCUSSION and RESULTS**

In the light of the findings resulted from this qualitative inquiry about teacher education and teaching culture in Finland, there appear three main issues to focus on: (1) the admission system to teacher education programs at universities, which follows a multi-stage path not for creating a highly competitive picture but for selecting the right candidates for the right profession; (2) the structure of pre-service teacher education programs, which reflects ideal initiatives with sound educational philosophies and approaches emphasizing research and practice; and (3)



teachers' social status, which was ensured through educational policies and legislations as well as the society's perception and attitude.

The Finnish society believed that teaching builds the foundations of the future (OAJ, 2008), thus teaching profession had a high status in the society and teacher education programs were one of the most favorite higher education programs in Finland. An average of 10 to 15% of students gain acceptance, which means that every tenth applicant can only be taken into teacher education programs at universities (Chung, 2009; Chung, Atkin, & Moore, 2012; Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012; Ostinelli 2009). The programs in the pedagogical courses at universities and the practicum in training schools are strongly connected and form a continuum (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012).

In the program, the student teachers are supposed to observe teaching from theoretical points of view and integrate theory with practice during their studies (Maaranen, Kynaslahti, & Krokfors, 2008), so they are able to choose themes for their BA and MA research on the basis of their experiences in the practicum (Maaranen, 2009). The objective here is not to train pure 'researchers', but rather to offer student teachers necessary skills and knowledge through which they become capable of applying what they have gained, observing their pupils and teaching environment, using their research-driven competencies in their ongoing teaching and decision-making, incorporating their reflections on their work, and analyzing their thinking (Kansanen, 2007; Krokfors, 2007; Krokfors et al., 2011; Kynaslahti et al., 2006, Toom et al., 2010; Tryggvason, 2009; Westbury et al., 2005).

The main purpose of teacher education is to educate autonomous and reflective teachers, who are able to base their pedagogical decisions on systematic and experiential arguments (Westbury et al. 2005) and act as pedagogically thinking practitioners (Krokfors et al., 2011). Thereupon, Finnish in-service teachers could be described as autonomous professional teachers who are able to construct their practice on their pedagogical and research-based knowledge from pre-service years.

As stated in The Learning Curve Report (2012), having good teachers starts with selecting talented individuals, goes with the right training and appropriate conditions; and ends with treating teachers as professionals. To conclude, three main steps could be taken to improve teaching society in Turkey: (a) attract the best (the most talented) individuals to the profession, which necessitates a revision and improvement in the procedures of pre-service teacher selection; (b) provide the right training, which ought to be done only in faculties of education (no alternative route) with a research-based and practicum-emphasized approach and; (c) respect teachers and trust on their autonomy in order to raise and strengthen the social status of the teachers in Turkey. And we should not forget "what a teacher writes on the blackboard of a life can never be erased".

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## Uzun Özet

Eğitim çıktıları dünya standartlarının üzerinde olan ülkelerin öğretmen yetiştirme politikaları ve uygulamaları, çoğu araştırmacı için vazgeçilmez bir araştırma alanı olmuştur. Bu ülkelerden birisi olan Finlandiya, Uluslararası Öğrenci Değerlendirme Programında (PISA) ortaya koyduğu başarı nedeniyle dünya çapında bir ilgi uyandırmış, iyi tasarlanmış bir eğitim sistemine sahip olması sebebiyle de uluslararası eğitim platformlarında sıkça incelenen bir örnek haline gelmiştir. Finlandiya'nın bu tutarlı ve üstün başarısı çok sayıda değişkene bağlanabilir. Ancak bu değişkenler arasında şüphesiz en önemlileri Finlandiya'daki öğretmenlerin eğitim-öğretime olan yaklaşımları ve öğretmen yetiştirmeden sorumlu eğitimcilerin öğretmen yetiştirmeye olan yaklaşımlarıdır. Singapur, Finlandiya, Güney Kore gibi dünyanın en iyi performans gösteren okul sistemlerindeki liderler, bir eğitim sisteminin kalitesinin o sistemde yer alan öğretmenlerin kalitesini aşamayacağını dile getirirken, öğretmen yetiştirmenin eğitim sistemine sağladığı katma değeri vurgulamaktadırlar. Dolayısıyla, Finlilerin öğretmen yetiştirme politikaları ve uygulamaları, birçok ülke açısından ders çıkarılabilecek bir örnek arz etmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Finlandiya örneğinden yola çıkarak, Türkiye'de öğretmen yetiştirme konusunda sistematik bir iyileşme hedefleyen araştırmacıları ve politika belirleyicileri yönlendirebilecek bilgiler sunmaktır. Çalışma, öğretmenlerin ve öğretmen yetiştirenlerin eğitim sistemine sağladığı katma değeri saptamak için, altı ay süren nitel inceleme sonucunda elde edilen bulguları değerlendirerek Finlandiya'nın öğretmen yetiştirmeye ilişkin sürdürdüğü felsefe ve politikaları ortaya koymayı hedeflemiştir. Bu çalışmada, etnografik araştırma deseni benimsenmiş olup, bireysel görüşmeler, yakın gözlemler, okumalar, yorumlamalar ve doküman analizi yoluyla Finlandiya'daki 'öğretmenlik kültürü' üzerine bir inceleme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmayı yönlendiren iki temel araştırma sorusu bulunmaktadır: (1) Öğretmen yetiştirme hususundaki algılar Finlandiya'nın uygulamalarına nasıl yansıtılmıştır? Ve (2) Finli bir öğretmen eğitim-öğretimde nasıl fark yaratır?

Çalışmaya, etnografik araştırmaların ön gördüğü şekilde, doküman analizi ile başlanmış, toplumun ve eğitimcilerin öğretmenlik mesleği üzerindeki bakış açılarını görmek için eğitime ilişkin belge ve raporlar incelenmiş ve yorumlanmıştır. Bir sonraki adımda mevcut öğretmenlik uygulamalarının irdelenmesi hedeflenerek, 84 saatlik katılımcı gözlem ve 36 saatlik yardımcı öğretmenlik ve staj uygulaması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, on ikisi hizmet-içi öğretmen, yirmi üçü hizmet-öncesi öğretmen, yedisi öğretmen yetiştirmenden sorumlu yüksek öğretimsel olmak üzere toplam 42 kişiyle gerçekleştirilen görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler, kodlanarak nitel araştırma geleneği ile belli temalar altında sınıflandırılmıştır. Tüm veriler derlenmiş ve nitel içerik analizi yoluyla değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular, (1) öğretmen yetiştirmenin felsefesi ve politikaları, (2) öğretmen adaylarının seçimi, (3) hizmet-öncesi dönem ve (4) hizmet-içi dönem başlıkları altında sunulmuştur.

Finliler arasında öğretmenlik mesleğine yönelik genel algı son derece pozitifdir. Hem toplumun geneli, hem de şu veya bu yolla öğretmenlik mesleğiyle ilgisi bulunan alt kültürler, öğretmenlik mesleğini prestijli ve yaşam boyu bir kariyer olarak tanımlamaktadırlar. Finlandiya, farklı sosyo-ekonomik kökenden gelen her bir öğrencinin karşısına etkili öğretmenler çıkarmak amacıyla, nitelikli öğretmenlerin ülke genelinde en ideal dağılımını teşvik eden politikalar benimsemiştir. Finlandiya ülke olarak kendi eğitim felsefesini gerçekleştirmek için yenilikçi girişimler ve buna bağlı olarak başarılı uygulamalar gerçekleştirmiştir. 1971 yılında öğretmen yetiştirme sorumluluğu öğretmen okullarından alınıp yükseköğretim bünyesinde olan üniversitelere devredilmiş, 1979 yılında ise yüksek lisans düzeyinde bir öğretmen yetiştirme programına geçilmiştir. Eğitim programlarında, araştırmaya dayalı bir öğretmen yetiştirme modeli benimsenirken, öğretmenlik uygulamalarına da çokça ağırlık verilmiş ve aynı zamanda yansıtıcı öğretmen yetiştirme modeli de vurgulanmıştır.

Finlandiya, öğretmenlik sertifikasyonu için titiz seçim standartları benimsemiştir. Öğretmen adaylarının seçimi Finlandiya'daki öğretmen yetiştirme sisteminin en önemli parçası olarak görülebilir. Prensip olarak, üniversitelerin öğretmenlik bölümleri için başvuran adaylar çok aşamalı bir seçim sürecinden geçerler. Aday öğrenciler ilk olarak, ortaöğretim programlarındaki konu alanlarından altı ila sekizine ilişkin performanslarının ölçüldüğü kompozisyon yazmaya dayalı bir "olgunluk sınavını" alınırlar. Olgunluk sınavında yeterli başarıyı sergileyen adaylar, eğitim ve pedagojiye ilişkin alanyazını temel alan bir sınava daha alınırlar. Bir sonraki adımda adayların öğretmenlik mesleğine olan uygunluklarının ölçüldüğü "yatkinlik testi" yapılır. Bu süreçte adaylar neden öğretmen olmak istediklerini ve öğretmenlik mesleğine ne derece uygun olduklarını açıklayan bir kompozisyon yazma veya motivasyon, duygusal zeka,

vb. konuların da vurgulandığı bir dizi mülakata tabi olma durumundadırlar. Son olarak adayların, “klinik etkinlik” olarak adlandırılan gerçek okul ortamına benzer durumların yaratıldığı mikro-öğretim uygulamaları sırasında sınav komisyon üyelerini tatmin edecek bir performans sergilemeleri beklenir. Birçok örnekte vurgulandığı üzere, bu seçim süreci sonucunda başvuran adayların sadece %10’unun son aşamaya kadar gelebileceği gerçeğine rağmen, üniversitelerin öğretmenlik bölümlerinin, lise mezunları arasında en çok rağbet gören alan olduğu görülmüştür.

Finlandiya’nın hizmet-öncesi öğretmen eğitim programları, etkili bir programının kaçınılmaz bileşenleri olan teori, uygulama, araştırma ve yansıtıcı düşünme öğelerinin entegrasyonunu başarılı bir şekilde sağlamıştır: (1) öğretmenlik için gerekli teorik temeller üniversitelerin öğretmenlik programları tarafından sağlanmaktadır; (2) öğretmenlik uygulaması, yönetsel olarak üniversitelere bağlı olan uygulama okullarında okulun kendi personeli ve üniversitedeki eğitimcilerin işbirliği ile gerçekleşmektedir; (3) nitel ve nicel araştırma becerileri ise hem tez öncesi yapılan üç kısa ve bir büyük araştırma projesi ile hem de öğretmenlik diploması alabilmek için önemli bir koşul olan yüksek lisans tezi sırasında kazandırılmaktadır; (4) yansıtıcı düşünme öğesi ise öğretmen adaylarının hem öğretmenlik uygulamaları hem de eğitim araştırmaları sırasında hemen her akademik dönem içinde yer almaktadır.

Finlandiya’nın öğretmen eğitimi hakkındaki bu nitel araştırma üç temel konuyu gündeme getirmiştir: (1) Üniversitelerin öğretmenlik programlarına aday kabul sistemi, rekabetçi bir ortam oluşturmak için değil, doğru meslek için doğru adayları doğru yolla seçmek için çok aşamalı bir yol izler. (2) Hizmet-öncesi öğretmen eğitimi programları, Finlandiya’nın eğitim felsefe ve politikalarının bir yansıması olarak araştırma ve uygulama bileşenlerinin vurgulandığı bir yapı benimser. (3) Öğretmenlerin sosyal statüleri hem ülkenin eğitim politikaları ve gerekli mevzuatları ile hem de toplumun algı ve tutumlarıyla sağlanmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, ülkemizde öğretmen yetiştirmeye ilişkin daha nitelikli çıktılar sunabilmek için üç temel önlem alınabilir: (1) Hizmet-öncesi öğretmen seçim süreçlerinde, mesleğe yatkın ve yetenekli bireylerin öğretmenlik mesleğine yönlendirilmesini sağlayacak iyileştirmelerin yapılması. (2) Hizmet-öncesi öğretmen eğitiminin (alternatif sertifikasyon programları olmadan) sadece eğitim fakültelerinde ve araştırma ve uygulama tabanlı bir yaklaşım ile sunulması. (3) Hizmet-içi öğretmenlerin sosyal statüsünü güçlendirmek için öğretmen özerkliğine güvenilmesi ve saygı gösterilmesi.

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