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In my presentation I want first to describe the Finnish this basic school as a system which has a lot in common with Freire's aspirations about an equality promoting school. Secondly I will describe Freire's influence in Finland and lastly, I present empirical

The Finnish basic school as a Welfare State institution

The first curriculum of the Finnish comprehensive or basic school dates from the same year 1970 when Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed was published. Both texts spring from a similar political campaign for an anti-authoritarian and emancipating school for the proletarian classes. The Finnish curriculum of the 1970 was an about 250 pages long document visioning a totally new "school for all" compared to the pre-war elitist two tier system of a short and rudimentary education for the working class children and a long, gymnasium based and academically oriented education for the middle and elite children.

The curriculum of the 1970 is still a very relevant pedagogic text. Its philosophy resonates with the ideas of democracy, equality and justice circulating among left-center minded and radical politicians and educationalists in several Western countries after the Second World War. The basis of curriculum thinking is a holistic view of human beings and civilization. All subjects were to be of equal value and none could be put aside as less important. In addition, the curriculum was not to be a crowded compilation of disconnected facts. Instead, "by teaching less, one teaches more". There was also a strong appreciation of childhood as a special time for maturing and development which was not to be instrumentalized to the service of specific adult interests. The curriculum of the elementary school was especially strongly influenced by progressive educational ideas of freedom of the children to move around in the class, to have a say, to work with their hands and going out of school to learn about the social and natural environment of the school.

There was also a strong influence social pedagogic thinking. This was expressed first by the idea that the whole school system from administrative practices to different teaching methods and the general running of the school should be in congruence with and support the educational goals of the school. Secondly, there should prevail co-operation and democratic participation among the different actor groups, ie. pupils, teachers and parents. This has been considered both as a question of citizen's rights and as a pedagogic principle in a school devoted to educate democratic citizens.

The basic political aim of the comprehensive system was to promote educational and consequently also social equality. To reach this goal a strong caring element was visioned as part of the idea of the school including several mechanisms: 1) the enlargement of the traditionally limited "teacher" role to encompass a caring attitude to every child, ie. teachers not only "teach" but have a personal caring relation to every child; 2) effective special educational provision was to be created for those with weaker background and learning problems, and 3) cooperation with parents, which was considered "as important as the teaching itself", 4) the placement of school doctors, nurses and social workers in every school. In this way the school was to be a multi-professional organization taking full responsibility of learning, social and health problems of the children in close cooperation with the parents. This vision of the Finnish basic school make it a good example of a welfare state system.

The political right has seriously weakened the equalizing possibilities of the basic school

In Finland the general public is *strongly* in favour of the basic school vision described above. The social and educational philosophy of the basic school was also eagerly accepted by the first generations of the new school system and it still can be taken as the official ethos of the system. Finns are also proud of the comprehensive school and appreciate very much the idea that every local school can be considered just as good as any other, that the teachers are well trained and in general the schools are safe and inspiring places for their children.

The rise of the political right in Finland at the turn of 1980-90's, however, brought with it a change in educational policy: resource cuts started to be made and also certain structural innovations along the lines of neo-liberal educational policy spreading all over the Globe since the 1980's. Today there is a real threat of a re-emergence of a functionally elite school, although formally still within the official basic school structures. According to recent studies a strong hierarchisation process is going on between schools and within them which threatens to change the whole dynamics of the system.

Radical innovators inspired by Freire are coming¹

Finnish educationalists and teachers have always been inspired by various versions of progressive education. This can be seen especially in our elementary school pedagogy, where the influence of Dewey, Freinet and Steiner can be seen. Freire profiles less in Finland than for example in Sweden where Pedagogy of the Oppressed and some of Freire's other texts were translated already in the beginning of the 1970's. Anyway his ideas spread to Finland, too, and were much discussed at that time among the students of pedagogy. His influence has, however, been strongest in adult education and peace education circles. A Finnish peace education activist, Helena Kekkonen, introduced his ideas widely in Finland and applied Freirian ideas in a prisoners' educational project. Kekkonen was also internationally so well-known as to gain the Unesco Price for Peace Education in 1981 (Freire received the same prize in 1986).

Since the turn of the Millennium one can find a growing interest in Freire in Finland. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was translated in 2005. A second printing in 2016 shows this growing interest in Freire. The book is today used as obligatory reading of teachers and students of educational sciences in the universities. Research on Freire's thinking and his pedagogy is developing, with at least one dissertation (in 2000). Articles reflecting on the relevance of his thinking can be found here and there in pedagogic periodicals ever since the 1970's. Several empirical studies of how his ideas have been applied in different fields of education (basic school, dance, communications studies, contextual theology etc). A cartoon describing concisely the elements of Freire's thinking was published in 2006 (Lissu Lehtimaja. 2006. Freiren kyydissä. (*Driving with Freire*)Helsinki: Pystykorva).

There is also a very active network of "Critical teachers" in Helsinki and to my knowledge last year they were reading together *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Some members have informed that they base their pedagogy as teachers more or less on Freire. As I returned from the Hamburg congress there was an internet message in this network asking for information about Freire in Finland. This

¹ This section is based on an article published as an afterword to the Finnish translation of *Pedagogia do Oprimido*: Tuukka Tomperi & Juha Suoranta: Sorrettujen jälkeen. Freiren kritiikistä, suomalaisesta vastaanotosta ja sovelluksista. (*After the Oppressed: About the critique, Finnish reception and application of Freire's ideas*. In: Freire, Paulo. 2016. *Sorrettujen pedagogiikka*. Helsinki: Vastapaino)

person, Sanna Ryyänen, was going to attend the 50th year jubilee of the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Sao Paulo! It is quite probable that next Freire congress in Germany will be attended by several Freire enthusiasts.

How the famous Finnish good school is created by pedagogic practice

In this last part of my article I will shortly represent principal results of an ethnographic study of three local elementary schools in Helsinki. These schools were chosen because they showed better learning results than would have been an above statistically expected considering the low socio-economic background of their student body. According to the analysis of their empirical material these schools showed such characteristics as:

1. A strong professional caring ethos concerning both the pupils and the teachers of the school and a belief in the immanent openness of the pupils' future.
2. A school climate characterized by at the same time warmth, safety and a feeling free of hurriedness on one hand and an atmosphere of orderliness, good behaviour and a demand of diligent work. Strong ethos of teachers being adult persons.
3. Clear responsible leadership combined with a low hierarchy and trust in the high professionalism of the personnel. A general ethos of multiprofessionality with no clear cut borders between representatives of different professionalities nor a stress on formal qualifications.
4. A belief and trust in being a bit "old fashioned" but at the same time open to experimenting; various efforts to promote active roles for pupils.
5. Very little competitiveness among teachers. In stead of demanding "outstanding results", "good enough" basic teaching and skills are appreciated.
6. Families have a trust in the school working for the best of their children and also in the ability to do so.
7. An ability in the school to understand the complexity of social problems and their effects on school life. An ability to understand that the biggest challenges are created by problems inherent in the class division accumulating in the lives of the pupils, no willingness to explain them away with various simplifications and stereotyping.

From: (Simola, H., Bernelius, V., Vartiainen, H., Paakkari, A., Norola, M., Juvonen, S. & Soisalo, L. 2015. Hyvin toimivan lähikoulun salaisuus. In: Kulonpalo, J. (toim.). 2015. Työkaluja metropolialueen kehittämiseen. Kaupunkitutkimus ja metropolipolitiikka-ohjelman tuloksia vuosina 2010-2014: 114-123).²

Simola et al describe the ethos of these schools in words like "we demand from children, from ourselves, from the families certain things, because we care for them; and we respect them, because we demand certain things from them. Pedagogically we are rather traditional. Everything is glued together with a sense of doing things together". Most of the good pedagogic practices were created by the schools themselves and in addition to rules and certain practices, they were based on the common adherence of all personnel to do things as well as possible.

In another recent study of especially effective schools (measured by their especially good results promoting the learning of boys), the rectors and vice rectors interviewed told that the good results are based on the whole personnel being unanimously behind what is agreed. One of Freire's

² An English description of this study can be found in Paakkari, A. & Vartiainen, H. 2014. *Functioning Local Schools – A study of three Helsinki Schools in Areas of Low Socio-Economic Structure*. In: Paper presented at The European Conference on Educational Research in Porto, Portugal.

importance is surely his sometimes criticized “preaching” for certain important values (freedom, critical thinking, emancipation of the suppressed etc). One can think that a strong presence of such values among the pedagogues supports an energetic and competent professional work filled with hope and strong adulthood. Such professional ethos is especially needed in areas populated by the poor families where creating an effective school is an especially great challenge. Today a real danger exists that children of the poorest families will be more and more educationally oppressed as a result of the ongoing hierarchisation of the schools. Freirean ethos is thus very much in need. One can, in fact, detect a certain “leftist” effect in the ethos of the three schools described above.

Dynamic components of a pedagogically and academically effective school

This is an extremely short introduction to the system theoretic model I have developed as a planning and evaluation device for school personnel in their efforts to create a radically inclusive and democratically run school. If anybody is interested to know more about it please contact me.

According to the model, there are three basic dynamic subsystems with their functional demands influencing the inner dynamics of a school class:

1. Functional demands of the psychodynamic systems of teachers and pupils as individual actors of the school system
= they are able and motivated as institutionally positioned actors of the school system to participate in a constructive way as expected by them => what the relevant needs
2. Functional demands of the classes as social psychologically large scale groups
=In spite of being socio-emotionally and socioculturally extremely intensive dynamic systems, the classes are able to function as positively activating and inclusive communities of practice =>what are the relevant needs on the group level?
3. Functional demands of the didactic-curricular system (the area of primary responsibility of the teacher community as responsible for the effective running of the school)
= Teaching and the general running of the school creates equal opportunities to everyone to act effectively in their roles as teachers or students.

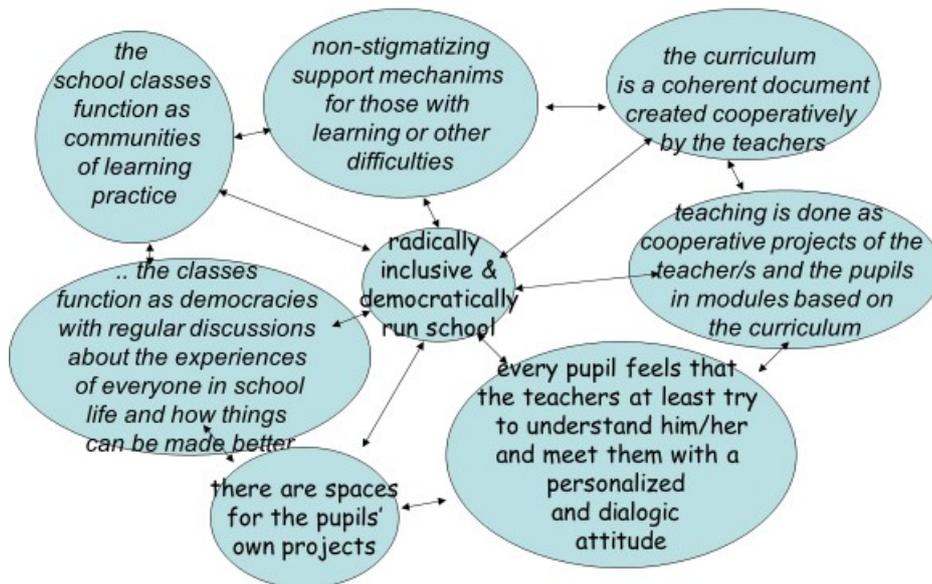
In the real life of the schools:

1. The basis for everything: The national curriculum must be worked through collectively by the teacher community in order to make it a commonly understood and accepted document programming the work of different subjects within a theoretically consequential vision and plan. This plan concerns how the idea of a holistically civilizing general education is produced by the gradewise progressing teaching of the different subjects and the general running of the school in a way which creates a holistically satisfying social world within the school walls for both teachers and students.
 2. Teaching as praxis must be produced as a "common endeavour" of the teachers and the pupils.
 3. Respect of the individual needs of both teachers and pupils is a general ethos so that every teacher and student really is able to feel that he or she is an appreciated member of the school community.
- From these functional demands we can, using substance knowledge created by the relevant sciences concerning the dynamics of the different system levels, extrapolate certain strategic targets in teaching practice and administering the school system:

It is important that curriculum development work and general planning of the activities make sure that the aforementioned functional demands are filled. This requirement means that the school has an effectively functioning leadership system: good managers and well functioning development and other teams securing effective monitoring of the activities, sound development work and problem solving capacity of the school.

Schemas of systematizing this complex work can be created to assure that everything of importance is being cared for. These schemas can be used to create feedback mechanisms used in planning necessary interventions to secure the overall dynamic efficiency of the school.

Elements of a democratically run and radically inclusive school culture



To strengthen every element, discussions are needed around for example following questions:

What is meant by this every element? Why are they here?

What kind of indicators tell us about how things are around the different elements?

How do we know things are really well/badly in different elements?

Where are we now concerning the different elements? How do we know it?

What kind of mechanisms are needed to secure that the different elements are strong in our school culture?

Where are we strongest/weakest?