The Four Decades of Finnish Educational Sociology

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Introduction

The history of educational sociology in Finland is long, thin and fragmentary. The forefathers of this history are Edvard Westermarck (1891) and his anthropological school (on Finnish sociology see Allardt 1994). In his studies on marriage and family, Westermarck argued against the so called promiscuity hypothesis. The family has not evolved gradually from free sexual relations. Rather, a family taking care of its children, has always been in existence. Westermarck also unravelled some myths regarding education, as his following remark demonstrates:

The more in detail one studies the upbringing of primitive people, the greater are the surprises that it offers. It appears to be the rule among the primitive people that parents seldom or never punish their children. The methods that European settlers employ to make their children obey have many a time shocked the minds of savages." (Westermarck 1913, 42)

Westermarck was an advocate of evolutionary theory, but by no means that of simple social Darwinism. According to Pipping (1982), a general social theory is visible in Westermarck's work: the moral reality is the particular common feature of human societies, and the process of institutionalization is its core. Pipping compares this theory to that of Emile Durkheim's about the origin of social solidarity. Pipping claims that the ethical relativism of Westermarck is a challenge
to the cultural relativism of today. One of the later Westernmarckian researchers, Hilma Granqvist (1932), was concerned with education in her classic studies of a Palestinian village. In the field of pedagogy, Bertel Nyberg studied child welfare among primitive peoples, whereas Karl Bruhn examined child rearing among arctic nomads, and Paavo Päivänsalo, under the supervision of Rafael Karsten, was also occupied with upbringing of Eskimos and Lapps (Päivänsalo 1954; 1971).

Another group of predecessors can be found in the Hegelian trend that prevailed in pedagogy during the latter half of the last century. According to the Hegelian point of view, education can be understood as the development in becoming a member of one's community and society, in the sense of both nation and state. According to J.V. Snellman, the Finnish national philosopher, parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children, whereas formal education is to take place under the control of state (Päivänsalo 1971, 71-77). In the nation building process education is highly regarded. Z.J. Cleve, an eminent professor of education, also saw education in a historical perspective, based on tradition and promoting the development of the nation. The aim of education was to create an independent, cultured and ethical human being.

The following description of Finnish educational sociology is based on reading and typification of doctoral dissertations and other remarkable studies in recent decades. Naturally, it is not a perfect list of topics and publications although I have tried to give the reader a view to the landscape of Finnish sociology.

The Origins of Empirical Research: from the Miniature Society of a School Class to Society Itself

Even though Matti Koskenniemi did have a few psychological predecessors, ‘Soziale Gebilde und Prozesse in der Schulkasse’ (1936) can be seen as the pioneer work in Finnish educational sociology. Similarly, Koskenniemi’s later program of social education can be regarded as a pioneer work in social pedagogy.

Koskenniemi himself was primarily influenced by the behaviour-
istic psychology of the time, the social psychology of group dynamics and the school experiment of the German pedagogue Peter Petersen in Jena (Koskenniemi 1943). The sociometric method that Koskenniemi employed to analyze interaction and social relationships in school and school class was a completely new method internationally as well.

Koskenniemi’s results demonstrated that the school class is a socially structured entity. Even in the more teacher-centred classroom, a particular status hierarchy, a network of friendships and certain social types (or roles such as ‘leaders’, ‘followers’ and ‘outcasts’) are generated among the pupils. Thus, the school class is a social organization which is based on the awareness and activity of its participants. It is a structure with both a formal organization and a community aspect. As a community, it has also its own ethos, for instance a certain class spirit or climate (cf. Waller 1932).

Based on his research, Koskenniemi has constructed a pedagogic program - i.e. his own social pedagogy - in his book on the social education of school. This book was first published in 1952, while its most recent, revised edition came out in 1982. Some materials for the book originated with the aforementioned Peter Petersen and his school of Jena, and from the American founding father of progressive pedagogy, John Dewey.

Beside Koskenniemi, various other researchers directed their interest toward the school community. Sociometry became the basic tool which was utilized through the decades. Perhaps owing to the standard method, theoretical findings remained scarce however.

In the 1950’s, empirical research was expanded to include the leisure time activities of young people. Rafael Helanko (1953), in his doctoral dissertation, studied the formation, structure and development of the peer groups of young people in boy gangs in the town of Turku. This study is regarded as the first sociological research in Europe within this theme. Here, young people are studied in their ‘natural’ social environment, not in school. Helanko (1972) claims that socialization is primary and education only secondary. The structural aspect of socialization is represented by the group, and the active aspect is represented by play. This latter conclusion, drawn by a sociologist is sig-
significant, since educational sociologists have generally only acknowledged the reality of adults. Later on, Helanko (1969, 1978) completed more research on playground activities. In the pedagogic sense, his studies have been important in revealing the educational meaning of the groups and communities of young people. Traditionally, the boy gangs have been seen as sources of deviant behaviour, such as crime. Thus, Helanko has successfully combined detailed sociological analysis and significant pedagogic conclusions.

A few years later, a research group in the Institute of Social Sciences formed by Erik Allardt, Pertti Jartti, Faina Jyrkilä and Yrjö Littunen (1956, 1958), studied the leisure activities of young people by using an interview method. This study was conducted at the time of post-war reconstruction and structural change when the leisure time activities of young people were considered to be a social problem. The introduction to the study claims that a certain mental change took place alongside industrialization. New groups and groupings were born, and the social control maintained by family, village and church was loosened. In connection with this change, the youth appeared both passive and ill-mannered, as had happened before in similar kinds of changes. The results acquired by the new method - interviews of some 1600 10-29-year-olds - did not support the public opinion, since young people turned out to be more engaged than adults in activities such as physical exercise and reading. The hypothesis posed by Allardt et al regarding the accumulation of activities and participation was the best-known and the most influential idea in the Finnish sociology of the period. It could be seen that even a ‘bad’ hobby, by the standards of the day, could be a better predictor of the activeness of young people than could passiveness and isolation.

The doctoral dissertation of Kosti Huuhka, titled ‘Talonpoikaisnuorison koulutie’ (The Educational Path of the Peasant Youth) (1955), examined the education of a whole social class. Huuhka constructed his theoretical frame of reference in a fairly modern way, following the examples of American research on the concepts of cultural change. The time span of Huuhka’s study is forty years, which made historical analysis both possible and necessary. For the first time in
Finnish sociology of education, official *national statistics* were used as data. This research paved the way for the study of social selection and social mobility. The impact of general mobility and structural change was analyzed, and distinctive characteristics of the rural population were compared with those of working class youth, including factors such as the popularity of secondary education and the unpopularity of vocational education among the agrarian offspring.

Attitude research, characteristic of post Second World War social psychology, came into general use in Finland in the 1960's. A vast survey study concerning the attitudes of parents raising their children was conducted at the Jyväskylä Institute of Educational Research (Takala, A. 1960; Takala M. et al 1960; Nummenmaa 1964). The research focused on the childrearing attitudes of mothers from social environments. At the same time, the methodology of attitude research, and theories of learning and socialization were developed.

The results showed that among upper social classes the upbringing of children is a more planned and long-term process, and that the emotional interaction in different social strata is fairly analogous. Attitude research has had several followers. Annika and Martti Takala have faithfully observed the development of Finnish *educational consciousness and activity*. They have also published widely. The work on the way of life of the family can be seen as the successor to this research (Takala, M. 1984).

Pertti Toukomaa (1967), in his doctoral dissertation, focused on the ideals and values of young people. His aim was to examine the impact of home and school in the socialization process of the young. The results demonstrate how the values of young people from different social classes had certain logical discrepancies. Particularly interesting was the fact that socialization to the values characteristic of, first, the folk school pupils and, second, the upper secondary school pupils, seemed to have begun to materialize before the actual selection of the type of education took place. Theoretically, according to Toukomaa, this signifies *anticipated socialization* based on one's reference group.

Frequently in *adult education* the sociological viewpoint has been present. In addition to the studies on the accumulation of hobbies,
Alanen's (1969) doctoral dissertation examining the instrumental and expressive orientation of adult students ought to be mentioned. In Alanen's work a Parsonsian theory was used to solve a practical andrologic problem with success.

**Educational Policy and Socialization as the Major Themes**

Although both Urpo Harva (1960) and Aulis Alanen (1963) had presented an up-to-date view of educational sociology earlier, the publication of ‘Kasvatussosiologia’ (The Sociology of Education) (1972) by Kalevi Kivistö and Tapio Vaherva was a turning point. This book synthesized the grounds and results of the emerging field. Kivistö and Vaherva outlined an overall picture of the expanding and renewing educational system in Finland, and its relation to the educational systems of other countries. This raised the area of practice in which the study results were meant to be applied, i.e. *educational policy and educational planning*. The structure of Finnish society is very visible in chapters on education and population structure, education and regional structure, and education and social stratification. The revised edition also examines gender-related educational differences (Kivistö & Vaherva, 1979, 83-87). While examining the selective hidden functions of school, the authors are concerned with the pool of abilities, for example, the number of pupils disqualified from post-compulsory school education either because of financial or social reasons. Consequently, the functional connection between education and society is illustrated from various viewpoints.

Similarly, the doctoral dissertations have dealt mainly with issues of educational policy. Educational sociologists, indirectly at least, have been engaged in constructing the new comprehensive school and solving the problems of higher education. Yrjö Littunen (1956) discussed higher education in his early doctoral dissertation. Päivi Elovainio (1974, 1983) differed from the functionalist mainstream by arguing that the explanation for the expanding university system lay in national conflicts. This is how Antikainen (1980, 93; 1981) concluded the final report of the project ‘University and Environment’, a project
that studied the regional effects of universities:

"Finally, it should be pointed out that so far the regional expansion of higher education has taken place under circumstances of economic growth when the regional development policy has also had an integrating influence on society. If the circumstances change, the regional policy may result in conflicts as well."

Perhaps the most important debate in educational policy during the 1970's was about the *educability of the human being*. It was a topic that had been discussed in British educational policy a decade earlier (Banks 1982). The influences came from elsewhere, however, primarily from Soviet and American psychological research, from which pedagogical conclusions were drawn. Yrjö-Paavo Häyrynen and Jarkko Hautamäki (1973) expressed an optimistic interpretation of educability in their popular book. They argued in favour of the viewpoint that educability was not a genetic, but a social problem. This same optimism has traditionally been represented by enlightenment philosophy and progressive pedagogy. Similar interpretation of educability are found in psychological approaches that emphasize the importance of environment, and in the whole tradition of sociology. The debate, however, was chiefly on the level of actual school practice. The distance between general and historical thinking, and that of everyday school practice was not seen. Hautamäki (1978) suggested that a distinction between educability and teachability should be made. In this debate, society was still perceived as a rather functionalist system, essentially as an image of technological society.

The construction of *socialization theories* was promoted by the doctoral dissertation of Olkinuora (1974), and the book titled ‘Uuden sukupolven vaihtoehdot’ (Alternatives of the New Generation) (1974) by Annika Takala. Takala's starting point was to integrate anthropological, historical, sociological and psychological views of socialization by means of general system theory. The major approach within this frame of reference is the social structure model by Gerth and Mills (1953), which claims that the socialization process is essentially so-
cialization to institutions through socialization to roles. The role is the bridge between the individual character structure and the social structure of society. Another major reference was Berger and Luckmann's (1966) phenomenological sociology of knowledge which addressed the social construction of reality. Takala was particularly interested in individual moral development and in the ethical pattern of culture. In the conclusion of her book she states:

"The most difficult ethical problems of today's world are not relations between people - at least we have in our moral traditions a set of rules to govern those. Today's most difficult ethical problems are global, and they are connected to preserving the prerequisites of life. The knowledge about the basic processes of life and the influences of human activities has far-reaching consequences. The decisions on human productive activity have both locally and temporally far-reaching consequences, of which at least part can be seen as certain likelihoods. Certain decisions have influence on people's nutrition, maybe on their gradual intoxication, some decisions have influence on infant mortality or on foetal damage, some induce damaging genetic mutations in following generations. People have been brought up to the kind of ethical decision-making that makes a difference between 'good' and 'bad'. They are not brought up to such ethical decision-making which forces one to estimate the likely consequences of alternatives and use them as feedback in today's situations of choice." (Takala 1974, 216-217).

I consider this theoretical book to be the most important study in Finnish educational sociology in the 1970's. This is not to suggest that no empirical study of socialization was completed. The doctoral dissertations of Marjatta Marin (1970) and Ritva Aalto (1975) are examples of empirical approaches to this research area.

**Diversification towards Many Educational Sociologies**
The 1980's brought a diversification of educational sociology, but education policy issues were still on the agenda. Among other things, a book dealing with the *economics of education* and educational planning was published by Tapio Vaherva and Simo Juva in 1985. The old *functionalism* was torn apart, however, by new approaches. Raivola (1982) contributed to the field with a critique of the Anglo-American *conflict theories* and Takala (1983) presented a Marxist *critique of political economics of education*, as did Tuomisto (1986). Niinistö (1984) moved on to *interpretative studies*, which was then expanded by Aittola (1992). Rinne (1984; 1988) integrated historical analysis and *critical structuralist theory*, while Kivinen (1988) and Kivirauma (1989) continued with their distinguished historical analysis of the systematization of education and the special education system (Kivinen & Kivirauma 1989). These are just a few examples of the range of research and analysis developed during this time period.

The researchers from the Turku Research Unit of Sociology of Education indicate their Bourdieuan (Bourdieu & Passeron 1979) starting point on the back cover of their pamphlet:

"Education is capital and the object of investment. It is gathered, sold and developed. Through education we all take our positions in society. Education classifies, makes distinctions and selects. It produces status, knowledge, style and wealth. Some are destined for stupidity, lack of style and poverty. Education opens and closes the routes in human lives." (Kivinen & Rinne & Ahola 1989).

Tapio Aittola (1992, 105), of the Jyväskylä University, sums up his eclectic approach as follows:

"The method of the study applies abductive reasoning, in which earlier research observations are thematicized as the subject of theoretical reflexion and they are interpreted with the construed regulatives based on new theoretical viewpoints (Peirce). The subjective experiences of students interviewed as well as their descriptions of their study processes and the objective statistical analyses
are synthesized as "discursive" descriptions of their era (Bourdieu). The analysis of the empirical interview data applies a typology construction method, in which empirical observations are associated with theoretical perspectives (Gurvitch). In the reanalysis of the interview data a special attention is paid to the relations between the objective, subjective and documentary meanings (Mannheim), because thus one is able to construct a holistic depiction of university studies of the past decade."

During this period, research themes became diversified as well. The study of Järvelä (1991) was a balanced and detailed study of the need for education. Ritva Uusitalo (1984, 1985) was engaged in studying young people and Kuusinen (1985) demonstrated that despite the comprehensive school reform, social discrepancies remained in secondary education (see also Hautamäki 1982). The professionalization of teachers, or the lack of it, also became a topic of debate. (Rinne & Jauhiainen 1988; Simola 1995; Simola & Popkewitz 1996).

Women's studies and childhood studies represent new fields of inquiry which have influenced sociology of education research. Firstly, these studies have introduced previously little examined topics and problems to the field of research. Secondly, they are developing new concepts and approaches (Gordon & Lahelma 1991; Gordon 1989, 1994). For example, a distinction is made between sex and gender (Huttunen 1990). Sex is a biological and gender a social category. When linked with power structures in society, one can talk about gender systems. A typical gender system leaves women on the border, or outside of, power structures, whereas white, heterosexual, affluent men comprise the so-called hegemonic masculinity (Gordon & Lahelma 1991, 122). The relation of education and school to gender is a complex matter. For instance, comprehensive school and its official curriculum is gender neutral, but in school routines this neutrality tends to genderize (Lahelma 1992, 1993). Consequently, Elina Lahelma comes to the conclusion that the school is actively participating in (re)producing the predominant gender system. The gender features in the vocational post-comprehensive education are much more vis-
Childhood and youth have not historically changed much as biological phenomena. Childhood as a social phenomenon, however, has changed enormously, and it varies a great deal from one culture to another. For social scientists, children and childhood have been marginal phenomena. They have seldom been touched in research, and when they have, it has been from the viewpoints of biology, pedagogy and psychology, which Leena Alanen and Marjatta Bardy (1990, 9-11) have referred to as ‘child sciences’. They claim that Finnish society does not regard children as a part of the ‘greater society’. Rather, children are seen to be moving in the microcosms of home, day-care and school. Their task is to develop and mature in these ‘waiting-rooms’ of society, and to acquire such knowledge and skills as they need later in the ‘real’ society. Adults focus their interest on this development process and concern themselves with how to organize and guide a child to society. On the politics of childhood, Alanen and Bardy conclude:

"The formation of a new generational agreement signifies the politics of childhood, which aims at the social interaction and equity of people of different ages. If the social order between generations is transformed, childhood also will change. In the course of this project we have continuously noted that the adults' way to discuss childhood is adult-centred. The knowledge on childhood is very much attached to the views and ideologies that adults have of children. The autonomy and participation of the underaged will expand their opportunities to speak and act. The realities of ‘real children’ might then be emerged better than in this current situation."

To acknowledge the specific quality of childhood, and to take it into account, will thus change the face of sociological research (Alanen 1988, 1992). The same will happen regarding the study of the other stages of life.

In addition to studying one's own society, comparative research
and research of developing countries has emerged. Various studies with interesting methods and contents include Raivola (1986), Sabour (1988) and Takala & Tapaninen (1995).

**Recession, Rationalization and Expansion of Evaluation**

The 1990's have been a decade of structural change in Finnish society (Antikainen 1990; Kivinen & Rinne 1995). An *economic recession deeper than that of the 1930's* has manifested itself through a bank crisis, a series of bankruptcies, problems in the national economy and soaring unemployment figures. Public expenses for education have been cut, which, among other things, has caused the closing of village schools, growth in teaching groups and cutback in extra curricular activities. At the same time, more and more expectations have been directed to the economic significance of education. Vocational adult education has expanded, higher education has been rationalized, and there have been attempts to strengthen the connection between education and working life. Management by results and evaluation have become part of educational administration. At the same time, Finland has joined the European Union, and internationalization has become the new slogan of education.

In the context of structural change, research in the field of educational sociology has developed in at least three ways. Firstly, the process of diversification that started in the previous decade has continued. It has been fed by researchers' 'postmodern' distrust for seeking influence through traditional political decision-making, as well as their attempt to find *new ways to communicate with the subjects of their research* (cf. Suoranta 1995). Examples of this can be found in *youth studies, women's studies, and life history approaches*, as well as in *vocational education and educational leadership* (Hoikkala 1993; Gordon 1994; Aittola et al. 1991; Heikkinen 1995a, b; Isosomppi 1996; Antikainen et al. 1996a, b). In addition, the *university culture* and its change has been under scrutinization (Koski 1993 a, b; Välimaa 1995).
Secondly, members of the structural school have continued their critique of education. The suggestion of moving class teacher education from the university to the polytechnic originated with this group. Their research has been preoccupied with the persisting pattern of class differences in postcompulsory education, arguing that these class distinctions are actually being ‘inherited’ from generation to generation through the educational system (Isoaho et al 1990; Kivinen & Rinne 1993 and 1996). A new theme, in the context of growing racism, is *ethnic relations and  intercultural education* (Toivonen 1992; Virrankoski 1994).

Thirdly, adult education, in particular, has attempted to respond to social challenges. *Learning at work and life-long learning* are the priorities of both educational policy and educational research (Engeström 1987, 1994; Sarala & Sarala 1996; Varila 1992; Antikainen et al. ibid). The history of *Nordic liberal adult education* and its international context has not been fully forgotten (Toiviainen 1995).

Thanks due to the fast social change, the first lesson here is very clear. The social context does matter in Finnish educational sociology.

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The article is partly based on chapter 4. of my book (1993) "Kasvatus, koulutus ja yhteiskunta" (Education, School and Society). Helsinki: WSOY.
I apply here a wide concept of educational sociology and don't make distinctions between sociology of education and educational sociology.
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