

# HARIDUSUUEENDUSE KONVERENTS 2015

*Traditsioon ja innovatsioon hariduses*

# ***EDUCATION IN TRANSITION – THE IMPACT OF NEOLIBERAL EDUCATIONAL REFORMS ON TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM IN ESTONIA***

*Artikli kaasautorid: Inge Timoštšuk, Rain Mikser ja Aino Ugaste*

---

Maarja Tinn

16.04 2015



# INTRODUCTION

HARIDUSUENDUSE  
KONVERENTS 2015

Traditsioon ja innovatsioon hariduses

- *Educational changes in Eastern Europe around the fall of communism*
  - *Great expectations on teachers as the main initiators of reforms*
- *State-run central control mechanisms*
- *Teachers deprofessionalisation*
  - *Decreasing autonomy and ever increasing standardisation and external output control*
- *Refraction of global educational policies in national contexts*

# Context of the study

- *Events and initiatives that influenced developments in teacher control over their work (Eliot Freidson)*
  - *direct control over the terms (structure and social relationships, discretion);*
  - *conditions (working conditions, including required training credentials for entry);*
  - *goals (defined through assessment);*
  - *content of work (freedom to decide over content and means of work)*
- *1986-1996*
  - *Last Soviet education act – first Estonian national curriculum for schools of general education*

# METHODS

- *Bottom-up and top-down processes in education policy*
- *Documentary analysis of educational policy documents and articles in professional periodicals*
  - *Legislative documents, pamphlets & protocols*
- *Thematic analysis*
  - *Themes and sub-themes*
- *The aim of the analysis was to develop coherent and thick description of the study material*

# RESULTS

## 1986-1988

- *Top-down initiatives*
  - *Out-dated ideas*
  - *Headmasters of schools were given some freedom*
- *Bottom-up initiatives*
  - *Democratization, decentralization, participation and involvement*
  - *Teachers Congress*
    - *Beginning of decentralization and democratisation movement*
  - *Estonia's Educational Platform*
    - *Main purpose of education should be supporting the growth of democracy in society*
  - *Teacher – victim of the circumstances or the cause of the troubles?*
  - *Textbooks and school subjects under critical observation*

# *Control over work*

- *Increasing the autonomy of the school boards, teachers' councils and headmasters*
- *The need for a complementary education*
- *Bottom up initiatives focused on the change of the content of education*
- *Top-down initiatives focused on the structure*
- *Lack of teachers professional autonomy*

# RESULTS

## 1989-1990

- *Top-down initiatives*
  - *Declaration on the Sovereignty of the Estonian SSR*
  - *National Educational Committee*
  - *Stabilisation period – initiative was taken over by the state*
- *Bottom-up initiatives*
  - *Education Forum*
  - *Critical review of Estonia's educational conditions*



# *Control over work*

- *Schools gained rights to partially modify the school syllabus*
- *Professional freedom of teachers increased:*
  - *right to decide over assessment forms and criteria;*
  - *right to decide over methods;*
  - *right to choose their own teaching materials from the selection approved by the ministry*

# RESULTS

## 1991-1996

- *Top-down initiatives*
  - *A principle of shared responsibility*
  - *Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act*
  - *Evaluating teachers' work on the basis of students' results*
  - *State Board of Education – teacher evaluation*
  - *Process of curriculum development*
    - *Teachers were given more responsibility*
  - *Schools gained more autonomy*
- *Bottom-up initiatives*
  - *Leading role was taken over by experts in advisory groups formed inside the ministry*
  - *The government's one-sided focusing merely on administrative duties was heavily criticised*

# Control over work

- *Signs of increase in professionalism at the same time with deprofessionalisation*
- *Input to the school curriculum*
- *Formal education requirements were replaced by evaluation*
- *Efficiency became more important indicator of teachers work than professionalism*
- *Decentralization led to the increase of schools' autonomy*
  - *Increasing collective rather than individual autonomy*

# CONCLUSIONS

- *The main source of influence on professionalism is the state and its policies*
- *Freidson`s indicators of professionalism were found to have been partially followed at an institutional level*
- *External growth of professionalism in increased requirements and expectations for teachers*
- *Tendency towards standardisation*
- *Teacher profession became more vulnerable*

# Täna kuulamast!

maarja.tinn@gmail.com

---