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## Becoming interested during teacher education

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### ABSTRACT

In this article we examine first-year student teachers' possibilities to become interested in professional issues in teacher education. We study the phenomenon of becoming interested among first-year student teachers via three different kinds of data. We analysed our data through John Dewey's definition of interest, where a person has an interest if s/he is actively keen on some object that has personal meaning for her/him. According to our data, student teachers adopt an object of interest that teacher educators provide. Learners found it difficult to find the objects of interests by themselves, and it was exceptional for them to find personal meaning and an active state of interest. This is problematic because studying may be performance-oriented without the conditions of interest conceptualised by Dewey. Through our study we also discuss a theoretical approach which would help understand the mechanism behind becoming interested.

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## Introduction

Finnish school culture can be described as teacher-centred, not as learner-centred and emancipation-oriented. Both teaching and learning methods are traditionally based on frontal teaching for the whole class. (Raiker and Rautiainen 2013, 496–497; Simola et al. 2017). Especially in the 2000s teacher education has tried to replace traditional teaching and move towards a more experimental and critical research-based approach (see e.g. Jyrhämä et al. 2008; Tryggvason 2009; Räihä, Rautiainen, and Nikkola 2013). In spite of this pedagogical developmental work, the learner has little say and few participatory rights (see e.g. Simola et al. 2017; Rautiainen and Räihä 2012).

In this article we study first-year bachelor students' possibilities to become interested in professional issues in their studies for a primary school teacher education. Becoming interested should be the starting point for studies in higher education, but according to our data collected from first-year student teachers, this is not necessarily the case. We have noticed becoming interested is not something to be taken for granted, but a very complex question.

Many studies point out the strong connection between interest and learning; a person's interest has a powerful influence on learning, specifically on attention, goals and levels of learning (Hidi and Harackiewicz 2000; Hidi and Renninger 2006; Mikkonen 2012; Ketonen

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2017) and interest is, for example in constructivist learning theory, a precondition for deep and self-guided learning. The question of how to get learners interested in a teacher's interests has been one of the key themes in didactics for decades. Educational research exploring interest has focused on the potential of various activities and tasks that can support the development of interest (Renninger and Hidi 2011, 178). Researchers have found that an educator can help students to sustain attention and create an environment that promotes problem solving, strategy generation and curiosity questions (Hidi and Renninger 2006, 121). Novelty, challenge and the role of others are significant features of activities and tasks that support students' interest (Renninger and Hidi 2011, 178).

According to John Dewey ([1913] 2009, 23–24), the problem is that making things interesting can sometimes mean that teachers sugarcoat predetermined content to make it appealing, whereas it should mean that the content is selected in a way that has a meaning for the learner. Teachers ask about the learner's preconceptions and experiences, but it does not necessarily have any influence on the teaching. The teacher has decided beforehand what s/he is teaching, regardless of what kind of experiences or preconceptions learners have. The learners' role is to find out the teacher's intentions in this context. In other words, the learner has to get 'hooked' to become interested through teaching methods alone.

This approach has been criticised by some philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2004, 93) and Jacques Rancière (1991, 18), who emphasise the learner's desire to learn, not teaching methods, which were secondary questions for them. If the learner is to be a more equal partner in learning, as Dewey, Rancière and Rousseau demand, the learner's interests cannot be ignored. This approach has been emphasised in recent decades especially by Renninger and Hidi (Renninger, Hidi, and Krapp 2014; Renninger and Hidi 2016). In addition, in studies where new learning environments have been under study, results have shown the essential role of interest and curiosity in the learning process (see e.g. Barron 2006; Arnone et al. 2011; Mazer 2013).

## Interest

Our starting point here is Dewey's ([1913] 2009) definition of interest. Dewey has outlined three components of interest. First, interest is embodied in an object: interest is directed to a particular object and people can have a range of different interests (Dewey [1913] 2009, 16, 19–20). According to Renninger and Hidi (2011, 169) many researchers agree with this perspective, namely that interest is object-specific where the individual has focused attention on or engagement with some content, task or event. This object-specific nature separates interest, for example, from intrinsic motivation because, unlike many other motivational constructs, interest is always connected to an object (Hidi and Harackiewicz 2000; Renninger and Hidi 2002, 174; Hidi and Renninger 2006, 112–113; Mikkonen 2012, 6–7). Second in Dewey's definition ([1913] 2009, 16, 20–22), interest is personal: things have personal, subjective meaning for us that makes those objects worthwhile. Third, interest is an active, projective, or propulsive state: to be interested in any matter is to be actively concerned with it (Dewey [1913] 2009, 16–19). All these three components in Dewey's definition of interest go hand in hand since you need all three of them to have an interest; a person has an interest if s/he is actively keen on some object that has personal meaning for her/him.

Interest originates in some form of person-environment interaction. There is potential for interest in a person but interaction with the content and the environment direct and

determine a person's interest development (Hidi and Renninger 2006, 112; Renninger and Hidi 2011, 169). Interest has two constituents, cognitive and affective, that work as separate but interacting systems (Hidi and Renninger 2006, 112; Renninger and Hidi 2011, 169). In general, the affective constituent of interest represents positive emotion accompanying engagement while the cognitive constituent of interest refers to perceptual and representational activities related to engagement (Hidi and Renninger 2006, 112).

Researchers typically emphasise one of these two different types of interest, individual or situational (Krapp, Hidi, and Renninger 1992, 5). Individual interest refers to a fairly durable preference for certain objects which are associated with increasing value, knowledge and positive feelings whereas situational interest refers to the actual situation that stimulates a person's attention and to a short-term preference (Schiefele 1991; Krapp, Hidi, and Renninger 1992; Hidi and Harackiewicz 2000; Renninger and Hidi 2002; Hidi and Renninger 2006; Mikkonen 2012). Hidi and Renninger (2006) have developed, based on existing research, the four-phase model of interest development. Each of these phases of interest can develop and lead to the next phase and each phase is characterised by varying amounts of affect, knowledge and value. All these four phases are psychological states of interest but the last two, which are connected to individual interest, are also predispositions to seek repeated re-engagement with particular objects (Hidi and Renninger 2006).

In Hidi's and Renninger's (2006) model, the first phase of triggered situational interest provides a basis for a person to begin forming a connection to an object. Something in the environment turns on short-term changes in affective and cognitive processing. The learning environment can trigger situational interest when it includes, for example, puzzles or colourful pictures (see e.g. Clark 2008).

The second phase of maintained situational interest involves focused attention and persistence over an extended period of time (Hidi and Renninger 2006). In this phase, a person continues to develop a connection to an object but also begins to develop value for this object. The learning environment can maintain a person's interest when it provides meaningful tasks and personal involvement in learning activities (see e.g. Palmer 2004).

In the third phase of interest, emerging individual interest, a person begins to seek repeated engagement with an object (Hidi and Renninger 2006). A person starts to formulate curiosity questions, which leads to self-regulated activity and accumulation of more information. The first two phases of interest are mostly externally supported but in the phase of emerging individual interest, a person continues to re-engage with the object with or without explicit external supports. Nevertheless, the learning environment can support emerging individual interest by providing tasks and environments which challenge and also provide both opportunities and support from peers and experts (Hidi and Renninger 2006).

In the fourth phase of well-developed individual interest, a person continues to seek repeated engagement with an object but in an intensive form (Hidi and Renninger 2006). A person prefers working with this content to other interesting activities and working is characterised by positive feeling. A well-developed individual interest can also benefit from the learning environment that provides opportunities for interaction and challenge, which in turn leads to knowledge building and can deepen individual interest even more (see e.g. Bråten and Strømsø 2006).

In this article, we concentrate on the personal awakening of interest in the teacher education environment. As researchers, we are interested in what kind of objects student teachers become interested in or whether they become interested at all in teacher education. We



acknowledge that during the first year of study student teachers might not form a well-developed individual interest towards objects emerging from educational science, the teaching profession and a teacher education environment. Instead, we seek indications for maintained situational interest or emerging individual interest; do student teachers reflect on their experiences, do they ask curiosity questions and do they explore knowledge or act according to their interest?

## Teacher education in Finland

The 1970s was the age of educational reform both in basic education and teacher education in Finland. The 1971 decree on teacher education transferred teacher education to the universities and from the end of the 1970s qualification as a primary school teacher has required a higher university degree, a Master of Education (300 ECTS). Teacher education has remained popular among applicants ever since 1863 when the first teacher education college was founded in Jyväskylä. Having graduated, primary school teachers are qualified to teach grades 1–6 in the Finnish comprehensive school. Only 10–15% of applicants are accepted to begin their studies in primary school teacher education, which means that universities can select the most suited students from among a large group of applicants. Selection consists of two phases. First, applicants participate in a national entrance examination for the field of education. Second, scores on this exam are then used as the basis for invitation to aptitude tests in each university. All universities have their own aptitude tests, which usually include an interview, group exercise, psychological tests and different types of written tests. Applicants are not expected to have any former experience of teaching or any studies in educational science.

Qualification as a primary school teacher usually takes approximately five years of study (first a bachelor's degree, continuing sequentially to a master's degree). Primary school student teachers major in education. In addition, they have to complete a minor in multi-disciplinary studies in subjects and cross-curricular thematic modules taught in basic education (60 ECTS). The degree also contains either two optional minors (25 ECTS each) or one longer minor (60 ECTS). Teaching practices are mainly carried out at the university's teacher training school. All universities with a department of teacher education have their own teacher training school. All teacher degrees have to include at least 20 ECTS of teaching practice, which is one of the few national standards for teacher education. Autonomous universities make their own decisions concerning curriculum and operational culture including contents and pedagogical methods.

Academic research is an essential feature of primary school teacher education and it prepares teachers to reflect, to think analytically and critically. Research-based teacher education endeavours to encourage students and teachers to share knowledge and ideas in the professional community and develop their work as well as their community (see e.g. Niemi, Toom, and Kallioniemi 2012; Darling-Hammond 2017). All in all, the character of teacher education in Finland is academic, which gives both teacher educators and student teachers considerable freedom for developmental and experimental work. This character also has an essential role in schools, even if the models created in teacher education are only slowly transferring to schools (Heikkinen, Aho, and Korhonen 2015). However, in this kind of culture becoming interested should be more like a routine than an exception, both in Finnish schools as well as in higher education.

## Research data and analysis

In this article we use three different kinds of separate data collected from three different groups of students between the years 2009–2013. All informants were first-year primary school student teachers doing bachelor-level studies at a Finnish university. Most of them had neither experience of being a teacher nor former studies in education at the beginning of their studies at the Department of Teacher Education. First-year students were chosen because we are interested not only in the learning culture in teacher education but also in the orientation towards learning which has developed before university studies. Three different kinds of data give us three different perspectives on becoming interested at the beginning of teacher education. We view each set of data through one of Dewey's three components of interest and we try to understand first-year student teachers' possibilities to become interested during their studies. Our aim is not to give a complete explanation of these components but through the data to open up new perspectives on students' interest and its constraints in the teacher education environment.

The first set of data consists of 13 learning diaries, which we call interest diaries. Students in one group ( $n = 13$ ) were instructed to write interest diaries during their first study year, 2012–2013. Students were instructed to describe and reflect on all the themes and questions they were interested in. Instructions were open and challenged students to define their own approach towards the instruction and phenomenon of becoming interested (see the section 'What kind of themes did student teachers become interested in?'). This data describes study orientation and allows us to ask what the objects or contents are that student teachers find interesting during their first year of study (Dewey's first component).

The second set of data provides a viewpoint on what happens when students are given an opportunity to focus on studying their own interest. During the first semester of studies student teachers spend one week observing school and classroom activity as part of their first teaching practice and after that report their findings. In autumn 2013 one group of students ( $n = 14$ ) were given the task of recording and reflecting especially on what they became interested in during this observation week. These observation reports provide information on whether the things students teachers observe in schools stimulate personal meaning and whether they become interested in them (Dewey's second component).

The third data-set describes the situation where student teachers have more opportunities to participate in planning the contents of a lecture. This data consists of questionnaire responses ( $n = 65$ ) collected following a lecture entitled 'Communication and Interaction 1' in 2009. In the questionnaire the first-year student teachers explain the reasons for not completing jointly agreed assignments which evoked enthusiasm during the lecture. This set of data allows us to enquire why students do not enter the active or propulsive stage and why situational interest did not lead to action (Dewey's third component).

All three different kinds of data were analysed separately. Interest diary themes are categorised and compared with the teacher education curriculum. The contents of the observation reports are classified from the viewpoint of given assignment and levels of personal meaning. The questionnaire data is categorised according to different explanations for omission given by students.

**Table 1.** Themes in the interest diaries.

Number of diary entries with mentioned theme	Themes in the interest diaries
8	Co-operative learning
6	Studies of subjects and cross-curricular themes in basic education
5	Difficult situations, some theoretical aspect (theory)
4	Participation/participatory culture, authority
3	Alternative schools, teacher's autonomy, human lifelong learning, well-being in the school
2	Teacher education culture, sexual inequality, didactics, evaluation, motivation, school's values and political character, planning teaching, success/failure
1	Co-teaching, socialisation, school rules, learning difficulties, creativity, emotions, social exclusion

## Results

### *What kind of themes did student teachers become interested in?*

School reflects what is happening in teacher education and, on the other hand, student teachers bring school culture into teacher education. One group was instructed to write a so-called interest diary through their first year of studies. The idea of the interest diary was to collect data on themes they became interested in, but also to direct students to reflect on their own learning through the writing of a diary. The instructions for the students were: *'Write a diary about your interests. What things did you become interested in during your studies?'* The diaries, which students kept from September 2012 till May 2013, included 26 different themes, which are presented in Table 1.

The results are not surprising when compared with the objectives in teacher education at a Finnish university. The themes in Table 1 are the core contents in first-year lectures and literature. Significant was that only two diaries explicitly express a critical attitude. In these diaries students ask new questions instead of adopting the words and thoughts of the teacher educator as such. Students also ask questions and wonder about surrounding reality.

Democracy in school, pupils as active learners and group working were familiar already in the 1950s, but the ideas are still not reality even now. Why?

It was possible to recognise two styles students used to write their interest diary. For two students the diary was a continuation of their reflection on further questions of interest awakened in their studies. They reflected on and developed questions from their own perspectives. Other diaries were more like repetitions of the routines and instructions studied in contact lessons.

This can be explained by the study culture. Students eager to collect as many credits as possible inevitably reduced the time spent on reflection and internalisation of learning. Studying is then more to do with performance and constructed from external meanings rather than with the learner's life-world entity and its meanings (Karjalainen, Alha, and Jutila 2003, 11–12; Kostiainen et al. 2018). There is not enough time for developing interest in this context. This is a typical feature of Finnish schools and this part of the students' school history can be recognised in their diaries. Becoming interested is not their primary viewpoint on learning.



The other explanation can be the students' understanding of the teacher's work and profession. The nature of teacherhood among the first-year student teachers is closer to that of 'competent technician' than 'teacher as cultural worker' (Freire 2005) or 'transformative intellectual' as Henry Giroux (1988) formulates his ideal. Giroux's ideal teacher approaches work by examining the political, social and historical contexts of his/her work. Giroux stresses this perspective because the teacher is working as a producer in these processes and this role creates a specific meaning and objective for teaching: active and critical citizenship. This is not possible without the teacher's own active, multi-perspective and critical examination of his/her own work (Giroux and McLaren 1987, 266–267; Giroux 1988, 125–127). Nevertheless, student teachers do not necessarily see themselves in this role, partly because tradition has an important role in the professional development of teachers in Finland. Social cohesion of teachers is strong in Finland despite the extensive pedagogical autonomy teachers have. The pupil's unquestioned position as learner and the teacher's as supervisor is also a deeply rooted tradition of school. In teacher education, student teachers retain their role as pupils (see e.g. Raiker and Rautiainen 2017).

According to the diaries, students are mostly interested in themes which teacher educators stress in their teaching; political, social or historical perspectives are not strongly involved (Table 1). Instead the culture stresses didactic techniques, which are also meaningful from the viewpoint of student teachers, because techniques can be transferred directly to practice (Giroux 1988, 1–7). From the viewpoint of becoming interested this is destructive because the learning process is more like a result than a starting point for reflection and research.

### ***Is it too difficult to become interested?***

In addition to the basic report instructions for the observation week in school, one group of 14 student teachers were given an assignment related to interest. The assignment was the following: *'In your report, remember to reflect on and write about the question "what did you become interested in during the week?"'* Judging by the reports, interest did not seem to be an easy task for students.

On the one hand, we may come to the conclusion that only some of the students had taken interest into account when reporting their observations: in a few reports (4/14) interest was described under a separate heading and even then it was seen as a separate part of the report, not as a starting point for it. But, on the other hand, we can interpret the presence of interest in reports insofar as students have selected and written specially about those observations that they considered to be the most interesting.

From the perspective of interest, however, the problem was that observations were just listed and stated without showing any personal meaning:

Desks were arranged in girl-boy-pairs and those students who frequently had difficulties with their studies were placed in front of the class near the teacher and those students whose studies were running smoothly sat at the back. (Student 7)

If single students did not calm down, the teacher called them by name and said we are waiting for you. This seemed to work rather well. (Student 14)

The problem in this kind of listing is that plain observations as such do not lead to interest when they are stated without any reflection. For example, some of the students' findings seemed quite interesting but they just mentioned these things without processing them further: *'According to what she said, the teacher wanted to take the teaching close to the pupil's*

*world. Nevertheless, the teacher decided the contents!* (Student 4) It seemed that when the students did not develop their observations any further, the findings were interesting but the student was not interested in them. The active state of interest that could push interest forward was maybe missing.

If students commented on their observations, they mostly commented on whether or not the class teacher had performed well from the student teacher's point of view. The positive reviews took the following styles:

The class teacher worked in a nice and easy-going way but still with an assertive manner. (Student 8)

Lovely conversation and in just the right place. (Student 13)

This kind of praise that followed observations was given directly, but expressions describing a teacher's incorrect performance were disguised in the form of a question:

For many pupils, the maths lessons were their favourites and there was a good, peaceful working atmosphere when they were doing their tasks. Was there any reason to have a game at the end of lesson which didn't even have any connection to maths, and especially as the class was working well and peacefully? (Student 12)

Of course, it's easier for pupils to do calculations, when their notebook is nice and neat, but isn't the most important thing for the pupil to make sense of what s/he has written in the notebook? (Student 2)

It seemed that the observations stimulated personal meaning when students judged the teacher's performance, but instead of awaking interest, judging closed it down. For example, students could have started to ponder why they themselves appreciate maintaining a peaceful and quiet atmosphere in the classroom or respect an easy-going and assertive teacher, but the observations did not lead anywhere after judging the teachers to be good or bad. After value judging there was no reason to reflect because the viewpoint was clear and stable (see also Britzman 2009, 29–30).

In addition to listing the observations and judging their value there was also some so-called 'teacher speech' in students' reports. Teacher speech refers to statements which are proper for an aware pedagogue and which are presented as truisms: *'The peaceful and positive atmosphere in the learning environment is essential to learning.* (Student 11)' These kinds of statement resemble value judgments without relating them to observations; in other words, facts which are not challenged or even open to the possibility of challenge, and which consequently do not lead to interest. In general, it can be concluded from students' reports that although they made lots of observations when monitoring the class, these observations did not lead students to new questions but more to create norms for what an ideal teacher is like and how they themselves wanted to act as future teachers.

In some reports, however, there were signs that observations had stimulated personal meaning and through that also interest. A couple of students, for example, reflected on their own ability to observe and their modes of acting, or considered alternative explanations for their observations. But overall interest still had a marginal role in the reports despite the assignment.

### ***What happened when the educator tried to activate student teachers?***

It has been an on-going topic in teacher education that students want lectures to be more activating, and also close to their interests. An attempt to achieve this was made in the

lectures by giving the student teachers an opportunity to influence the subjects of the lectures. Student teachers were also activated by giving them a chance to formulate their own conceptions of the topic instead of just listening to what the lecturer had to say.

The subject of the lectures was the special characteristics of school and classroom interaction. The lecturer suggested that the student teachers should observe the interesting special characteristics of classroom interaction as a part of their observation week. The students would then report briefly to the lecturer by email on the notions they found interesting, and the lecturer would then use these observations as the basis of her next lecture and as examples. The assignment was designed to be as light and simple to return as possible.

The lecturer asked the students if they thought that this would be a good way to proceed with the lecture. Those who commented on this said that it was a good idea, and it was even possible to sense some kind of enthusiasm in the lecture room. The assignment can be seen as a mutually agreed way to prepare for the next lecture. The assignment was projected on the wall in the lecture room as written text, but it was not given to student teachers as a handout. There was no check on whether the students returned their answers or not because the lecturer wanted to give a better chance for all participants to develop something together. This is something that is often hoped for in teacher education – the assignment was more to activate study and students' interest than to control and measure their achievements.

Before the next lecture, only three students from the group of 73 enrolled in the course sent their thoughts and observations, as requested in the assignment. Because so few students responded to the assignment, the lecturer decided to ask them why so few had participated. In the next lecture the lecturer gave the students a questionnaire asking if they remembered the assignment and, if not, why. In addition the lecturer asked why the students did not send their notes and if they would like say something about this subject. Sixty-five students replied to the questionnaire during the lecture. Most of them, 61 out of 65, wrote that they had remembered the assignment but nevertheless decided not to respond. Even though the assignment had raised interest, it did not lead to any action.

The answers of the student teachers can be divided into three different explanation models. These models are: partly forgetting the assignment, interpreting the assignment as voluntary, and feeling that one's own thoughts are not valuable. The most usual explanation given for neglecting the assignment was partly forgetting what had been agreed.

I didn't remember the assignment during the teaching practice; it just didn't come to mind. I remembered it the day before the lecture, but because I didn't do it immediately, I forgot it again.

I only remembered the assignment yesterday afternoon & in the evening I was only at my computer for a while and I was too tired to think about a specific observation anymore.

The explanations for not remembering were diverse, contradictory and incoherent. For example, the explanation was both too long and too short a time between lectures. The explanations for not remembering resemble normal explanations given by a pupil at school. Forgetting the assignment may also be an unconscious defensive strategy. Forgetting allows a student to ignore the suggested method for studying which s/he finds unfamiliar and confusing. Some student teachers actually noticed the hollowness of their explanations: *'In a way the reasons I listed were just excuses.'*

Another common explanation model was that the student teachers neglected the assignment because they thought it was optional.

Somehow I interpreted this task as a 'do it if you want and you have something to say' assignment. This must be the reason I didn't think it was so important.

It wasn't a compulsory assignment. ☺ I rarely do these kind of optional assignments because I can use that time for compulsory work.

The student teachers' explanations also mentioned feelings of stress and other urgent tasks. In some answers they wrote that usually they are very precise concerning compulsory assignments in their studies. 'Optional' assignments are then neglected because they are considered as 'extra work' and left out to ease the workload. Still, the assignment was not defined as voluntary, only that there were no sanctions, like disqualification from the course, if the assignment was not completed. It seemed possible and natural for only a very small number of students to get interested in something without any external obligations.

The third distinctive group of explanations were those who had felt they had nothing significant to say.

I didn't consider my observations especially interesting or exceptional to make them worth sharing.

I wasn't sure my observations would be useful or even good enough.

These excuses can be described as explanations from a subordinate position. The answers were characterised by insecurity. On the one hand, the reason for this may be excessively high expectations of one's work. On the other hand, the reason may be the idea of living in a 'ready-made world' where right answers will be found even without one's own interest and effort:

During the whole week nothing 'special' happened in the classroom. The pupils behaved really well and the things I was worried about in the way the class or certain pupils worked were explained and clarified through discussions with the class-teacher and the extra background information given.

The deeper reason, then, for the lack of interest may have been that the work of a teacher is simply not understood as problematic and thus is not a possible object of interest.

The most extreme examples of lack of responsibility were the answers in which student teachers gave instructions to the lecturer on how she could get the student teachers to return the assignment.

It would have been clearer if the assignment had been given in writing and there had been a deadline for returning it. This would have helped me remember it and I might have been doing it before 10 pm.

The assignment should be made compulsory if you want students to do it.

Especially those instructions on how the lecturer can get students to do their work speak of a strong assumption that the teacher is in control. The responsibility for arousing students' interest is clearly seen as an integral part of the teacher's work. These instructions strongly direct the lecturer to a role where she is expected to be an authority who gives orders instead of suggestions. In this kind of model of thinking the students are in a lower, receptive position, where they get interested only when an authority clearly orders and instructs them to do so. Interest is seen as 'a study game' where someone else is in charge. The lecturer is expected to participate as a controller from above.



## Discussion

In this article our focus has been on the concept and phenomenon of becoming interested in the culture of teacher education. According to our data, student teachers adopt an object of interest that teacher educators provide, but personal meaning and an active state might be missing. It is difficult to promote and advance interest at the beginning of their academic studies. When the teacher educator gives more space for students' interests, only a few of them are willing to use this opportunity. Students are mostly satisfied with teaching. According to our data, at the beginning of their studies students expect teacher educators to provide the answers to the questions raised in their studies rather than taking responsibility for also investigating phenomena by themselves. From a historical perspective this is not surprising. The teacher's role has been that of the 'better knower', who has transferred information and content to learners in the school (see e.g. Raiker, Mäensivu, and Nikkola 2017).

Pupils are managed by the teacher in the school and they learn a subordinate's attitude towards her/him. Student teachers are socialised into this culture in teacher education. At the outset of teacher education, students expect the same: to be supervised, 'ruled', by teacher educators, who are expected to say what to do and learn next (Mäensivu, Nikkola, and Moilanen 2013). The subordinate's attitude is destructive for growth of interest. For example, asking questions is a sign of becoming interested, but in school the teacher has a monopoly on asking questions. Student teachers' capacity to formulate questions can be eroded before they start their university studies.

The subordinate's position can also lead to an attitude that the learner does not have the responsibility for becoming interested. The learner no longer sees her/himself as a subject but more as an object. In this context the teacher's objective is to get the learner interested. In university studies, on the contrary, the key idea is to stress students' responsibility for their own studies and to create learning processes where students can become interested and continue this process by researching phenomena they are interested in. Dewey ([1913] 2009, 81–84) describes this by using the concepts of intellectual or theoretical interest.

As in other academic studies giving a qualification for a certain profession, becoming interested is perhaps not at the core of studies. Students' interest is directed at a future profession whereupon they try to study and complete the courses whether or not they are interested in them (Jonas 2011, 118; Mikkonen 2012, 34). Dewey ([1913] 2009, 22) calls this a mediated interest: studying is an interphase and a means towards the real goal, the teacher's profession. But is there any space for intellectual interest in teacher studies? According to our data, not much. The interest diaries reflect the fact that students adopt teaching as it is and do not see a need to develop it further because they do not regard it as necessary for their work. Giving an assignment in the lecture could not keep the interest alive because it was not interpreted as compulsory and thus students could not see its immediate relevance for their profession in the future. The instructions given for the observation reports were intended to reflect what kind of things students became interested in. Instead of this, students wrote about how the teacher should behave and act in certain situations. The student teachers were oriented to learning how to be a teacher, not to becoming interested in the phenomena they observed in school.

What should be done differently in teacher education? Teacher education should promote student teachers' transformative agency. Transformative agents are able to take the initiatives



to the transform traditional teacher-student positions and to change the course of activities (Virkkunen 2006; Lipponen and Kumpulainen 2011, 818). Ownership of one's own learning process becomes stronger when the learner has more space to influence teaching and use her/his own interest in this process. Students transformative activity is not possible in didactic-based interaction where students are positioned as passive receivers of knowledge (Virkkunen 2006; Lipponen and Kumpulainen 2011, 818). Didactic-based teaching should be changed for discussion-based teaching which is more likely to challenge traditional expert-novice boundaries and create a sense of agency (Lipponen and Kumpulainen 2011, 818). The teacher's position changes from 'better knower' to counsellor in the learning process. This change needs space for teacher educators and students to come together and share their views and findings. This can be a starting point for something new, but changes in the way we organise time and space in themselves do not create a new culture. Teacher education needs more and different ways of observing reality and of becoming interested by means of wondering. This change also needs a new theoretical approach.

From the psychodynamic perspective learning is always a conflicting process. An individual has a desire to learn something new, but on the other hand also a desire to remain in the current situation because learning involves psychic pain (Britzman 2003, 21; Ziehe 2009). Learning gives pleasure, but also causes emotions like fear and angst. These emotions can be paralysing and therefore the learner begins to resist learning; in other words, to suppress her/his interests.

The question then is about the relationship between feeling safe and exploring the environment. From the psychic perspective, it is far safer for the student to stay in the subordinate's position than to take responsibility for her/his own learning and be in a state of uncertainty. It is also a question of dependency between teacher and learner. From the teacher's perspective the key concepts are compulsion and freedom. The teacher has to ask herself/himself whether there is something in her/his teaching which hinders students' interest. It is more important for the teacher educator to question routines in the learning culture than to act in the way students expect.

Implementation of educational change needs changes in curriculum and operational culture from basic education to higher education. Both have been under change in Finland during past years. New national core curriculum for basic education was released in 2014 (FNAoE). It emphasised learners' stronger participation in school community. At the same time faculties of education in Finnish universities have changed their own curricula in teacher education towards student-oriented direction (see e.g. Curriculum plans 2014–2017 2014). Ministry of Education released Teacher Education Development Programme (OKM 2016), which support faculties of education to create more student-based teaching and learning culture in teacher education. Still, balance between structural changes and individual work of teacher educators based on large pedagogical freedom, is complex. Interest as key concept in teacher education is possible only when teacher educators as community will take it seriously.

The conditions for becoming interested depend very much on social relationships. Institutional learning is normally based on assessment, where the relationship between learning and assessment is very clear and direct. There is no space for conflicts, missteps or uncertainty in that kind of process. Nor are there relevant and established concepts to represent the phenomena in the educational world (Britzman 2009, 25–31). What is going to happen when teaching is based on interest, and uncertainty comes apparent in the learning

process? No heroic tales of how learning overcomes all obstacles, but more unsolved questions and problems, which have been latent in the world of education.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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