



Research –based Teacher Education

In my long career as a teacher educator the most significant policy change was the requirement that all teachers must hold a academic masters’ degree in education or in the subject they teach in school. It launched a development chain that elevated all teachers as professionals who, among other things, are able to understand teaching holistically and improve their own work continuously. In Finland it took more than 20 years to build common understanding among teacher educators, university professors and practitioners about the complexity of the teaching profession. Research – based teacher education has the following three key principles:

- Teachers need a deep knowledge of the most recent advances of research in the subjects they teach. In addition, they need to be familiar with research on how something can be taught and learned.
- Teachers must adopt a research-orientated attitude toward their work. This means learning to take an analytical and open-minded approach to their work, drawing conclusions for the development of education based on different sources of evidence coming from the recent research as well as their own critical and professional observations and experiences.
- Teacher education in itself should also be an object of study and research.

Many people ask why Finnish students perform so well in school and many young Finns choose teaching as their life career. There is no regular standardized testing, school inspection, teacher evaluation or ranking of schools in Finland. Public education has a central role in enhancing equality and well-being in Finnish society. High quality academic teacher education ensures readiness to work in many other areas of the Finnish labor market. Most importantly, in Finland, teachers and schools enjoy strong public confidence. Parents trust teachers the way that they trust their dentists. Parents do not need to worry about finding a good school for their children. Many think that the nearest school in their community is good enough. I believe that because teachers – as a result of academic education – have clear moral purpose and independent professional ethos, they are trusted. Research based teacher education is essential in making that possible.

Hannele Niemi
Professor of Education
University of Helsinki



Research-based teacher education means that the integration of educational theories, research methodologies, and practice all play important roles in Finnish teacher education programs. There are opportunities for teachers to engage in and practice research. All teachers have a Masters degree either in their subject or in education.

To what extent do we feel that our own programmes for teacher education in the UK share the same focus?

What is the impact?

Points from the text to consider and discuss:

- education enhancing equality and well-being in society
- strong public confidence in the profession
- teachers as a trusted profession
- a good school being the nearest school
- the role of standardised testing
- the absence of teacher evaluation

How do we affect change in the perception and perceived professionalism of our profession?