

# *HUMANISM IN SCHOOL- POLICY IN FINLAND AFTER 1945*

## *1. Introduction*

In this paper I will analyse the development of Humanism in school policy in Finland after 1945. One reason for this topic is the crisis after the second world war in Europe during which school policy and school system had to establish new guidelines. My interest is to Finland and its solutions. After 1945 the political situation was very volatile for many reasons, but the election of the Finnish Parliament had a great effect, development became more stable and rendered reform of education possible. What was the role of Humanism in this process?

## *2. Humanism in Antiquity*

Antiquity and its Humanism have had a great effect on Finnish schools and their curricula since the Middle Ages. Humanism and its standard bearer, the study of Latin, were a major part of the curriculum in secondary schools from the 1300 to the 19th century. Next to Latin, Greek and Hebrew were taught. Latin formed the majority of the lessons, one of its important aims being to acquaint the pupils with Antiquity.

Religion also had a very important position, while other subjects were studied for practical needs. This unity began to

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break down in the 1840's with the reform of the schools. The ideal of classical humanism acquired a rival: the ideal realism which emphasized the connection between school with the real world and its phenomena, including industry and business life. Tension between these lines increased so greatly that it was decided to establish two kinds of secondary school, classical lyceums and real lyceums in the school law of 1883. This meant that the hegemony of Latin was finally broken, but tension continued. From the 1920's humanism took another form which can be called National Humanism. It valued national subjects such as mother tongue instruction, poetry and all aspects of national culture and its achievements. One example of this period is the school committee of 1932 which made a proposal on the model of a comprehensive school, advancing arguments based on the ideas of Plato and Comenius.

The tradition of classical lyceums continued until the 1970's, when the parallel school system came into force.

### ***3. Humanism and school policy in conflict***

The Parliament of Finland decided in 1963 to reform the schoolsystem to create comprehensive system. The law was passed in 1968 and was implemented in 1972-78. This meant a new administration and a new curriculum for all levels of the school system. The committee of curriculum of 1970 formulated the goal for comprehensive schools that a school should give promote the development of personality. This goal can be seen as close to humanism, emphasizing individuality and supporting personal growth. But a new committee of 1971 wanted to change the goal. Its starting-point was social policy and school policy and aiming a total model for the educational system form early childhood to university and professional education. This committee paid particular attention to the second level of the school system, formulating three goals: the main goal was

to give professional education to all age-groups. This meant emphasizing more quantitative goals than qualitative. The second goal was professional education planned according to the needs of working life (business life) and the third was a continuous reform of the curriculum. A developing economic structure and production technology was presupposed to change the curriculum. These goals meant a great reform of the second level of the school system. The new model of the school system consists of the 9-year comprehensive school as the first level and the three year secondary level with high school and professional education. This model means that the parallel school system has been reorganized, names of schools changed, classical lyceums disappeared, and so on.

Where was Humanism?

In this school reform the status of Latin, the standarbearer, changed greatly. A student can select Latin in the comprehensive school and in high school, but very few did so in the 1970s and 1980s. But in the 1990s however, interest has increased again. One reason is the so-called hard values. In School policy emphasizes equality, effectiveness and centrally planned administration. Social values were preferred to individual values.

At the same time humanism, in the 1970s, began to be explained in another way, as can be seen in the well-known Faure report, "Learning to be". It talks about scientific humanism and explains wearing of this concept. Planning a new school should be based on scientific and technological teaching, which is one cornerstone of scientific humanism. One can talk about real humanism in the sense that scientific humanism gives up all predestinal subjects or an abstract image of man. It considers man as a physical being in a historical framework at a given period. A new explanation became very popular in the following proposals of the school committee. The status of sciences and scientific researchers was to be greater than be-

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fore but a tumbling-block was how to combine (party)political values with school policy. Political parties aimed to reinforce their status in school policy by being members of every school committee.

#### ***4. The reform of humanism***

It was very interesting to remark how quickly a central-planned school administration had to be changed in the 1980s. It appeared clearly at two levels. The trend could be characterised as “from uniformity to diversity”. National curricula were discarded and the municipalities granted an opportunity to develop their own school and instruction. It meant at the same time that local school boards obtained freedom in decision-making on economic questions, curricula, learning material, etc.

The clearest sign of the reform of humanism one can see in the documents of the parliamentary education committee in 1990. According to this committee, the education objective of Finnish schools is to educate balanced young people who have a solid personality and are concerned with the development of the national culture and national values, including the humanistic and Christian traditions and appreciation of home and work.

International cooperation is one of the objectives. In order to achieve the schools education objectives the committee stated that teacher training should take into account the basic values of education, namely humanistic values, the internalisation of the educational task and the ability to feel responsibility for pupils and instruction. Beside the basic objectives, another such value is sustainable development which is achieved by an interactive relationship between nature and humankind, by realising human dignity and related fundamental human rights, and by developing the individual and society so that they can

fully make use of and develop their cultural resources. Humanism and Finnish culture thus a very close connection.

Another sign of the reform of humanism is apparent in a book written by Liekki Lehtisalo and Reijo Raivola, entitled "Suomalainen koulutuspolitiikka" (Finnish School policy) in 1992. They emphasized that the humanism of yesterday is insufficient for the culture of the post-industrial information society. Change in society, new international and global challenges as presumed to enhance the humanistic vision through continuous analysis. Thus one must talk about democratic and participatory humanism, in which work is an essential part regardless of the development of the task and its quality. Education is the realization of humanism, this is the omenial criterion of success in education .

This book takes humanism to be an important concept for the engineer, architect and researcher, who all have to see man in their work . To make work humanism is an essential aspect of professional education. Writers emphasize the reorganization of humanism as a vision for the future, which in education means innovative, creative and anticipatory learning . In the broadest sense it appears as genuine concern to save mankind from nuclear war. So international education and education in peace tackles an essential problem of our existence.

Writers consider the relevance of humanism to other social factors, Work, culture and education should be bound together with a band of democratic humanism. One important question is technology. Writers assume that humanism without technology means Unreality and that technology without humanism is catastrophe in education. It is possible to connect humanism with technology in applied form and in many ways in all school policy so subordinated that image of man of humanism will formulate limits of technology and use purpose and give to it one part of content too. Humanistic and technological attitude of life will be connected with concepts of ethno-

technology and ecotechnology. Ethnotechnology means taking into consideration national draws and past and ecotechnology means technology under nature's conditions.

Writers stressed the central position of education in how the big problems of humanity and its environment will be decided. Hum all, man-centered education and education system are necessary to preserve mankind. Unfortunately, they alone cannot guarantee it.

## 5. Summary

Humanism has had many explanations since 1945 in school policy. Early humanism had a central position in the secondary school curriculum but changing to comprehensive schooling meant finding new guidelines. Faure's report "Learning to be" concentrated on the concept of scientific humanism. The Finnish Parliament in 1990 stressed humanism as personal values, personal growth while also embracing international cooperation. Another version in the 1990s was democratic and participatory humanism which has close connection with technology.

## References

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