RECENT DISSERTATIONS

MARIA HOFMAN, 2012

Sustainable development in the Finnish teacher education – political rhetoric or reality

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to identify how sustainable development and its dimensions have been integrated into teacher education in Finland in relation to what is written in various national and international policy documents. How is the prospective Finnish classroom teachers prepared for the task of educating for sustainable development? What kind of knowledge on sustainable development is possessed by teacher educators?

The concept of sustainable development and the dimensions that can be inferred from it are elaborated in the theoretical framework and are key concepts in the analysis. Various international and national policy documents are analysed and compared to what is done in reality. Some possible change models are presented, the development of education for sustainable development is discussed and previous research in the field is referenced within the theoretical framework.

The empirical part of the study has been divided in three. In the first substudy, three Finnish universities teacher institutions were examined. The content of their university strategies and teacher training institutions' manuals was analyzed to give an idea of how and in what context the concept of sustainable development is used. The second substudy consists of a questionnaire directed to the universities' study offices. Substudy three consists of a survey directed to all teacher educators in Finland to obtain knowledge of how teacher educators look at sustainable development.

The results show that the concept of sustainable development is not mentioned to any great extent in university strategies and study guides for classroom teachers. Furthermore the class teacher students in Finland have slightly different possibility to choose environmental education as minor or elective studies. The results also show that the Finnish teacher educators do not possess any greater knowledge of sustainable development. One can even discern a tendency of negative attitudes towards sustainable development in the Finnish teacher educators. An alarmingly large proportion of teacher educators believe that sustainable development does not affect them or their teaching.

The results indicate that sustainable development in Finnish teacher education is largely political rhetoric, not reality. Today's Finnish class student teachers are only to a limited degree provided with knowledge on sustainable development and its various dimensions during their teacher education.

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