

## Experiencing the global dimension of sustainability

Barth, Matthias; Rieckmann, Marco

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# Transformative Global Education and Learning in Teacher Education in Finland

*Rauni Räsänen*

University of Oulu (Finland)

## Abstract

The aim of this article is to discuss developments in global education in Finnish teacher education. It argues for the necessity of a comprehensive approach which encompasses holistic reforms in formal educational institutions, but also in other sectors of society and in national policies. Special attention is given to the importance of teacher education in global education, as well as to the role of the Finnish core school curricula, the new national strategy for global education and the Education for Global Responsibility project at the University of Oulu in its development. The main parts of the article discuss and analyse the theoretical foundations and practical implications of critical intercultural pedagogy and transformative learning in teacher education in Oulu, Finland. The article ends by summarising the main results from the teacher education experiment, and with recommendations for future development.

**Keywords:** global education, teacher education, higher education, transformative education, intercultural education, Finland

## Introduction

Finland is a sparsely populated parliamentary democracy in northernmost Europe. Its immediate neighbours are Norway, Sweden and Russia, with which it has a 1269 kilometre border at the eastern edge of the European Union. Culturally, Finland has been described as a very monocultural country. This may be true in terms of ethnicity and religion, but considering the whole range of languages, dialects, political views and particularly forms of living in different areas and parts of the country, it is in reality highly diverse. The myth of one nation, one language and one culture was needed in the times of nation building and the fight for independence (Häkkinen and Tervonen, 2004: 22-23). Ethnic diversity did not become a major issue in Finland until new minority groups began to enter the country in the 1970's, although the rights of older minorities such as Swedish-speaking Finns, the Sami and Roma people have also become better recognised within recent decades. The biggest immigrant groups are from Russia, Estonia, Sweden (part of this population is returning Finns), followed by immigrants from Somalia, Iraq, Great Britain, Germany, Iran, former Yugoslavia, the United States and Turkey (Puuronen, 2004: 13). Finland has always been a border country between the East and West, and both Russia and Sweden have significantly influenced Finnish cultural and everyday life.

Both politically and socially, Finland has often been torn between ideologies and power struggles in the past. Finland declared independence in 1917 as a result of the First World War and the Russian revolutionary movements, but was soon driven into political controversy, which led to a Civil War which killed almost 40,000 of the country's less than 3 million inhabitants. In spite of this traumatic past, the country was able to unite its people and to create a strong front in the Winter War (1939-1940), to pay back massive war debts and to develop the impoverished country through economic growth and policies of social responsibility (Simola, 2005: 457). In the 1970s and 1980s national consensus crystallised around the need for a welfare state and for all citizens to receive quality education, policies which gained strong support from all parties and social groups. A comprehensive school reform of the 1970's became known as 'the mother of all reforms', and it inspired and energised a decades-long cycle of change in several sectors of society.

Since the 1990s, Finland has been ranked as one of the most competitive countries in several surveys, and it is now considered one of the least corrupt societies in the world. In several evaluations, it has also been stated that one of the key drivers of Finland's success has been and will be a uniformly high-quality education system which has helped speed the country's social and economic internationalisation in the 1990s (Aho *et al*, 2006: 17-18.)

All Finnish political documents at the moment emphasise the vital importance of participating in discussions about development and decision-making at European and global levels. Within the country, education is expected to respond to the challenges of increasing diversity in population, international migration and co-operation, and the changes caused by the economic, social, cultural and ecological impacts of globalisation (Räsänen, 2007a: 221-224). This article discusses how education has considered these challenges, what transformations are taking place in educational policies, and what further changes are required in teacher education if transformative global learning is to be seriously pursued. It argues that if transformations are desired, changes are needed both on political and institutional levels and in both structures and practices. It also argues that teacher education (both pre- and in-service training) is central to processes of social transformation and so comprehensive changes are needed in curricula, contents and methods. Finally, the discussion focuses on the theoretical foundations of transformative teacher education, describes an experiment to implement the theories, and summarises the results from the experiment.

### **Towards Comprehensive Global Learning in Finnish Policy**

The need for education about international contexts has been recognised in the aims of Finnish education since the comprehensive school reform at the end of the 1960s. In Finnish educational discourse, the concept of 'international education' is even older than 'global education', and is founded on the terms and ideas intro-

duced in United Nations documents such as UNESCO recommendations (1974) and the Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1995a). Following the birth of the comprehensive school system, the scope of international education in Finnish national curricula is wide: according to UNESCO documents, it included education for peace, human rights, equality, development studies, environmental education and respect for other cultures. International education was singled out as the core element of ethical education nationally, and attention was drawn to educating citizens who would demonstrate global concern and responsibility (Räsänen, 2007b: 19-21.)

The most recent national core curriculum for basic education was issued in 2004 and for upper secondary school was issued in 2003. It is evident from their contents that the core curricula now more clearly than ever before acknowledge the multicultural nature of the Finnish population and view this as a richness, instead of a burden or extra expense, when organising education. The curricula discuss the way in which Finnish culture has developed in interaction with indigenous, Nordic and European cultures, and point out both the cultural diversification which has resulted from the arrival of people from other countries, and the importance of acknowledging this in policies and practices (National Board of Education, 2004: 12). It is also obvious that Europe and European cultures now receive more attention than previously; identity is discussed as a construction consisting of several sub-cultural elements, and need for international cooperation is emphasised.

The core curricula also distinguish a number of cross-curricular themes that should be taken into account in the whole school culture. All of the themes are connected with development issues and global learning, but the content areas on culture, internationalisation, active citizenship and sustainable development are particularly relevant in this context. In the core curriculum for basic education (7-16 years), for example, the objective for participatory citizenship education is said to be to help pupils perceive society from the viewpoints of different players and to develop the capabilities needed for civic involvement. According to the curriculum, the learning culture and methods of the school must support the pupil's development as an independent, goal-conscious, cooperative and engaged citizen, as well as help the pupil form a realistic image of his or her own potential to influence matters. Overall, the emphasis is clearly on the school and home contexts, and on cooperation with near-by communities (National Board of Education, 2004: 37).

Participatory citizenship is expanded in the core curriculum for upper secondary schools (16-19 years of age), where the curriculum states that the aim in the theme area is to educate students to become contributing, responsible and critical citizens, which means becoming active in the various sectors of society: the political, social, cultural and economic. The curriculum also points out that one should be active on a local, national, European and global level. It further emphasises that students should gain personal experience about the functioning of a democratic society and

about their own potential to have an influence in school, in different organisations and in work places (National Board of Education, 2003: 27). The cross-curricular theme of cultural identity and knowledge of cultures further strengthens these ideas of multi-levelled citizenship, responsibility and identity by stating that students 'should become aware of shared Nordic, European and universal human values and the manifestations of such values or the lack thereof in their everyday life, in Finnish society and in the world as a whole' (National Board of Education, 2003: 29).

Sustainable development has also been an important thematic area in Finnish policy documents. In 2006, Finland launched its national action plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), which was the first of its kind in the whole of Europe. The promotion of sustainable development is clearly incorporated in the core curricula for basic education and for general and vocational upper secondary education. The aims of the theme area include the dimensions of ecological, economic, cultural and social development, and emphasise cooperation for a better future on local, national and international levels (Kaivola-Rohweder, 2007).

The new core curricula have played an important role in providing one framework for global education, but several other national processes have also given direction for developments in the area in the 21st century. Global education in Finland was evaluated by a peer review team from the Council of Europe's North-South Centre in 2004. One of the suggestions made in the Review Report was to draft a national strategy for global education in the whole country. As a result, a committee was established for the purpose in cooperation with the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs. The committee submitted its report to the Ministry of Education at the end of 2005. In its report, the committee paid special attention to the role of the education sector in managing globalisation and to the construction of a holistic strategy for the sustainable development of global education in the country. The holistic approach adopted in the report addresses a number of aspects of global education: lifelong education from early childhood to adult education; life-wide education involving formal education, non-formal education and informal education; interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approaches comprising cooperation of various professionals and workplaces; comprehensive transformations in school curricula and school ethos; action from local to global arenas; a holistic view of a human being and learning consisting of cognitive and affective aspects as well as active participation, through individual contacts and societal structures (Ministry of Education, 2006).

As a continuation for the strategic work, in the spring of 2007 the Ministry of Education launched a project called 'Education for Global Responsibility' with the intention of providing a conceptual framework for the strategy and for involving all sectors, from the educational system to the whole of Finnish society, in the movement towards global responsibility (Kaivola, 2007: 3-4). The project emphasises the

role of universities (especially in terms of teacher education) in this transformation. The project leader, Monica Melen-Paaso, points out that as universities in Finland have an important role not only in relation to other sectors of education but also to the development of society as a whole, it was natural to start the cooperation for conceptual clarification together with university researchers (Melen-Paaso, 2007: 13-15). On the basis of the results from this clarification work, several seminars and conferences have been organised and two reports (in addition to several individual articles) have been published (Kaivola and Melen-Paaso, 2007; Kaivola, 2008). The plan is that the project will cover not only the educational system, but other sectors as well. As several governmental and non-governmental actors are working on the same broad topic, coordination and cooperation is essential, and all relevant sectors will need to be given enough attention.

### **Teacher Education and Global Education in Finland**

Considering its size and population, Finland has a large number of universities – ten multidisciplinary institutions, six specialist institutions and four art academies – all of them state-run and engaged in both research and education. Currently, teacher education is provided by eleven universities and they operate under the administrative direction of the Ministry of Education. Since the beginning of the 1970s all teacher education (including pre-primary and primary teacher education) has taken place in universities, and the minimum qualification for a teaching post is a Master's degree.

An interesting feature in Finnish education and teacher education is that teachers enjoy a higher status than in most other OECD countries. This is largely due to the long-standing requirement of university degree-level education for all teachers. What is perhaps even more rare, as Simola points out (2005: 458), is that people at both the lower and higher ends of the social spectrum seem to appreciate and respect the work teachers have done. Another clear indication of the status of the teaching profession is its popularity as a career choice. There is a shortage of applicants for some subjects (mostly in mathematics and natural sciences), but generally speaking, teaching has maintained its position as one of the most attractive career options among young people (particularly girls) in Finland. For instance, only 10 per cent of the applicants for a class teacher's programme (grades 1-6) can be admitted, which means that those accepted are highly motivated and multi-talented with excellent academic skills (Väljörvi *et al*, 2002: 42-43.)

Like in other Nordic countries, the comprehensive school system was designed with no ability grouping or streaming in order to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, cities and rural areas, centres and peripheral regions. Special attention was also given to students with learning difficulties and special needs. Although equity was one of the guiding principles in the comprehensive school reform, it paid more attention to socio-economic, regional and ability-based inequities than to some

other aspects of diversity such as ethnicity, religious rights, gender and sexual orientation. New challenges posed by increasing diversity – partly due to new immigration, partly due to existing groups being recognised – add to the requirements of taking education for all and integration seriously. In addition to the diversity inside national borders, globalisation as a whole presents increasing challenges for educational systems and particularly for teacher education.

In principle, global education (previously known as international education) has been part of teacher education programmes in Finland since the 1960s, and since then several teacher education departments have developed courses on the topic. The contents of those courses are mostly derived from United Nations documents and UNESCO declarations. With the exception of very few institutions, however, global education has been a marginal area in teacher education because it has consisted of separate courses, and therefore has had only a minor influence on mainstream thinking and perspectives.

### **Arguments for Transformative Global Education in Teacher Education**

Many international researchers emphasise that a high-quality teacher education is an excellent means to further active citizenship and global responsibility. Writers such as Bennett, Noel and Nieto point out, however, that narrow national competence is not enough in a fast-changing, interconnected world and that teacher education should involve awareness of broader social and educational issues in addition to the pedagogue's skills (e.g. Bennett, 1995; Noel, 1995; Nieto, 1996). Both Bennett and Noel talk about the importance of trainee teachers being confronted by outside views and becoming aware of multiple perspectives (Bennett, 1995: 262; Noel, 1995: 270). They also point out that controversial issues such as ethnocentrism, power, equality, stereotypes, prejudice, racism and oppression of minorities are rarely found in teacher education agendas. The ethnocentric and monocultural nature of teacher education programmes is rarely criticised, nor is there serious analysis of how teacher education programmes would change if they were more globally oriented.

Nieto (1996: 306-323) emphasises that intercultural education is not a question of methods and projects, but a philosophy, a way of looking at the world from several perspectives, and that is why it should be present throughout education and will require changes in the entire curriculum. She also argues that multi-perspective education is not just for minority students or ethnically mixed groups, but it is about all people and for all people. Indeed, it is often the majority that needs attitude change and awareness-raising the most because they have seldom experienced the oppression or discrimination that comes with difference.

Nieto further argues that monocultural education deprives all students of the ability to recognise the value of diversity – both in their immediate environment and in a global context. It creates ethnocentrism and makes perspective transformation and

mental border crossing increasingly difficult. She recognises that intercultural education is not a neutral approach but a strongly value-laden activity, with cultural richness, equity, non-violence and human rights as its core values. However, she concludes that when intercultural education is combined with social awareness, it enforces action towards these goals on local as well as national and global arenas. She therefore advocates active participation and open discussion about issues such as social justice, poverty, discrimination and gender.

Work on critical pedagogy has placed a strong emphasis on teachers' roles as social actors and 'transformative intellectuals' in this process (Giroux, 1985; Raivola, 1993). The influence of critical theorists has been prominent in linking multicultural education with wider issues of socioeconomic and political inequity as well as ethical considerations. Bennett (1995: 263) argues, for instance, that acquiring multicultural literacy and appreciation of cultural diversity is not enough to put an end to prejudice, but that the emphasis should also be on dispelling myths about the inferiority of certain races, cultures or geographical areas. From this perspective, education should include an awareness of institutional and cultural racism and of economic and political power structures in the world. This is not to suggest that global education and tolerance mean accepting anything and everything; war, discrimination, injustice and violations of human rights are issues that one should be sensitised to, but they are also things one should fight against.

Stephen May (1999: 11-45) has developed three key principles for critical pedagogy in multicultural contexts:

1. to become aware of and deconstruct the apparent neutrality of education – and particularly citizenship education – and to realise that knowledge and values that often are presented as universal are neither common nor available to all;
2. to situate cultural differences within the wider nexus of the power relations in which they are embedded and to interrogate the normalisation and universalisation of the cultural knowledge of majority groups and its juxtaposition with other knowledges and practices;
3. to maintain a reflexive critique of specific cultural practices that both avoids cultural relativism and allows for criticism (both internal and external), transformations, and change.

In addition to these principles, McLaren and Torres (1999: 71) argue that critical multicultural ethics must be performed and not just reduced to reading texts. Educators must be informed by an ethics of compassion and social justice, an ethos based on solidarity and interdependence, and practical engagement in activities where these principles are practised. McLaren and Torres also emphasise the importance of students' lived experiences in their learning and of engaging their minds, bodies and affections in the learning processes. They also highlight the im-



portance of practice and of opportunities to work in diverse communities and for other people.

There has been significant international discussion of the wider ethical principles that bind cultures and societies together. One example of this is the United Nations' Human Rights process, which emerged from the experiences of both World Wars and the conviction that similar catastrophes must be avoided in the future. One of the crucial dilemmas in this discussion was the question of how specific cultural values and general ethical principles should be combined in order to safeguard the human rights process and peaceful cooperation in the world (Gylling, 2004: 15-26; Sihvola, 2004: 222). Another ethical challenge is how to expand the scope of caring and responsibility beyond the immediate environment and one's own socio-cultural and political context (Noddings, 1988).

UNESCO's report on culture and development, *Our Creative Diversity* (UNESCO, 1995b), for example, singles out global ethics as the main starting point for its discussion about global challenges. It emphasises that the Golden Rule, equality, human vulnerability and attention to the human impulse to alleviate suffering are the central sources of inspiration for global ethics. *Our Creative Diversity* argues that human rights are widely regarded as the standard of international conduct, and that rights must always be combined with duties (UNESCO, 1995b: 40-41). It also identifies four key concerns for global ethics:

- protecting individual, physical and emotional integrity against intrusion from society;
- providing the minimal social and economic conditions for a decent life;
- fair treatment;
- equal access to remedying injustices.

The report adds that because of fundamental threats to the global environment, it is also essential that certain new human rights – such as the right to a healthy environment – be included in existing codes, not only for the present but also for future generations.

This discussion presents clear requirements for substantive educational reforms. Reforms to teacher education are particularly important because through institutions of basic education it is possible to gather all future citizens to learn together for the common future. Multicultural societies need educators who are sensitive to culture, who have intercultural competences, who are aware of ethnocentrism, biases and power structures and are not afraid of tackling violence, inequity and injustice. In addition to teacher education programmes, teachers will also need practice in how to implement their plans and philosophies, as well as supportive policies, strong leadership, and cooperation with professional networks and educators from other sectors.

## **M.Ed. International Programme as a Global Education Experiment in Oulu**

There is a long tradition of developing intercultural teacher education as a collaborative action research process in the Faculty of Education at Oulu University. Global perspectives as well as global ethics have been a natural part of the work of the university's Teacher Education Department since the beginning of the 1990's because it is a member of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network. A pedagogy which focuses on intercultural and global education has been developed as a collaborative experiment within the M.Ed. International Programme. The programme is a special 5-year teacher education programme and it provides students with a teacher's diploma and a Master's degree. The work was designed so that the first group of graduates would be a pilot group and the ideas gained from the experiment would be used in transforming teacher education as a whole.

The M.Ed. programme largely follows the aims and structure of an 'ordinary' primary teacher education programme, but it pays special attention to increasing ethical sensitivity, intercultural competences and global awareness. The main theoretical guidelines for the development of the programme have been provided by critical pedagogy, intercultural education and global ethics. The aim is also to study the possibilities of education on the local and global level – i.e. how education could play a transformative role for sustainable and fair development. For practical reasons, as some of the students are not Finnish-speaking and exchange students also study with the group, a large amount of the work is conducted in English. Students are also required to study a minimum of one term outside their home country. The Erasmus networks and other exchange programmes (e.g. the North-South programme) have provided excellent opportunities for the students to study abroad, as well as for employing international experts to lecture in the programme.

In terms of content, about one-third of the programme is similar to that of other teacher education programmes, and one third of the courses have the same title but have a different focus. Subject specialists, for instance, discuss how to change the didactics of their subject so that it crosses cultural and national borders, and demonstrate how different the world looks when it is viewed from various socio-cultural positions and from other parts of the world. Important questions considered throughout the programme are, for example: whose knowledge is included? who has access to knowledge and education? and what kind of a worldview and future do we construct, and want to construct, through education?

The remaining third of the programme is specially designed for the M.Ed. International Programme group. Special courses deal with intercultural education, comparative education, education and development, and global education (e.g. human rights, peace, equity, environment, globalisation and theories of knowledge and development). At the very beginning of their studies, students also take part in a

simulation project called ICONS (International Communication and Negotiation Skills), where students representing the governments of different countries discuss current issues in world affairs via computers and video. These sessions are preceded by a thorough study of the topics to be discussed, of each country and of its relationships with other states. Students in the Oulu programme have represented, for example, Great Britain, India and South Africa. This has required them to familiarise themselves with these countries and with their positions in world politics in relation to negotiations about trade, health issues, education, environment and human rights. The aim of the project is to open up global perspectives and to show how both issues and nations are interrelated. The purpose is also to encourage the students to reflect on societal and ethical issues from the very beginning, and to concretely illustrate the existence of ethnocentrism and the effects of power structures both locally and globally.

Within the first two years, students focus on studying European education systems and cultures, educational philosophies, practices and policies. Education of minority groups is also given special attention in these studies. The study units include excursions to Russia and other European countries, and representatives from these countries give lectures about their countries and cultures. The academic mentor (co-ordinator of the programme) accompanies the students on these excursions, but students plan the excursions themselves with the help of university staff. The students are offered various opportunities to meet and talk with the people from other regions, and particularly with their future colleagues in other countries. A comparative method, which considers the historical and cultural situation of each country, helps the students to understand the different contexts and provides them with a vast number of options to consider when they are making choices about their future employment.

Master's level studies in the programme include courses in research methods, long periods of practice, and the completion of a Master's thesis which takes a multicultural or global perspective. The International Programme has three Master's level courses: Educational Management and Leadership, Education and Development, and Global Education. The aim in these courses is to direct attention again to globalisation and the global aspects of education (including the work of international agencies and non-governmental organisations) and to provide competencies for conducting research on intercultural and global education. The most popular minor subject choices in the programme are special education, English, intercultural education, Finnish as a foreign/second language, social sciences and arts. However, all other alternatives available within the student's home university and other Finnish or foreign universities are also possible.

Part of the teaching practice takes place in a practice school which is attached to the Department of Teacher Education. The school is a part of the University, and its teachers are particularly trained for tutoring and to provide guidance. The other half

of a student's practice can be individually designed according to their interests and the aims of the programme. In addition to learning the basic skills of teaching, experience of different pedagogical cultures and contexts is considered important. For this reason, students have worked, for example, in small rural schools, urban schools, refugee centres, immigrant classes, international schools in Finland and abroad, various organisations, and development cooperation projects. In addition to guidance before and during the practice, group discussions after the working period are also considered essential for individual and shared learning. Well-structured diaries have proved to be important for reflection and dialogue – in other words, for interpersonal and intercultural sharing and learning. Students are encouraged to be creative with their practice choices; civic service and participation are supported.

Special attention in the programme has been paid to tutoring, individual guidance, and collaborative learning. During the first three years, tutoring sessions and studies in intercultural (i.e. diversity) education run parallel to all other studies and they are chaired and co-ordinated by the group's academic mentor. These sessions aim to provide a secure atmosphere for long-term and continuous reflection on socio-cultural experiences and on students' professional development. The mentors support and challenge the learning processes, develop the programme in collaboration with the students, and collect feedback about its meaningfulness. Another important part of these sessions is visits by experienced professionals from different fields of life. As a whole, intercultural and international education is seen as a holistic approach where a diversity of cultural encounters, dialogue and reflection are provided throughout the programme.

### **Some Results and Conclusions**

The International M.Ed. programme in Oulu has been running for 14 years and there have been many phases in its development. It has been evaluated internally and externally (Jokikokko and Waris, 1999; Tella, Räsänen and Vähäpassi, 1999; North-South Centre, 2004: 57-58). The theoretical foundations have become clearer, but at the same time new questions have arisen. Students have taken an active part in the development of the programme along with their teachers and, according to many evaluations, the programme has been successful in providing students with special skills in global education. It is hoped that they can then support the gradual, holistic transitions which are needed in schools and in teacher education. However, the old structures and traditions of teacher education are sometimes strong, and major changes in other programmes even within the same department have been rather slow. At the same time, there has been some effect outside the pilot programme. New forms of internships have slowly but steadily increased, for example, and co-operation with nongovernmental and international organisations has intensified.

Feedback about the programme and students' learning experiences has been gathered through questionnaires, interviews, alumni evenings, and evaluation discussions. Generally speaking, students have indicated that their intercultural sensitivity and global awareness have increased during the programme, although it has been difficult for them to specify any single reason or situation that has been the most significant in the process. They have emphasised that development of intercultural and global awareness is a long and never-ending process, which is usually effected by many successive experiences and knowledge, which gradually transform and/or diversify perspectives. However, students have indicated some conditions or prerequisites that they feel are favourable for transformative learning (Jokikokko and Waris, 1999; Räsänen, 1999 and 2002):

1. Supportive and safe learning environments and study groups where people dare to express their own views and where they are respected and listened to.
2. Dialogue where people and cultures meet on equal terms. Representations of different cultures, expertise and life experiences have an important role in opening up new perspectives.
3. Experience of working in different contexts, pedagogical cultures and with diverse people.
4. Knowledge and learning content which forces one to reflect and evaluate one's own views, assumptions, worldviews and ethical principles.
5. Combining experiences and critical reflection (individual and shared), knowledge and action through learning circles.
6. Discussion about the value basis and ethical aspects of global education and about the role of education in society and for the future.
7. The role of tutors and academic mentors is significant in inspiring, challenging and supporting the learning process and in safeguarding caring relations and atmosphere.
8. Learning units that are long and many-sided in terms of their central aims and content areas. Two central problems in standard teacher education are its relatively isolated position in society and its fragmented nature, which sometimes make it difficult for students to concentrate on the essential questions and for tutors to organise deep learning experiences (Räsänen 2008, 30-35).

According to students, learning is effected by knowledge, affective aspects and action; diverse experiences combined with critical reflection. They also consider experiences and knowledge that challenge one to re-evaluate earlier views and mainstream thinking are essential for perspective-shifts and transformation. In their feedback on the programme, students set requirements for the learning environ-

ment, contents, methods and particularly human relations. They also particularly criticised the tight and inflexible schedules which are often typical of teacher education. Ethnocentrism in academic studies and scientific theories worries students as well; they point out that knowledge construction at universities is often based solely on western research, theories and writers.

The central role students give to human relationships is particularly interesting at the time when distance learning and virtual universities are being developed even in situations where it would be possible and even sensible for groups to meet in person. The students speak strongly in favour of the need for face-to-face personal and cultural encounters, about the important role of academic mentors, and the significance of supportive and challenging environments. In addition to fellow students and tutors, students also emphasise the necessity of networking. They consider this particularly important in global education because it involves interactions with many non-governmental organisations and international actors. This raises questions about which competencies and skills (e.g. cooperation) are most relevant for teachers who are working in new learning environments and within diverse local and global networks.

The research process has been very transformative for the core team of teacher educators as well. The experience has shown that teachers can expand students' world-views, open new perspectives and build bridges between students and parents of diverse backgrounds. They can also form networks of experts and catalyse transformative processes. However, the experiment has also shown that the life of transformative teachers is not necessarily easy at schools or teacher education institutions. Former students of the programme have frequently reported that the schools they have entered have not been very receptive to a more global approach in the curricula and school activities – in spite of the national guidelines, strategies and development projects which exist to support it. Many have expressed a need for networks of support to help them carry out reforms in schools. This shows how persistent the old structures and traditions can be and how multifaceted the innovation attempts should be in order to address them. The next step in the action research project will therefore be a study to help students entering the field to build support systems for their professional development. It is also clear from the project that pre-service education of teachers and professionals is not enough; it needs to be complemented by in-service education as well.

Finally, Oulu's long-term experiment in intercultural teacher education has also highlighted how difficult it is sometimes to maintain hope and prevent cynicism, even among the most optimistic young people, as they learn about political and societal realities, the present world order and burning ecological problems. Young people know that the knowledge and economic resources to put things right usually do exist, and that often what is lacking is wisdom, will, courage or far-sighted thinking. Luckily, there are some positive examples and evidence of clear improvements

and rapid change to share with students, but many more examples of concrete, positive action are needed. This is because young people should receive realistic and many-sided knowledge, but it should not paralyse them. Rather, education should provide empowerment and affirmation about wisdom, will, and action (Räsänen, 2007b: 27-29).

***Rauni Räsänen, PhD**, is a Professor in Education (specialising in global education) at the Faculty of Education, University of Oulu, Finland. Before her university career she worked as a primary and secondary school teacher and as a provincial adviser for language teaching. She has been responsible for the MEd International programme, a five-year university-degree teacher education programme focusing on global and intercultural education, since 1994. Her main research interests include the ethics of education, global education and intercultural education. Dr. Räsänen coordinates several North-South projects in the Faculty of Education, and is a member of the National UNESCO Commission in Finland. Email: rauni.rasanen@oulu.fi.*

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Lynn Davies is Professor of International Education at the Centre for International Education and Research, University of Birmingham and author of the prize-winning book *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos*.

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