THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSORSHIP IN FINLAND
(Summary)

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The title of professor

The persons included in this biographical directory are united by the word “professor” (*professor* in Latin), which, in its original form, means teacher. Today, professorship is primarily understood as the highest teaching level at universities and other institutions of higher education, and the word “professor” signifies the holder of a specific post or chair. In some European countries, however, the title of “professor” has also been used for subordinate teachers. The development of scientific research and the related growing need for pragmatic knowledge has, of late, resulted in the establishment of different types of research institutions within the universities. The heads and leading researchers of these institutions have been considered as being equal to academic professors, and consequently, the word “professor” is used as the title of the post or as a part of it (for example, Research Professor) or as an honorary title connected with the administrative title of the post (i.e. Department Head, Prof.) The word “professor” can also be a title of honour, which the Government bestows on particularly distinguished scientists or artists, or persons with great merit in the field of fine arts and culture. Universities can also nowadays grant the honorary title of professor to persons working in their service. Overall, we might say that, in colloquial language, the content of the generally used term “professor” has gradually become even more varied.

Professorship at the Academy of Turku

Although the university got its start in the 12th century in Southern Europe, the concepts of university and professor did not become familiar to the Finnish population until the 17th century, when Sweden was making strong efforts to establish itself as a great power among other nations while also striving to improve its internal development. Universities were founded for the purpose of educating civil servants for the needs of the growing administration. In 1640, the gymnasium founded in Turku ten years earlier became a university under the name “Turun akatemia” (Royal Academy of Turku). The university had four faculties and 11 professors. At this earlier stage in the Academy’s history, the majority of the professors were recruited from the mother country of Sweden.

The professors carrying out their teaching and research at the Academy of Turku were in a clearly superior position in relation to the other personnel, and the situation remained quite unchanged until the new developments in the late 20th century. From its start, the Academy also had two posts for assistants, or ‘adjuncts’, whose job description was, at first, quite heterogeneous (including the duties of a librarian and secretary) and whose salary was notably lower than that of the professors. During the period under Sweden’s rule, the number of professorships in Turku increased to 16, particularly within the natural sciences as a result of the period of utilitarianism and enlightenment prevailing in the mid-18th century. The number of assistant posts also rose, to eight.

During this phase in Turku, the Academy hired several extraordinary professors and assistants, who had the right to lecture, but were not assigned a regular salary within the rule of expenditure. Their position yielded, in practice, formal career merit, which held a certain expectation to ease one’s selection for a tenured professorship should one open up. These extraordinary professors and assistants were generally used in situations in which the holder of the ordinary post was unable, for one reason or another, to fulfil his duties.

The arrangement of the professor’s wages was, of course, a highly crucial and central issue for universities and institutions of higher education. The wages were paid partly in kind consisting of tithes due to the Crown and tax parcels (beer, butter or other natural products). The taxes in kind were collected from more than 300 farms and estates in the Turku region which together formed a sort of wage feoff for the Academy. Additionally, the professors in Theology and two professors in the Faculty of Philosophy also served as parish vicars, who subsequently received income from their pastorates. For the other professors, the Academy had its own estates in the jurisdiction of Masku, which could be cultivated by the professor and his labourers, unless he decided to lease it to a tenant. The regular taxes were collected by the Academy’s treasurer or bursar with the help of bailiffs. In 1743, a new rule of expenditure was confirmed, resulting in an

increase in salaries as well as several crucial changes in the system. The position of bursar was abolished and each professor was individually responsible for collecting the taxes for his own farm or estate.

Under Russian power – an era of struggle and growth

The growing prosperity of the Academy of Turku at the end of the 18th century was visible in the gradual increase of the professoriate, but the development during this period paled alongside the change that was soon to take place as Finland was ceded to Russia in 1809. The councillors of the Academy of Turku had showed a positive attitude toward the change of power and the 'Imperial Academy of Alexander' was repaid generously for its support by the Czar of Russia, Alexander I, in 1811 under a new rule of expenditure. The rule of expenditure raised the number of professorships from 16 to 21 and nearly doubled the number of assistant positions to 15. The rapidly growing group of teaching assistants, however, had not been able to establish their positions. Senior academics felt that the assistant posts were too often regarded as stepping stones to professorship; the post holders were not particularly concerned about developing their own knowledge or skills, because they trusted that their merits would automatically earn them the title of professor eventually. When the university was transferred to Helsinki in 1828, not a single extraordinary assistant was appointed. In 1852, Czar Nicholas I announced statutes to abolish all assistant positions. Several decades later, assistant positions were established once again, albeit at a relatively slow pace.

In 1828, the statutes mentioned an extraordinary professor of Russian language and literature, whose salary was regulated by the rule of expenditure. This paved the way for new development, even though the position in question held a specialised role. When Johan Jacob Nervander, Adjunct in Mathematics and Physics, was named Director of the new Magnetic Observatory (presently the Finnish Meteorological Institute) in 1838, with the title of extraordinary professor and a professor's salary, a new and more effective model was introduced for the development of professorship in Finland. Scientific developments and the increasing educational needs in this arena correspondingly increased the pressure for new academic posts. It became more common for new posts to be established as salaried extraordinary professorships. Some of these later turned into tenured professorships or chairs and some took the role of personal extraordinary professorships. The model for the current tailored chairs, where individuals are often recruited by invitation and the position is specifically designed for the person in question, began to take hold even though the appointments in those days were, in most cases, permanent positions; unlike the current trend of fixed-term appointments, there was no mention of non-tenured positions at that time. The benefit of this system was, of course, its flexibility. The wage expenditure was less than that for tenured professorships and, at the same time, it was possible to evaluate the new field researched or instructed by the extraordinary professor to see whether it would have potential to grow into a discipline to be included in degree studies.

At the end of the period of autonomy within the Russian empire, the development in the number of professor positions was quite favourable, as was the wage development, with a transition to a purely monetary wage system in 1875. In 1917, the University of Helsinki had 57 tenured professors and 29 extraordinary professors. The number of assistant professors was only 15. Therefore, the number of professorships at the University of Helsinki was altogether approximately 100 when the country headed into independence.

Nearly to the end of the period under Russian rule, the University of Helsinki managed to hold its monopoly in the training of the country's educated classes. The multilevel impact of the national awakening and developing economic life created, however, pressure to divide the education structure into separate sectors. Despite some scepticism, higher education in agriculture and forestry was included as a new faculty in the University of Helsinki in 1896, but advanced technological and business instruction were focused on finding their own solutions. In 1908, the Polytechnic Institute became the University of Technology, which began its activities with 20 professorships. Development within higher business education was formally moving in a unified direction; in 1911, a private school of economics and business administration was formed in Helsinki from the classes of the Finnish Business College that were intended for students with a matriculation diploma. Its activities, however, did not develop to the professorship level until the 1920s.

Acclimating to independence – complicated development

The development of posts at the University of Helsinki was swift during the first few years following independence in 1917. The growth in the number of students required a corresponding increase in teaching faculty, but a part of the growth was attributable also to language policies, since Finland had officially become a bilingual state and it was important to ensure sufficient higher education for both Finnish and

Swedish speakers. By 1930, the number of full professorships in the University of Helsinki had risen to 87. The number of extraordinary professors had also risen slightly (to 33), despite the fact that these positions were changed quite frequently into tenured professorships. The number of assistant professors had also grown from 15 to 22.

The professoriate met with quite tough financial restraints during World War I. The salaries of the professors again reached a stable level in 1925, but it remained at approximately 2/3 of the salary level prior to the war.

Even though the financial aspect of being part of the elite professoriate faded, the social status retained its prestige. During the period between the wars, the University of Helsinki retained its unchallenged leadership position in higher education. It was not, however, the only university in the country anymore, and more universities of applied sciences were founded, even though professorships for them were still hard to obtain. In Turku, the strong local and language policies led to the foundation of the private Swedish-language university, Åbo Akademi University, in 1917. In its beginning stages, the university had ten or so professorships. In 1922, the University of Turku was founded as a private, Finnish-language university of similar size. The number of professorships and faculty development at Åbo Akademi University was, however, clearly ahead, and it was not until after World War II that the Finnish-language University of Turku was able to gain the upper hand as a result of the Faculty of Medicine established during the Continuation War.

In 1927, a Swedish-language private school for economics, Svenska Handelshögskolan was founded in Helsinki, and several of its "senior teachers" were given the title of professor in the mid-1930s. A second Swedish-language school of economics and business administration, Svenska Handelshögskolan vid Åbo Akademi, was also founded in 1927 in Turku. The professorships for this school were primarily part-time positions covered by professors of Åbo Akademi University. The Folk Academy was founded in Helsinki in 1925, but was quickly changed into the Institute of Social Sciences in 1930. The permanent teaching positions in the school were not, however, promoted to professorships until after World War II. In 1934, the Institute of Pedagogics was founded in Jyväskylä in connection with the existing folk-school teacher training college and managed to establish four professorships already by the end of the 1930s. Progress was, therefore, slow for seats of learning that carried names referring to higher education to become true universities. The economic depression in the 1930s was undoubtedly one of the reasons behind the slow progress. The seeds for the regional decentralization of higher education were, however, sown during the period between the wars.

Dynamic growth at the end of the twentieth century

The impacts of the lengthy and taxing World War II were felt for a long time, but a promising period was dawning for growth development. There existed a desire to build a stronger, more secure future for the baby boom generation through improved education. A few examples of the growth development efforts following the war could be seen in the establishment of the College of Veterinary Medicine in Helsinki in 1945 and the Finnish-language School of Economics in Turku in 1950. The political parties that had risen into power, particularly the Agrarian Party at the political centre, viewed the steering of education development as an important aspect of regional policies. Due to frustration with the lack of space and increasing signs of mass higher education, even the University of Helsinki showed interest in directing resources to other areas of the country as well. At the end of the 1950s, lengthy committee collaboration and political debate resulted in some noteworthy decisions. A university was founded in Oulu and, in 1958, Jyväskylä's Institute of Pedagogics gained a Faculty of Arts and Sciences which held promising growth opportunities. In 1960, the Institute of Social Sciences moved to Tampere; a move that opened up a number of promising growth prospects. In Oulu, efforts were made to retain the professors by creating a local housing allowance system, which was in use until the 1990s.

In terms of the regional policies, a grand step concerning higher education was taken at the end of the 1950s within the decision-making arena, but the expansive operations did not get into full swing for years for many reasons, and Eastern Finland remained without a university. In the 1960s, persistent work was done to find new regional policy solutions. The decision to establish a university in Eastern Finland – the successor of the university once planned for Vyborg – was, however, a politically heated topic and the final result in 1966 was to divide the project between the three areas of the region. An institution providing education in medicine and natural sciences was founded in Kuopio, a teacher training college in Joensuu and a university of technology in Lappeenranta. A Finnish-language school of economics and business administration was also established

in Vaasa around this same time. The dynamic growth favoured even the more recently founded universities and institutions of higher education. The Institute of Social Sciences in Tampere and the Institute of Pedagogics in Jyväskylä grew to be multidiscipline seats of learning to the degree that, when they were granted the right to use the word university in their titles in 1966, it was nearly just a formality. A university of technology was also established in Tampere in 1965. Although the school initially operated as an annex to the University of Technology situated at that time in Helsinki and Espoo, it soon developed into an independent institution of higher education.

Following the parliamentary election of 1966, the so-called popular front government rose to power. Under its wing, youth radicalism flourished, partly, also, through the favour of the country's highest leadership. The demand for introducing democracy into the exertion of power within the field of education sparked a stormy debate. The most extreme option, known as the principle of "one man, one vote", appalled the university professors, who decided to establish their own union in order to reinforce their front in rejecting the proposed option. One significant consequence from this period of upset was the closing of private universities and institutions of higher learning. They were unable to bear the economic stress brought on by new challenges, and one after the other became nationalised. This development was not opposed within the Government; after all, a shift to planned economy had, in effect, taken place, and it called for increased centralization of the control systems.

In the 1970s, there were already some fifteen universities and institutions sharing the resources allocated for higher education. Positive growth in the national economy facilitated the educational cornucopia, but it was not unlimited. Older academic institutions complained about the scantiness of posts. The recession brought on by the so-called oil crisis did not prevent political decision-makers from establishing the University College of Lapland in Rovaniemi in 1979 (currently the University of Lapland). The very promising economic period in the 1980s helped to strengthen the already established units. Affiliate operations were developed for the institutions of higher learning to compensate for unrealised plans to establish local institutions. The academic institutions of Kuopio and Joensuu were granted the title of university in 1984, followed by the schools in Vaasa and Lapland in 1991. The tight economic situation at that time once again stifled growth opportunities and led to budget cuts, the reallocation of resources and merges into larger units. The recession was followed by reduced mental and material well-being, difficulties to adapt to the new performance-oriented management which demanded efficiency and the potential for regeneration, and a growing feeling among the senior professors of the need to 'escape to retirement'; in other words, issues commonly experienced by those faced with a recession.

Alongside scientific institutions, the art institutions of higher learning also received their part of the growth, even though it also meant being faced with similar political ambitions. The Sibelius Academy, founded originally in 1882 as a conservatory to provide advanced musical instruction, became a private institution of higher education in 1939 and was then nationalised in 1979. The present University of Art and Design Helsinki was founded in 1973 following several intense phases, and was followed by the Theatre Academy in 1979. In 1985, the Fine Arts Academy of Finland was nationalised and given the name Academy of Fine Arts. In the beginning of the 1990s, the school had several professorships. At that time, the art academies had a total of more than 30 professor and assistant professor posts. Quantitative development in institutions of higher art education during the 1990s was favourable, and the number of professorships has nearly doubled since the beginning of the depression. The creation of non-tenured professorships has, however, been strikingly pronounced. The pressure to realise creativity is a reality in the art sphere; a reality which establishes set boundaries for art education. The activities are tinged by frequent changes in direction and trends.

In the 1990s, the higher learning institution in Finland gained yet another new university. The comprehensive reform of the military education system resulted in the establishment of the National Defence University, which is the only university outside of the administration of the Ministry of Education.

New challenges for the new millenium

As the twentieth century progressed, Finland developed into a modern Western society; a civilized state with advanced technology. This did not, however, mean that the country removed itself from the technological rat race; in fact, quite the opposite proved to be the case. Finland's succession to the European Union in 1995 radically accelerated the country's internationalisation and steps toward globalisation. The general opinion was that education and research must also increase their efforts to keep up with the development. In

international comparisons, the Finnish school system has proven to be highly successful, but the application of the same model characterised by “democratic equality” has provided less satisfactory results in higher education and research. The fact that the University of Helsinki placed 73rd as the only Finnish university among the hundred best universities in the world has drawn confusion and encouraged discussion.

The Finnish university system has been harshly criticised as having become stuck in mass producing mediocracies. This claim is supported by the finding that the student-teacher ratio in Finnish universities has dropped below the OECD average. Demands have been placed on the Government to increase the financial backing for education and research, but also the right for universities to receive further benefit from external strategic and financial support, primarily from the business sector. The State’s meticulous managing of the budget, with its method of using a figurative ‘cheese slicer’, has been viewed as truly taxing.

The principle of triangular governance that has been applied to university administration from the start of the 1970s has been viewed as being too rigid and as limiting for the rector’s authority. External interest groups have had very little chance to influence university administration. The amendment to the Universities Act (30.7.2004/715) included the obligation of universities to work interactively with the surrounding society and to improve the social impact of the research results and activities in the fields of science and fine arts. One suggestion calls for each university to be run by a primarily external board who would appoint the rector and, in collaboration with the rector, guide and oversee the university’s strategic and financial management. The opinions as to whether this type of reform would present a threat to the traditional autonomy of the university, in terms of its education and research, are undoubtedly highly divided.

Some of the criticism concerning the recent waning trend in development is directed at the students, who are said to be idle in their study practices and to jeopardize their studies by working part-time while studying. Talk about introducing tuition payments and adopting an educational voucher system is primarily intended to create incentives and to suggest movement towards a growing international practice. The underlying idea is to fit students into the role of ‘demanding customer’, but the students themselves vehemently oppose any encroachment into free education.

Competition between universities which stems from business life is primarily a characteristic of Anglo-American culture. Within the European continent, its role has been traditionally weaker. The consistently increasing assessments and audits of teaching and research have, of course, increased the significance of competition and competing. Many people feel that there are too many universities in Finland and that the development of their numerous units are suffering as a result of insufficient funding. The deep recession in the 1990s also had its effect, since the process of repairing the damage from that period seems to have swallowed a great percentage of the resources needed for growth. We are now seeing signs of accelerated integration development. The project to merge the Helsinki University of Technology (HUT), the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE), and the University of Art and Design into a world class university has been the most debated of the new projects. Its interdisciplinary, innovative opportunities are viewed as highly intriguing, but within the art and design sector, there is also a fear of finding their discipline suddenly at the mercy of the business world.

Attempts to raise the quality of research through competitive funding have also created problems. State funds that circulate through many levels before reaching their intended project have created a cycle of unnecessary “project bureaucracy”. The grave consequences of this have proven to be a further increase in academic temporary and fixed-term work and, particularly, a weakening of the social security for grant researchers. Issues concerning wages and social security have otherwise been in the hot seat within the academic community for many years. At the beginning of the 1990s, a comprehensive reform of the salary system for state positions was initiated, but the integration of the new system (known as UPJ) within the universities has been very slow. Positive change began to take effect in 2003 and, following a tough period of struggle, the reform was fully integrated in the universities in 2006. The central objective behind the reform was to formulate a system by which a person’s salary is determined by the difficulty level involved in his/her work and the assessment of his/her competencies. The task of reconciling these aspects has proven to be toilsome and painful.

The issue surrounding the working hours of university employees has long remained below the surface, but has gradually risen to become a notable factor. In 2004, Statistics Finland carried out its third time use survey within the universities. According to the results, the maximum hours used by professors for their work tasks have remained nearly the same as in the previous survey in 1991-92, or an average of 47 hours per week, including 6 hours on the weekends. Art professors are even more diligent, since their corresponding

figures were 49 and 7. Perhaps these higher figures are affected by their inborn passion for art, or maybe it is linked with the young age of these chairs and the resulting hard work to try and increase respect for art academies. The honour awarded to Professor Erik T. Tawaststjerna, Piano Instructor at the Sibelius Academy, as ‘Professor of the Year 2006’ is living proof that art has come of age alongside science within the sphere of Finnish higher education.