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Recent tensions and challenges in teacher education as manifested in curriculum discourse

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Abstract

This study seeks to contribute to discussions on the development of teacher education by analysing teacher educators' talk concerning curriculum reform. The curriculum is understood as a mediating construction between teacher educators and the social context, and the development of the curriculum is seen as a negotiation process between global discourses and local actors. Our aim was to understand the contrasting discourses used by teacher educators in talking about curriculum development, on the grounds that such discourses frame interpretations that direct the implementation of teacher education as a whole. Five contrasting interpretative repertoires were found. We illustrate these and discuss what they imply for the development of teacher education.

Keywords: Curriculum development; Discourses; Interpretative repertoires**;** Teacher education

1. Introduction

Reforms in teacher education are nowadays conducted in a world suffused with various and often contradictory discourses concerning the curriculum. Globalisation has speeded up the exchange of cultural, educational and curricular knowledge around the world. Thus, the curriculum is not only constructed in local practices; it exists in cultural exchanges constituted as a part of global discourses (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Connelly & Xu, 2008). These public discourses concerning teacher education have grown rapidly during the last few years (Korthagen, Loughran & Lunenberg 2005; Murray, 2008). Simultaneously, demands for improvements in teacher education have strengthened; it is argued that schools will not change unless the ways in which teachers are educated change (Bransford, Darling-Hammond & LePage, 2005). Teacher educators are being required to develop new perceptions of their professional identity, and of the curricula for teacher education; also a new understanding of their relationships with the schools they work with in educating student teachers (Margolin, 2007; Robinson & McMillan, 2006). In addition, it is now seen as important to increase collaboration and boundary-crossing across disciplines, and this will have an influence on how school subject studies are integrated with educational sciences (Hökkä, Rasku-Puttonen & Eteläpelto, 2008; O'Connell Rust, 2007). Another factor derives from external assessment programmes (in Europe e.g. the Bologna process) that

have brought new demands for a clear quality- and research-based orientation in teacher education (Niemi, 2007).

These recent challenges have been reflected in local discourses surrounding the curriculum process in teacher education, and they have led to wide agreement that the curriculum must be reformed. Barnett and Coate (2005) have argued that in higher education it is important to get a better understanding of how the curriculum is intertwined with the social and historical contexts of universities, and of the wider world in which universities are situated. The fact is that educators have only a limited understanding of the multiple perspectives and tensions that shape curriculum development, and of how different voices form interdependent relationships between individual actors and their local/global contexts. In order to achieve a fuller understanding of how the curriculum process is played out in teacher education, it is necessary to look at the discourses that emerge in the construction of the curriculum.

This study thus aims to encompass the diversity of discourses in the curriculum process, as negotiated in one Finnish teacher education department. We consider the curriculum to be a central aspect of education, since it integrates the actual, local implementation of education with discourses on education that are more public and global. Our focus will be on how teacher educators use various discourses as resources when they describe curriculum development in the context of the global Bologna process. We are interested in (i) the kinds of interpretative repertoires produced in teacher educators' talk, and (ii) what these discourses reflect in the context of curriculum reform.

Our overall purpose is to understand the competing and often contrasting discourses that teacher educators utilise while talking about the curriculum and its development. We base this endeavour on the belief that such discourses frame interpretations that direct the implementation of teacher education. We adopt a (critical) socio-cultural approach as a theoretical starting point, and we highlight the curriculum as a central mediating practice, one that exists between the social context of a teacher education department and teacher educators as individual actors. Our methodological approach also draws upon discursive psychology; hence it emphasises the ways in which language is employed as a form of social and societal action, mediated through talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1994; Potter, 2005). In the following sections we shall address the curriculum within the framework of a socio-cultural approach; thereafter we shall focus on how a discursive approach could be helpful in understanding the curriculum process.

2. The curriculum as understood through (critical) socio-cultural lenses

The curriculum is seen as being at the heart of education, since it defines the integrated, holistic, narrative and public nature of education, and is also a primary locus of the discourse bound up with education (Connelly & Xu, 2007). There is little doubt that the curriculum offers a pivotal tool for developing teaching and learning, and for educational change at different levels of education. The significance of the curriculum becomes evident when one observes the extensive range of curriculum studies within the field of education. Moreover, the field of curriculum studies is undergoing significant growth, and a large number of new perspectives have emerged (Connelly & Xu, 2008; Pinar, 2008). With the aim of widening the understanding of the curriculum, educational theorists have seen a need to understand the curriculum as a social construction. They have argued that there is a need to

reconceptualise the concept of the curriculum and to move towards an understanding of the historical, social and cultural aspects that shape/reshape the construction of the curriculum (Goodson, 2005; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995). The demand for reshaping the understanding of the curriculum has become particularly urgent in institutes of higher education. Barnett and Coate (2005) have argued that in higher education there is actually no explicit understanding of the curriculum; there is thus a danger of being steered towards a narrow understanding of curricula, one that does not do justice to the complexities of the reality faced by students and educators. They suggest that there have nevertheless been tacit notions of the curriculum, and that these notions have emerged from different voices within higher education, exhibiting a variety of concerns. This means that educators require a better understanding of how the curriculum has been shaped by and how it is intertwined with the social and the historical contexts of the universities (Barnett & Coate, 2005).

In examining this need to reconceptualise the curriculum, Pinar et al. (1995) have emphasised the importance of understanding the curriculum as discourse, and of studying the language of the curriculum field in general. In the context of teacher education, Cochran-Smith and Demers (2008) have applied Pinar et al's (1995) idea of treating the curriculum as text, and looked closely at the discourse of the teacher education field in the United States. Their aim has been to provide a new theoretical framework, by reading the curriculum not only as a text but as a political text, and by seeing the teacher education curriculum as a bridge between higher education and the performance of teachers and students in schools. By understanding the curriculum as a text they mean looking closely at the broad range of discourses embodied within texts in teacher education, ranging from informal, unofficial and public debates to books and articles in the scholarly literature. In Cochran-Smith and Demers (2008) examination of the political nature of curriculum discourse the focus is primarily on written texts, seen as embodying particular ideological positions. An alternative – as in the present paper – may be look at how curriculum discourse embodies "talk" within an ever-shifting debate.

In the present study, we locate our work within the *socio-cultural approach*; this means that we understand the negotiation process of the teacher education curriculum as a situated and social practice existing between structural relations and individual actors. The socio-cultural approach (e.g. Rogoff, 2003; Van Oers, 2002; Wertsch, Tulviste & Hagstrom, 1993) describes and analyses human action as mediated by language and other symbol systems within cultural contexts; hence priority is given to the social context and cultural tools that shape the construction of human understanding and human actions. What individuals believe and how they act is seen as shaped by historical, cultural and social conditions that are reflected in mediational tools such as language, literature, art and the media (Wertsch, 1991; Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez, 1995), or in terms of educational reform such things as policy mandates, curriculum guidelines and standards laid down by the state (Lasky, 2005). In the present study, too, we understand the curriculum as a central mediating practice between teacher educators and social practices, and see the negotiation of the curriculum as an intertwined process between culture, language and individual actors.

In recent years, the socio-cultural approach has been challenged by many researchers. There has been criticism regarding the lack of attention to unequal power relations (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin, 2005); also regarding the risk of seeing only the social aspects and paying insufficient attention to the complex relations between individuals and their relation to communities (Linehan & McCarthy, 2001). Lewis, Enciso and Moje (2007) argue that many strands of socio-cultural theory (e.g. activity theory, situated cognition, communities of practice) do not adequately conceptualise the meaning of language or how subjects are produced through talk and discourses. Hence, it has been suggested that

there is a need to reframe socio-cultural research to give it a more critical bent and to focus on the central role of language, discourse and the individual actor; or as Moje and Lewis (2007) put it; there is a need to develop *critical socio-cultural theory*. Consequently, many researchers have tried to move outwards from socio-cultural theory, turning to post-structural, cultural, feminist and discourse theories to gain an understanding of social, cultural, mental, physical and political aspects of reality (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007).

3. Critical discursive psychology in understanding the curriculum process

In investigating the curriculum as a mediating practice between social context and individual actors, this study utilises discursive psychology to analyse the process by which the curriculum in a teacher education department is negotiated, and to understand the kinds of discursive resources utilised in the negotiation process. Our aim is not to assess the *quality* of any written or realised curriculum; rather it is to see how the curriculum is negotiated in local practices, and to gain a better sense of the discursive resources available for teacher educators in their construction of meaning within the curriculum planning process.

The *discursive approach* emphasises the study of language, talk and texts and how they are used to perform actions. The starting point is that language does not transparently represent the world, or some "reality"; nor does it reflect a pre-existing meaning in the manner of a mirror. Rather, language is seen as a site where meanings are constructed through text and talk in social action (Nikander, 2008; Wetherell, 2007). Thus, language is seen as entering a reciprocal relationship: the descriptions and accounts belonging to language construct the world, and the language itself reflects and is constructed by the surrounding world (Potter, 1996). However, the discursive approach offers a large number of mostly contrasting guidelines for research. Indeed, there are various types of discursive approaches deriving from different methodological principles and involving different conceptions of the role of the researcher and of the relationships between language and social world (De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006; Potter, 2004).

Discursive psychology can be seen as one further manifestation of the general turn to language, culture and discourse found across the social sciences (Wetherell, 2007). The focus has moved away from the individual mind to processes of social and societal action in and through talk (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005; Potter, 2005). Discursive psychology was first introduced as an alternative to cognitive psychology, placing a new emphasis on the variability, inconsistency and unreliability in people's talk. Such variability became understandable when talk was examined in the contexts of its occurrence and examined functionally and indexically (Edwards, 2005). Thus, this approach aims to make visible the ways in which discourse is central to action (Potter, 2004). It strives to analyse the strategies available to rationalise social practices and to show how patterns of language sustain and recreate social reality. The focus is on the broader patterns of meaning-making that are resources for social actions. A characteristic of this approach is that it operates on more of a macro-level than some other discursive methodologies (Stubbe, Lane, Hilder, Vine, Vine, Marra, Holmes & Weatherall, 2003). In educational research discursive psychology has not yet achieved its full potential, even though it was first articulated some twenty years ago (Roth, 2008).

In recent years discursive psychology has developed in different directions, with two different orientations coming to the fore: one sustained by scholars working within the frame of conversation

analysis and the other advocated by those working within the framework of *critical discursive psychology* (Wetherell, 2007). Critical discursive psychology pays attention to micro-level details which are supplemented with a macro-level layer of analysis, the focus being on historical, social and political contexts (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This approach emphasises the meaning of social and cultural resources as sources for individual meaning construction and subject positions. Individual actors are understood to be already positioned within larger social formations but at the same time able, within constraints, to position themselves and negotiate new subject positions (Taylor & Littleton, 2008; Wetherell, 1998; 2005).

In this study we apply critical discursive psychology and understand teacher educators' curriculum talk as emerging in the context of social and cultural resources and discourses. In so doing, we utilise the concept of an *interpretative repertoire* developed by critical discursive psychologists (Wetherell & Potter, 1988; Wetherell & Edley, 1998). According to Potter and Wetherell (1987) interpretative repertoires are "basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise and evaluate actions and events". Hence, interpretative repertoires provide a basis for a shared social understanding and they can be described as the community's common-sense resources that can be utilised in the course of everyday social interaction. Repertoires offer internally coherent ways of talking about and understanding objects and events and making them understandable in a particular community. These understandings create internally coherent ways of making sense of the content of discourse and how that content is organised (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edley, 2001). This means that when people talk or think they invariably apply terms already provided to them by history. Talk can be original, but it is usually made up of a patchwork of quotations from various interpretative repertoires (Edley, 2001; Reynolds, Wetherell & Taylor, 2007). In our study we are interested in the interpretative repertoires of curriculum development as they are constructed in teacher educators' talk. The repertoires create various images of teacher educators as actors in the community, simultaneously locating them in a particular *subject position*. In critical discursive psychology the concept of subject position implies the existence of different identities; these are made available by discourses that connect dominant cultural storylines to construction of particular selves (Edley, 2001). In this study we do not focus on particular teacher educators' identities as constructed within different discourses; instead we aim to understand the kinds of subject positions that are constructed in general, within different interpretative repertoires.

To sum up our theoretical framework, we aim to contribute to discussions on the development of teacher education by focusing on teacher educators' curriculum talk. As noted above, Cochran-Smith and Demers (2008) highlighted the meaning of discourses in understanding the teacher education curriculum, emphasising the reading of the curriculum as a political *text*. We would agree with the notion of the importance of discourses; however, instead of turning our attention to written texts, our aim here is to focus on teacher educators' *talk* and to the discourses that they utilise themselves when talking about the curriculum. We are interested in how teacher educators talk about the curriculum development process, and in the kinds of discursive resources they utilise while describing the development process of the curriculum reform in the context of the Bologna process. We see that there are socio-culturally constructed ways and possibilities available for teacher educators when talking about the curriculum, and that these ways are concretely and recognisably produced in societal formations – in this case in research interviews. We believe that the discourses used in talking about curriculum development frame those interpretations that have the capacity to direct and construct the implementation of the whole teacher education in its entirety.

4. Aim and research question

We aim to contribute to the understanding and development of teacher education by focusing on teacher educators' discourses concerning curriculum development. In order to gain a better understanding of these discourses we framed this question: *What kinds of interpretative repertoires did teacher educators construct when speaking about curriculum reform?* In this study we illustrate these repertoires, using as analytical tools the notions of (i) function, (ii) context, and (iii) the subject position constructed in the repertoires in question. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify the kinds of *meta-repertoires* that these interpretative repertoires reflect in the context of curriculum reform.

5. Methods

5.1 Research context

The curriculum process under study was connected to reforms implemented as a part of the Bologna process. The Bologna process started in 1998. It was concerned with the harmonisation of European higher education systems, the aim being to create a common European Higher Education Area by 2010. This, it was hoped, could make academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more compatible throughout Europe (Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi, 2006). In Finland, the Bologna process was seen more as a phase in a joint national analysis of the teacher education curriculum than as a fundamental structural change. National networks and projects planned the new degrees, and also the curriculum. The bodies concerned also offered national guidelines to Finnish universities. However, each university implemented the curriculum reform independently (Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi, 2006). Thus, the structure of the new curriculum was offered through external regulations, negotiated in both the Bologna context and the national context. Nevertheless, the universities and teacher education departments were expected to conduct independent negotiations covering the following aspects of the curriculum: its main objectives, its local structure (within the limits of the national structure), the model to be utilised, and its implementation.

5.2 Data collection and interviewees

The data for this study were gathered through open-ended interviews with eight teacher educators in a Finnish university-based teacher education department, staffed by approximately 80 teacher educators and 30 other employees. The interviews took place during 2005, when curriculum development was actively in progress. We wanted to have as wide a variety of teacher educators' accounts as possible; hence the teacher educators who were asked to take part in the interviews were selected as key informants representing different categories of age, academic status, subject taught, and length of work history in the department. There was at least one representative from all of the professional groups in the department (assistant, university teacher, lecturer, professor). The individual interviews lasted from approximately one and a half hours to two and a half hours. The overall duration of all the interviews was fourteen hours. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The interviews were open-ended, and the manner of the interviews was informal and conversational. The main reason for the informal nature of the interviews was the fact that the main author, who carried out

the interviews, knew all interviewees as colleagues – at least to some extent – because she and the other authors of this study had been working in the teacher education department in question.

5.3 Data analysis

In this study we applied critical discursive psychology (Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998; 2007). Our focus was not on linguistic issues but rather on language in use, i.e. how the curriculum was described (its meaning and its nature) and how the positions of teacher educators were argued. In order to understand this we analysed the kinds of *interpretative repertoires* that were available for making sense of the curriculum reform and its development, in the teacher education context. As mentioned above, we utilised as analytical tools the concepts of (i) function, (ii) context, and (iii) subject position. The concept of *function* implies that people use language in order to *do* things – there is always a purpose in the talk. Function, however, cannot be understood in a mechanical way, since people do not always use language explicitly. Thus, in order to understand the function of the talk there is always a need to consider the talk within a particular time and space, that is, in its *context* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). *Subject position* identifies how a particular actor is positioned within a particular interpretative repertoire. It also illustrates the opportunities, constraints, demands and responsibilities for the actor thus positioned (Edley, 2001).

The analysis of the teacher educators' curriculum talk was conducted on a cross-case basis, meaning that patterns in the data were searched for both *within* and *across* interviews. This was because, in critical discursive psychology, the unit of analysis is usually a *discursive practice* – rather than an individual actor, or for example, a biographical narrative (Wetherell, 2007). The cross-case analysis was also carried out for ethical reasons, to ensure the anonymity of the persons interviewed. The interviews were first transcribed verbatim. Because the main objective of this study was to analyse the kinds of interpretative repertoires used by teacher-educators in their talk (and not to arrive at an in-detail construction of talk) more accurate transcription methods were not needed.

Analysis necessitates familiarity with the data and repeated readings of transcripts. Gradually, by reading and re-reading different patterns across people's talk, certain images, metaphors and figures of talk start to emerge (Edley, 2001). In this study, the analysis involved close reading of the transcriptions and consequently all the sections which included curriculum-talk were extracted. Thereafter, the data were thematised. This process was in many respects the same as in other types of qualitative analysis (especially thematic analysis) in which the purpose is to recognise the prevailing patterns of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From this phase, six preliminary repertoires were identified.

In the next phase, the data extracts were grouped together as representing a number of preliminary repertoires. These were compared using the analytical tools decided upon, i.e. according to (i) function (ii) the context of the preliminary repertoire, and (iii) the subject positions of the teacher educator. The aim here was to examine the boundaries between the various tentative interpretative schemes. In this analytical process the boundaries between two preliminary repertoires were found to be overlapping and these could be reconstituted as a single interpretative repertoire. Thus, in all, five repertoires could be identified as representing differently organised ways of talking about the curriculum development of the teacher education department. After identifying these five repertoires, we still wanted to condense

the findings further and to analyse them in the context of the curriculum reform and of demands for change. For this purpose, the five repertoires were further categorised into two broad *meta-repertoires*.

6. Findings

We first identified five different interpretative repertoires used by teacher educators when talking about the curriculum development process: (i) the *competition* repertoire, (ii) the *practical knowledge* repertoire, (iii) the *collaboration* repertoire, (vi) the *research-based knowledge* repertoire, and (v) the *break with the tradition* repertoire. Thereafter, we arrived at two meta-repertoires derived from the interpretative repertoires: (a) the *accommodation* and (b) the *reform* meta-repertoires. Table 1 summarises the interpretative repertoires and the meta-repertoires in terms of function, context and subject position. The final naming of the repertoires and the meta-repertoires aimed at revealing the particular features of accounts concerning the curriculum and its development. In the following sub-sections we shall illustrate these repertoires, showing how teacher educators talked about the curriculum, and setting out the kinds of subject positions produced within the repertoires. In the data extracts TE is Teacher Educator and I is Interviewer.

6.1. The competition repertoire

The competition repertoire represented the most common way – one could say hegemonic way – of talking about the curriculum development process. This repertoire was identified in all the interviews, occurring several times in most of the interviews. This repertoire describes the curriculum process as a battleground; here we have a struggle in which teacher educators aim to capture as many study credits for their own subject matter as possible, or more broadly, to secure resources (courses, study credits, contact teaching hours) for their subject. Within this repertoire, participants saw curriculum development as a narrow negotiation of resources, rather than as a matter of developing the curriculum as a whole. The planning process of the curriculum was often described as a quarrel, and the interaction between teacher educators was seen as contested. The contested and contentious nature of curriculum development emerged especially with regard to school subject studies.

The competition repertoire occurred many times in every interview, and was the most commonly manifested repertoire in teacher educators' talk about curriculum development. Typically, the educators used it as a natural and self-evident matter, one that did not require explanation or definition. The function of this repertoire was to emphasise the difficult nature of the negotiations, viewed as part of a teacher education department's internal processes. The following extracts illustrate the self-evident and natural occurrence of the competition repertoire:

> TE: In a way, where would we get the strength to keep on discussing these matters? The way I see it, now that the decisions have been made, *there's no longer any need to fight about who gets what*. We could properly consider together how things have gone, and it's to be hoped that we wouldn't blame each other and say 'I told you so,' or say that something doesn't work, or something else. Instead, if something really doesn't work, then let's just state that that's the case and let's decide to do something else.

TE: It's a completely different spirit [*in another department*] and there you have meetings with twenty people and yet they really talk about crucial issues and the things connected with them and […] there they don't speak at all about these quantities *[of resources] and they don't need to fight, fight about who gets most and who is deprived.*

TE: Well I've been following this *[curriculum development]* a bit from the side […]. I mean *I haven't had to get involved in these school subject studies to be more or less fighting over these issues,* and shall we say that I've felt that the discussion that has gone on about these things is totally and utterly necessary […] because I believe that these particular lines are the right ones and I see things through that frame of reference.

This repertoire positioned teacher educators in two different positions. On the one hand, teacher educators were positioned as protectors of their own subject-matter, and as lobbyists whose task and duty was to negotiate resources for their own subject, using different kinds of strategies. It was assumed that they should secure study-credits for their subject or capture even more. The teacher educators were in fact regarded as "possessors" of their own teaching and of those study credits they had previously taught. On the other hand, the willingness to struggle was also seen as the sign of a conscientious teacher, one who was devoted to developing education in his/her own subject and securing the importance of his/her own subject in teacher education. Thus, this repertoire positioned teacher educators not just as combatants but also as professionals, people committed to their teaching mission.

6.2. The practical knowledge repertoire

The practical knowledge repertoire portrays one of the central objectives of teacher education as being to teach practical skills to students. The use of this repertoire emphasised the importance of school subject studies in teacher education. It also underlined the need for plenty of contact lessons in teacher education. In this repertoire the relationship between educational sciences and school subject studies was described as problematic. The following extracts illustrate the curriculum process viewed in terms of the practical knowledge repertoire, and show especially how the repertoire is manifested in the relationships between educational sciences and school subject studies.

TE: I've gained the impression that, to put the matter rather harshly, there [*in the curriculum development process*] educational science has now taken over, but actually that's no problem if there is nevertheless enough consideration of school realities. But that's where we find the point that has also to be taken into consideration, the point that as I see it hasn't been dealt with that much in these discussions.

TE: It's clear that relatively speaking the focus *[study credits]* moved from these arts and crafts subjects to these cognitive subjects and yet when matters are based on the notion that content doesn't need to be taught, and on that general theory of learning and these meta-cognitive skills and so on, here, nevertheless, is the nub of the matter. And when in these theoretical subjects you could say that the studying is actually more or less the same irrespective of the content, and taking into account the entire body of skills in arts and crafts subjects in which there is a different way of studying *[from the cognitive way of studying]*, then to some extent the logic of the basic

idea breaks down. […] Fortunately, though, the student has the opportunity to take these minor subjects. It's when we go below a particular limit [in a given subject] then what comes to mind is whether in school subject studies we can still concretise core matters related to the teaching and learning of each subject matter in such a way that it would be any use when the students go into the school.

The practical knowledge repertoire emerged as a critique of the curriculum reform, and especially of the plans for the integration of school subject studies within the change process. There was a concern that the curriculum development, and the way in which school subject studies would be integrated within it, would reduce the number of face-to-face teaching lessons. This, it was thought, could threaten the quality of teacher education as a whole. Consequently, the significance of minor studies was underlined, as a means of securing the quality and satisfactory amount of contact teaching of subject studies in teacher education. The practical knowledge repertoire positioned teacher educators as subject teachers, persons whose duty was to teach the skills and knowledge needed by teacher students.

6.3. The collaboration repertoire

Thirdly, an interpretative repertoire was identified in which curriculum development was discussed as an interdisciplinary enterprise implemented by teacher educators working along with teachers from the teacher training school plus academic teachers from other departments. This repertoire was named as the collaboration repertoire. It described collaboration as a central aspect of curriculum development. The objective of the ongoing curriculum development process was seen as improving possibilities for collaborative teacher education, both at the planning and the implementation stage. This repertoire emerged when teacher educators described their work with partners (working in the teacher training school and in academic departments) but especially when educators talked about their hopes for the future. Collaboration was seen as rare, as far as the recent implementation of teacher education within the teacher education department was concerned. However, there were high hopes for better collaboration in the future. The following extract illustrates the collaboration repertoire.

TE: I had this extremely positive experience when we launched this three-way collaboration in [our subject] and really it's more or less completely unofficial. We don't have any formal background in this and the way we all experience it is that when we're leaving the meeting, we are more convinced than we were, and feel that the next time, everyone will come who can, from all the departments […] So in my opinion it's really great, what we have with these three participants. And then these other things that there have been as well. Last spring regarding [Faculty x] and the rest, well I've found a tremendous amount that is positive in this milieu from the point of view of teacher education. I mean there are extremely good possibilities to start collaborating. The thing in this is that now we just need to push what we want more strongly, pull some strings, so that we truly make use of this great opportunity that we actually have to collaborate with each other.

This repertoire underlined the need to restrict the individual autonomy of teacher educators in order to support collaboration among educators. However, this was described as difficult to implement. It is worth noting that the main function of this repertoire was to emphasise the need for collaboration among teacher educators *within* the department. This includes collaboration between different subject teachers, and between subject teachers and teachers of educational sciences. Overall, this repertoire

positioned teacher educators as bridge builders between various groups and participants inside the department and between the partners working in the teacher training school and in academic departments.

6.4. The research-based knowledge repertoire

This repertoire represents accounts in which teacher education was described using traditional academic discourse. The main objective of teacher education was seen as producing new knowledge and conducting research-based teacher education. In addition, the objective of the curriculum was portrayed as developing the teacher education department towards an academic research community, with an emphasis on building stronger links between theory and practice. The research-based knowledge repertoire underlined the scientific and academic nature of teacher education. This was seen as a prerequisite for promoting competencies that would allow teachers to face the diverse reality of schooling, and to solve the diverse problems that teacher students will face in their professional career. The following extract illustrates the research-based knowledge repertoire:

> TE: What in fact gives this university its own special characteristic and makes teacher education what in my opinion it ought to be, I mean this kind of maker of teachers who are educated for scientific thinking and actions based on research [...] The way I see it is that perhaps in a way nowadays theory and practice are partly separate – that's according to research, and I would say the same thing. I'd like to be the one who in some sense would build a bridge between the two.
> […]
> I: And you see your own role as precisely this kind of intermediary acting at these interfaces?
> TE: Yes, yes. So that in a way in my teaching I bear in mind that I must open up to students a research-based, scientific point of view for looking at what the school really is when you go there, and also these situations so that when they go into the school they see the kinds of resources the scientific community provides for facing new situations, the kind there's no formula for.

The function of this repertoire was to represent teacher education as a research-based and academic enterprise. The subject position was that of the teacher educator as researcher. However, the context in which this repertoire mostly appeared was in descriptions of what teacher education *should* be, rather than of teacher education at the present time.

6.5. The break with tradition repertoire

This repertoire represented a highly critical way of talking about the current implementation of teacher education. Teacher education (as currently practised) was criticised as fostering an outdated "teacher training college spirit" linked to traditional teacher education. The traditional way of doing things was seen as a behaviourist enterprise in which the emphasis was on content knowledge, skills and teaching techniques. This repertoire was also critical in defining the recent subject position of teacher educators. Teacher educators were regarded as traditional face-to-face teachers aiming to secure their role as individual possessors of knowledge. In the following extract a teacher educator draws on the critical transmission of knowledge repertoire:

TE: And then of course going into this curriculum reform, it breaks down that tradition and perhaps in some sense in this community, that's so overshadowed by its history of having a seminar [*teacher training college*] culture, if anyone dares to break down tradition then he's someone who is destroying some cherished national myth, or people see it as a matter of 'this old way should be preserved because it's the Finnish way.

I: Mm. Do you feel that we are still stuck within this old community?

TE: In my opinion there's a segment that wants to hold onto it […]. So that if we don't get any change in the school any quicker than this, the school won't move anywhere [...] this process which we have here has certainly given me quite a lot of understanding of why at the school the curriculum reforms are felt to be so awful – because in some sense we've been brought up on this culture of preservation.

This critique of the way teacher education was conducted had the aim of reforming the curriculum of teacher education. The function of the break with tradition repertoire was to justify demands for radical curriculum reform. The development of the curriculum was seen as something fundamental. As a repertoire it drew on a critique of those discourses which resisted curriculum reform. In addition, this repertoire was utilised when the interviewee was criticising teacher education as kind of a quasi-scientific enterprise.

6.6. Two meta-repertoires

We were able to identify certain shared aspects in the repertoires described above. These concerned the nature of and the need for curriculum reform. Some repertoires shared the conception that curriculum development should be regarded as a matter of accommodation to social demands. Other repertoires shared the notion of a need for reform in the teacher education curriculum. We could categorise these different (and partly contrasting) repertoires as forming two competing and over-arching meta-repertoires. By meta-repertoire we mean a superordinate category which includes various specific interpretative repertoires. These two meta-repertoires were named as (1) the *accommodation* meta-repertoire and (2) the *reform* meta-repertoire.

The competition repertoire (see 6.1) and the practical knowledge repertoire (see 6.2) were categorised within the *accommodation* meta-repertoire. The common characteristic of the accommodation meta-repertoire was the notion that teacher education had to respond to societal changes, and that the curriculum of teacher education must be developed in line with curriculum development in the schools. Following this line of thinking, the Bologna process was described as an external regulation which required teacher educators to make local adjustments and to adopt ideas that had been produced by external actors.

The *reform* meta-repertoire included the collaboration repertoire (see 6.3), the research-based knowledge repertoire (see 6.4), and the break with tradition repertoire (see 6.5). The common characteristic of the reform meta–repertoire were that teacher education was regarded as playing an important role in the development of schools and society as a whole. The objective of the teacher education curriculum was described as supporting societal development and social innovation. The Bologna process was explained as an important and welcome opportunity for local curriculum reform. Table 1 provides a summary of the five repertoires identified, together with the two meta-repertoires.

Table 1. Interpretative repertoires and meta-repertoires involved in teacher educators' accounts of the curriculum, in terms of function, context and subject position

Analytical tools	Interpretative repertoires				
	The accommodation meta-repertoire		The reform meta-repertoire		
	Competition	*Practical knowledge*	*Collaboration*	*Research-based knowledge*	*Break with tradition*
Function of the talk	To emphasise the demanding nature of curriculum development, seen as an internal process within the department	To provide a critique of development plans involved in the curriculum reform	To increase collaboration between teacher educators – especially between educators within the department	To emphasise teacher education as an academic enterprise	To justify the demand for radical curriculum reform
Context of the talk	The repertoire occurred many times in each interview, as a self-evident and natural matter.	The repertoire was drawn on within a critique of plans to integrate studies – especially the teaching of school subject studies.	(i) Occurred when describing work with other partners (e.g. within the subject departments, or with Normal School staff) (ii) Occurred when talking about future expectations	Appeared especially in talk of what teacher education *should* be in the years to come	Occurred as a critique, aimed *against* resistance to curriculum development plans
Subject position of teacher educator	(i) Defender of and lobbyist for one's own subject matter (ii) Conscientious teacher	Subject teacher	Bridge-builder	Teacher educator as researcher	Preserver of the old "seminar-spirit" tradition

7. Conclusions

In this study our aim was to analyse teacher educators' curriculum discourses through the lenses of critical discursive psychology. We understood the curriculum process as a major mediating practice between teacher educators and the social context of teacher education. Thus we saw curriculum discourses as framing those interpretations that direct and construct the implementation of teacher education as a whole. The data for this study were gathered through open-ended interviews in one teacher education department at a time when curriculum development was actively in progress, and

when teacher educators were struggling to translate curriculum ideas into practical and pragmatic formats. Despite the limitations of methodology and scale of the data, we would argue that the findings nevertheless reflect some important general issues in the field of teacher education. Our findings demonstrated the contested and contradictory nature of the discourses that teacher educators utilised in talking about the curriculum development process. In describing the five interpretative repertoires, we have attempted to make visible those tacit notions, multiple perspectives and tensions that shape and influence the process of curriculum development in the local settings of one teacher education department (see Barnett & Coate, 2005). Critical discursive psychology was found to offer a valuable methodological approach for analysing the cultural resources that shape social reality within curriculum development, and thus the ways in which teacher education is conducted in its entirety.

In this study the competition repertoire emerged as a hegemonic repertoire in teacher educators' talk. This underlines the importance of the local negotiation process in curriculum development. The demands for curriculum development came from external authorities, including the body responsible for the Bologna Declaration, the Finnish Ministry of Education, national working groups and the administration of the university. The external guidelines framed the local negotiation process, but at the same time challenged prevailing power relations and the resources allotted to training in different school subjects. Thus, the negotiation of the curriculum demanded re-negotiation between different subjects and the assertion of the status of one's own subject. In this pattern one can see a danger that the need to defend one's own subject could hinder the development and implementation of the curriculum, and hence adversely affect the quality of teacher education.

In the context of the Bologna process and its demands for curriculum development, it is interesting that when teacher educators talked about the ongoing curriculum process, they mostly drew their support from the *accommodation meta-repertoire*. The use of this pattern to talk about the curriculum process may be an indicator of the slowness of change in teacher education and of the opposition to radical reforms (cf. Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006). This meta-repertoire also raises the possibility that curriculum development will take the form of "window-dressing", meaning that although the written curriculum may be changed, the lived and realised curriculum will continue to be implemented as before. Nevertheless, when the teacher educators described their future expectations and hopes concerning teacher education, the prevailing pattern was drawn from the *reform meta-repertoire*. This finding suggests that there exists a readiness for fundamental reforms in teacher education. One critical concern is how to achieve a balance between external demands for change and the teacher educators' own (contrasting) perceptions of the essential principles that should underlie the curriculum and the implementation of teacher education as a whole.

Cochran-Smith and Demers (2008) have characterised issues pertaining to the teacher education curriculum as complex, messy and filled with intractable controversies. Their point is that "controversies about the teacher education curriculum are always about what knowledge is worthwhile and what purposes schooling should serve" (Cochran-Smith and Demers, 2008, p. 277). With this argument they underline the significance of power issues in establishing the teacher education curriculum. Our study has further demonstrated the multi-voiced, tensioned and complex process in which curriculum reform is negotiated in the context of one Finnish teacher education department. Thus, wrapped up in the complexity and messiness of teacher education curriculum discourses, considered as texts, there are controversies embodied in teacher educators' talk concerning the objective(s), meaning(s) and implementation of the teacher education curriculum. As a general conclusion, we would suggest that in order to conduct real reforms in teacher education, it will be

necessary to achieve a deeper understanding of the contrasting discourses that frame interpretations of the ways in which teacher education should be conducted. Moreover, since teacher educators are the key persons in developing teacher education, it is fundamental that they themselves should become aware of the contrasting repertoires that shape their discourses concerning the curriculum – and thus, potentially, the entire process and conduct of teacher education. Nevertheless, the big question remains: how are power issues entwined with the purpose, content and implementation of teacher education curriculum? This means that in future research, there should be a much stronger and more detailed focus on issues of power, in order for educators to widen their understanding of the teacher education curriculum, its implementation, and its development.

Transcription Notation

[…]   Material omitted by the authors
[text]   Material changed by the authors for the sake of anonymity
[text] Material added by the authors for the sake of clarity

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