POSTGRADUATE STUDIES FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS — COMPARATIVE STUDY

PODIPLOMSKI ŠTUDIJI ZA RAZREDNE UČITELJE — PRIMERJALNA ŠTUDIJA

1. INTRODUCTION

We would like to start our paper with two statements from the information about postgraduate programs:

The postgraduate level for teachers, even for those at Primary (Elementary, Classroom) level is no longer "a degree for only a few" (Strathclyde, Jordanhill Scheme). Such programs are "designed to prepare teachers working in primary and secondary schools as we move into a new century of education" (La Trobe Master of Education).

We believe that such ideas could be the orientation for the discussion about postgraduate studies for primary teachers within the context of their professional development.

Our paper is based on the comparative study of 8 postgraduate programs (from 5 countries), designed especially or also for primary (classroom) teachers:
2. SHORT PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMMES

2.1 Postgraduate Studies for Classroom Teachers in Finland

In Finland teacher education programmes were renewed twice in the 1970s. In 1979 also primary teacher (class teacher) education became a four-and-a-half-year programme in the university. The programme consists of more theoretical studies - mostly educational theory - than the earlier one. An outcome from this is that a student teacher must write a thesis in education and complete an M.Ed. In primary teacher education (M.Ed.) the major subject is education with an emphasis on didactics, or on research on teaching. The curriculum consists of a process shifting from practice through theorising to practice with the help of knowledge of research methods and contents. The programme for the primary teacher’s degree (M.Ed.) corresponds to 160 credit units (or study weeks). A study week (sw) equals approximately 40 hours of work by the student. The M.Ed. degree is estimated to take four - five years to complete.

From the facts given above follows that in Finland postgraduate studies for classroom teachers mean studies for the licentiate’s (Ed.Lic.) or doctor’s (Ed.D.) degree. The programme for the licentiate’s degree corresponds to 80 study weeks and the programme for the doctor’s degree corresponds to 160 study weeks. It is possible to take the doctor’s degree right after the master’s degree, but it is recommended that postgraduate students complete an Ed.Lic. first. If a postgraduate student takes the Ed.Lic. before the Ed.D., s/he usually broadens her/his Ed.Lic. thesis to a dissertation.

The degree structure of the postgraduate studies for classroom teachers is given below. (The details are taken from the postgraduate programme of the University of Helsinki, but the programmes of the Finnish universities are very much alike).
### Licentiate of Education (80 study weeks, /sw/)

1. Research methodology I  
   5 sw
2. Theory of education (contents can be chosen according to the theme of the thesis)  
   5 sw
3. Research seminar (three semesters active participating required)  
   5 sw
4. Research methodology II (contents can be chosen according to the theme of the thesis)  
   5 sw
5. Ed.Lic. thesis  
   40 sw
6. Advanced studies in one of the minor subjects of the M.Ed.  
   20 sw

### Doctor of Education (80 sw)

7. Dissertation  
   80 sw

The postgraduate programme for teachers is quite "academic" in nature. Although it is recommended that you choose the theme of your thesis from teacher’s or school’s everyday life, you can not, for instance, compensate any of the modules below for practical teaching merits. However, the degree structure of the postgraduate studies is in practice quite flexible. There is a fixed set of literature for most of the modules and problems or items from which to write an essay with the help of the set literature will be provided by professors. This is the standard form to complete a module. Alternatively it is possible to take (an active) part in a seminar or a course arranged for postgraduate students instead of writing an essay. Seminars and courses for postgraduate students are offered both locally and nationally.

#### 2.2 Postgraduate studies in Scotland

**Context**

Within the Scottish Education system all teachers must now be qualified with a University degree in addition to a teaching qualification. This may be a four year Bachelor of Education degree or a three or four year degree in another discipline followed by a one year post graduate qualification in teacher education.

The Scottish education system has a long history of provision of short inservice courses for teachers, provided by the teacher education institutions and the local education authorities. It has also been possible for many years for teachers to undertake additional specialist qualifications, such as:

- Infant Teaching Qualification
- Diploma in Special Educational Needs
- Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language
- Diploma in Guidance

Such qualifications are assessed by a combination of written assignments and observed practice. Such courses have not normally been pre-requisites for promotion but are frequently stipulated as desirable. The courses have a high reputation within the field for successfully blending Theory and Practice.

In the last five years, increasing opportunities have been developed for classroom teachers to study for postgraduate degrees in education, particularly at Master's level but also at Doctoral level.

Much of the provision of postgraduate degrees in Scotland is in modular form with participants choosing a flexible pathway to the award which suits their specific needs and interests. Postgraduate degrees in education are provided on a taught or research basis or a combination of these.

It is possible for participants to apply for the accreditation of prior learning or experience to be counted towards the modules required for a postgraduate degree. This scheme (SCOTCATS - Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme) has been a major contributing factor in the increase in the number of professional staff, not only in the field of education, taking advanced qualifications.

*University of Strathclyde, Jordanhill Campus, Faculty of Education*
The Jordanhill Scheme for professional development is the largest of its kind in Scotland and one of the largest in the United Kingdom with currently over 3000 people studying for an award at Masters level. The programme is designed "for professional staff who are continuing to engage in professional development beyond their initial qualification. It is no longer a degree for only a few."

The Master of Science in Advanced Professional Studies is awarded after the achievement of 180 points at Scottish Masters (SM) level. These may be gained, through SCOTCATS, by a combination of prior learning and experience, assessed by the University and modules studied under the postgraduate awards scheme but must include 60 SM points gained from the Enquiry Methods module and from a major research or development project culminating in a Thesis.

It is also possible to study for a research degree at Jordanhill, either the Master of Philosophy or Doctor of Philosophy and, since this year for a taught degree leading to the degree of Master of Education or Doctor of Education. Most students studying for research degrees are self-funding although a few scholarships are available each year.

2.3 United Kingdom - The Open University

The Open University, although based in Milton Keynes, England, is known throughout Europe, as a centre for the provision of study on a distance learning basis.

Short courses and study materials are offered by the Open University in addition to the more widely known undergraduate degree courses open to all, regardless of prior academic qualifications.

The School of Education of the Open University has a reputation for a high standard of publication as well as of professional courses for teachers and others involved in the education sector.

The Open University offers a number of post-qualification certificates and diplomas for educational professionals in areas such as:

- Educational Management
- Special Educational Needs
- Language Education

These diplomas may be counted as one of three modules for the award of the taught degree Master of Arts in Education (MA(Ed)). The programme of study for the award of MA(Ed) "is both intellectually challenging and professionally relevant".

At the moment study for a taught higher degree requires residence in the European Union or other countries in Europe where the Open University has a special arrangement throughout the period of study.

Students working towards the award of MA(Ed) choose to study three modules from a menu which includes the study of:

- Child Development
- Language and Literacy
- Inclusive curricula
- Mentoring
- Primary Education: assessing and planning learning
- Educational Management
- and others

Assessment of modules involves the submission of both essays and small scale research projects and, for some modules, a written examination. Some modules also require attendance at a short residential school.

Most students are self-funding although some employers offer financial support or sponsoring.

This year (1997/98) The Open University introduced the taught degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D) for which there are currently about fifty students. At the moment it is necessary to have gained an MA(Ed) degree from the Open University to be eligible for study for the award of Ed.D. Students must stipulate the line of study they wish to follow which must coincide with one of the modules studied at Master's level. Prior to admission to study for the Ed.D, students must also have passed a specialist module on Educational Research in Action and must submit a detailed research proposal.
The degree is awarded subsequent to the successful submission of a dissertation of 30-40,000 words.

2.4 La Trobe University - Graduate School of Education

Master of Education by coursework
The coursework Masters is designed for graduates with a professional interest in education who wish to undertake research and to update and reflect on their knowledge of theory. Masters by coursework consists of 8 semester units (180 credit points).

Master of Education by research
The thesis of 50,000 to 60,000 words is to be written over 1-2 years full-time or 2-4 years part-time. Students studying by research may attend appropriate research methodology subjects or classes from the coursework program.

Master of Teaching (Mteach)
The course is designed to build on a teaching diploma and to provide extensive practice and reflection on schooling.

It is underlined that the program "is designed to prepare teachers working in primary and secondary schools as we move into a new century of education. The teacher as researcher responding directly to the needs of their classroom will be a central concern of the course."

The course provides
- an intensive induction into issues, concerns and influences on contemporary schooling;
- the research and theoretical debate relevant to contemporary issues;
- the development of a general theory of education that informs school debate and school charter discussion;
- supervision of an individual or collaborative research project aimed at improving school practice.

Course structure
The course consists of eight semester units:

1/ Professional Practicum (2 semester units)
School placement for the equivalent of one school term. Regular staff duties are expected, school-based research can also be focus of this term.

Teachers with the evidence of five years teaching experience can claim for exemption from this subject.

2/ Pedagogical Principles and Practice (1 semester unit)
Students can examine both conventional and innovative ways of teaching. The focus is on classroom teaching, with ongoing reflection on the students' own experience of teaching.

3/ Curriculum Design and Implementation (1 semester unit)
Students should gain knowledge of contemporary approaches to the curriculum as well as historical and critical issues in curriculum design.

4/ Research Project - Field Study (Minor thesis) (3 semester units)
The field study comprises 50 days in a school or other educational institution. The student selects an appropriate research topic, designs a study, collects data, interprets and reports the findings and writes a 10,000 to 12,000 word research project. A contribution to existing school practice is desired.

5/ An elective chosen from the M.Ed list (1 semester unit)

2.5 University of Maryland at College Park, College of Education

"Master's and Doctoral degrees are designed to better prepare you for your career. Emphasis is placed on designing programs with individual interests and needs in mind." (Information Sheet, 1997-1998).
2.51 The Maryland Master’s Certification Program (MMCP) is an alternative teacher education program designed for highly educated and capable persons who have completed baccalaureate degrees in academic fields. Program is specifically designed for students with a degree other than education who now wish to pursue a career in teaching. Through this program, students earn a master's degree and complete the requirements for Maryland Certification in either Elementary or Secondary Education. Admission to the program is highly competitive (about 25 students are accepted per year of 200 applicants).

It is a one-calendar year, full-time program: two six-week summer school sessions and two full-time academic year semesters (approx. 45 semester hours/credits). Applicants may be required to take extra courses to bolster their academic content in some concentrations.

The curriculum is based on theory, research and knowledge from five fields of inquiry –
(1) naturalistic classroom investigations of effective experienced teachers;
(2) research from cognitive psychology that addresses the nature of learning as well as the nature of teaching;
(3) studies of theory-based educational programs;
(4) research on effective schools and educational leadership; and
(5) research on learning to teach. The program includes carefully designed field experiences.

The structure of the programme:
First Session (Summer I):
Models and Processes of Teaching (3 credits)
Cognitive Basis for Instruction (3 credits)
Teaching as a Profession (3 credits)

Fall Semester
Research on Effective Teaching (3 credits)
Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum (3 credits)
Educational Research and Statistics (3 credits)
Proseminar (1 credit)
Subject Specific Methods (3-6 credits)
for Elementary or for Secondary

Spring Semester
Conducting Research on Teaching (3 credits)
Apprenticeship (8 credits)
Proseminar (1 credit)

Second Session (Summer II):
Proseminar/Independent Study (3 credits)
Curriculum Specialties (3 credits)

One of the requirements within the program is also to assemble a portfolio which includes various examples of student's teaching (lesson plans, journal entries, videotaped lessons, photographs, pupils' work, etc.), coursework and research projects.

2.52 University of Maryland
Department of Education Policy, Planning and Administration
Masters in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (EDPA MA)

"The program provides opportunities to examine the purposes of education and the roles education may play particularly in a democratic, pluralistic society. It provides opportunities to examine how issues are generated, problems are framed and "solutions" are promulgated." It is evident that the program is not designed specifically for classroom/primary teachers, "the program is designed to accommodate individuals who have diverse educational interests and professional aspirations. It will serve individuals who seek to exercise leadership as well as individuals who want to enhance their ability to meet their current professional responsibilities."
Within the same information one can find the description of program contents and components, where the words *leadership* and *policy* are defined broadly: *leadership* "as responsible social influence", associated not only "with specific roles in organizations, leadership may be exercised by many individuals in many ways"; and *policy* "as a purposive course of action, a choice among alternative responses to social problems".

Given such orientation, the program of educational leadership and policy addresses contextual and critical aspects of educational leadership and policy through formal courses, field studies and master's seminar paper (no-thesis version) or a master's thesis and a master's comprehensive exam.
Program Components:
1. Disciplinary and Multi-disciplinary Perspectives (12 - 15 credits)
2. Methods of Research and Analysis (9 credits)
3. Issue Focused Seminars (3-9 credits)
4. Collateral Studies (0-6 credits)
5. a/ Non-thesis Option: Field studies (3 credits), Seminar Paper (3 credits)
   b/ Thesis Option: MA Thesis (6 credits)

These inter-related program components provide the general parameters within which students and advisors construct the student’s individually tailored program of study.

Especially Issue Focused Seminars offer a lot of opportunities for in-depth analysis of different educational problems and solutions, while Collateral Studies option encourages exploration of topics and issues through course work in other departments and may be incorporated, to complement or extend aspects of an individual program of study.

In the thesis or seminar paper required for an Ma degree, students pursue topics that go beyond those addressed in courses, or examine issues addressed in previous work more fully. Candidates exercising the thesis option defend the completed thesis in an oral examination.

2.6 Postgraduate studies for classroom teachers in Sweden

The postgraduate program in Sweden is a 4 to 4 1/2 year program (160 points). During the first two years of studies the postgraduates earlier focussed on different courses in order to deepen their knowledge particularly in theoretical and methodological aspects. More recently, the number and points for courses have been reduced. The remaining time is devoted to their empirical studies and writing the PhD-thesis.

The choice of courses is optional but usually you as a postgraduate discuss with your supervisor about which courses would be most adequate for you according to your interests and the title of your thesis. Postgraduate courses, given at the university, often have student representing various disciplines and interests, which is considered an advantage, both from the students’ as well as from the professors’ (teachers’) points of view.

Finances

Postgraduate studies are a costly affair and in Sweden there are much more students interested in this kind of studies than the institutions can economically support. Having a position as assistant at the institution, i.e. the institution has a liability for your salary, means that you will have a reasonable level of living, you do some teaching and other kinds of institutional support but the majority of your time is devoted to your postgraduate studies. It is assumed that having an assistant position will delay your studies with about half a year but not more. In practice we have this this not always comes true.

As very few postgraduate students have been given this chance - as most institutions accepted more student than they could economically support - the majority of the student have had to keep their ordinary jobs and do their postgraduate studies on their leisure time. This means that in most cases the time for finishing their PhD-thesis strongly exceeds the 4 to 4 1/2 years originally proposed. This situation, I would argue, was very typical for most disciplines within the social sciences while for postgraduate students belonging to other disciplines, e.g. natural sciences, the situation is quite differently. Recently, the situation has changes for postgraduate students in the social sciences as more and more departments no longer accept more graduate students than they can support.

3. WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS?
WHAT KIND OF COMMON KNOWLEDGE IS INCLUDED IN THESE PROGRAMS?

After examining the programs listed above, it is possible to find common units, some of which can be found in all of these programs:

1. Curriculum Studies
Knowledge of contemporary approaches to the curriculum and strategies for planning curriculum change. Impact of general societal changes on school policy and curriculum design.

2. Educational Research Methods
Principles and methods of educational research, designing an educational research project (proposal), carry out (at least) some pilot research.

3. Educational Theory, Principles of Learning and Teaching
Classroom management, theories of learning, cognitive basis for instruction, models and processes of teaching, child development, teaching and learning style.

4. Methods and/or Practice of Teaching
General teaching methods and subject specific methods (language and literacy, science, technology and mathematics education), systematic field (observation and teaching) experiences.

5. Other (Optional) Studies
Educational management, effective schools, assessment, mentoring, gender/race studies, adult education, ...

All these components certify that the applicants will obtain the knowledge about the most general and important issues, concerning everyday classroom work and, on the other side, the great range of optional studies offer them the possibility to reach their own needs and/or future professional aspirations.

The Methods
The whole range of different methods can be discovered in the descriptions of the programs: as some of the programs are designed especially for part-time students (Open University) and others, on the contrary only for full-time students (Maryland MCP). The methods differ according to this dimension, having more or less face-to-face/contact studies. The next dimension for the differences is of course the regional characteristics of the country and the level of technological equipment: La Trobe University (Australia) has a lot of up-to-date methods for distance learning, as video-conferencing and electronic discussions.

Some common methods are research projects and written theses/essays with exact prescription of the extent (number of words).

Credit System
All programs have a credit structure and exact Credit Transfer System. For the European credit system 180 credit points is the usual measure for a Master's Degree. In the US the system of credits differs and for Maryland "Approximately 43 total credit hours is required" (1 credit hour means usually 1 hour weekly during one semester). The Australian Master of Teaching (La Trobe University) consists of "eight semester units" (one 2-3 hour lecture or seminar per week for ten weeks and one 5000-word essay), also equivalent to 180 credit points. Prior learning is accredited when it was at appropriate level (Master's degree level). The maximum amount of transferred credit is also prescribed (90 points at Open University MA), Jordanhill Scheme allows also the accreditation of prior experiential learning in the form of a portfolio.

Within the programme at the University of Helsinki it is possible to substitute part of some modules with a paper at an academic conference or with an article in a journal.

3.1 What kind of specific knowledge is included in these programs (Is it possible to get additional knowledge about teaching practices for multicultural classroom)?

Specific knowledge is included within the optional subjects. All programs have more or less possibilities for applicants to create their own program. It seems that the greatest freedom with creating their own program have the applicants within the Open University, where students are free to select from a range of options the programme which best fits in with their interests and professional goals; they can study at their own pace, in their own time.

La Trobe's Master of Teaching consists of one elective from the MEd list (1 semester unit).
Maryland’s MMCP option is to choose either Elementary or Secondary Education and within Secondary Education students can specialize in either Art, English, Foreign Language, Maths, Science, or Social Studies; another option is within the subject Curriculum Specialties (3 semester hours/credits).

One can find more options within Maryland’s M.A. in Education Leadership and Policy Studies (EDPA), where students can choose 3 to 9 credits from category "Issue Focused Seminars" and again 0 to 6 credits from the category "Collateral Studies".

**The Jordanhill Scheme** stimulates the personally designed pathways with the Process and Planning module, which gains 15 SM credit points within an individual program of study.

In the **Finnish program** the student can get specific knowledge with "Advanced studies" (20 study weeks) in one of the minor Subjects of the M.Ed.

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