LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

University of Lapland

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version usually differs somewhat from the publisher's final version, if the self-archived version is the accepted author manuscript.

Mainstream university pedagogy in feminist perspective

Naskali, Päivi Helinä; Keskitalo-Foley, Seija Inkeri

Published in:
Gender and Education

DOI:
[10.1080/09540253.2017.1315057](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1315057)

E-pub ahead of print: 26.04.2017

Document Version
Version created as part of publication process; publisher's layout; not normally made publicly available

Citation for pulished version (APA):
Naskali, P. H., & Keskitalo-Foley, S. I. (2017). Mainstream university pedagogy in feminist perspective. *Gender and Education*, 1-17. [April]. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1315057>

Mainstream university pedagogy in feminist perspective

Abstract

This article analyses university pedagogy by contrasting mainstream pedagogy and feminist pedagogical thought. The data consist of two textbooks, and we investigate what kinds of teaching, learning and knowledge the textbooks construct and what kinds of student and teacher positions they suggest. The inquiry shows that learning in the textbooks is seen as a strictly defined, hierarchical process and that ideal teaching stresses methods over content. The power of knowledge is not discussed, nor are gender, sexuality and other differences. Academics are seen as professional teachers who master teaching methods, and students are framed as customers. An assumed human sameness, marketisation of education, emphasis on vocational benefit and ‘pathos of the new’ were found to be themes guiding mainstream pedagogy. We suggest that feminist pedagogy can offer an alternative approach, one enabling a critical analysis of the power of knowledge and an awareness of differences among students.

Keywords: university pedagogy, feminist approach, textbook analysis, power of knowledge, differences, neoliberalism

Introduction

In this article we discuss mainstream university pedagogy by examining some of its features from a feminist point of view. We are aware that neither mainstream pedagogy nor feminist pedagogy is monolithic; both are products of many trends and features. However, we will use

the terms here in the singular to emphasise the contrast between the two orientations. The inspiration for our research lies in the prospect of being able to change university politics. The values of neoliberal ideology, efficiency, quantitative measures and quality assurance systems (Bailey 2014, 664–6) have begun to dominate the university culture worldwide. Pedagogy has been harnessed as tool for quality assurance to demonstrate universities' effectiveness. Many feminist researchers have not been satisfied with mainstream pedagogy, which is blamed for being framed in rhetorical jargon that does not sufficiently address issues such as ethics, diversity, power, construction of knowledge, gender and sexuality. (Lempiäinen & Naskali 2011).

Our interest in this article lies in the differences and similarities between mainstream and feminist university pedagogy. Their shared history can be traced back to progressive pedagogy (hooks 1994; MacKeracher 1994). Back in 1984, in his *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, David Kolb (1985, 26–31) stated the main theses for progressive educational practice: learning as a process, the importance of students' experiences and emotions, and learning as a holistic process of adaptation to the world. It is our hypothesis here that the most obvious difference between mainstream and feminist pedagogy can be reduced to their respective conceptions of knowledge: while feminist pedagogy emphasises a critical approach to knowledge that 'reveal[s] the relationship between knowledge and power, gendered hierarchies, and dissymmetry' (Liljeström 2004, 21), mainstream university pedagogy is mainly interested in effective learning results. The latter orientation leads to a focus on teachers' teaching and students' learning practices, and thus to an emphasis on methods at the expense of content.

Development has been brisk in recent years in both approaches. For example, experiential learning, community learning and cooperative learning have brought new elements to mainstream pedagogy, and feminist pedagogy has received inspiration from norm-critical pedagogy and queer studies (Kumashiro 2000; Bromseth and Darj 2010; Sedgwick 2003). In addition, multicultural pedagogy (hooks 1994; Banks 1994; Smith-Adcock, Ropers-Huilman, and Hensley Choate, 2004) has been discussed in both feminist and mainstream pedagogy.

We have chosen for analysis two textbooks widely used in Finnish universities: *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (Biggs and Tang 2011, hereinafter TQLU) and *Yliopisto-opettajan käsikirja* (Handbook for the University Teacher, ed. by Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi 2011, hereinafter YK). We have considered textbooks worth studying because, in spite of the increasing amount of media-based materials, traditional academic textbooks still have institutional power in constructing knowledge.

We ask what kind of teaching, learning and knowledge the textbooks construct, and what kinds of student and teacher positions they suggest. We first describe the textbooks and the main characteristics of feminist thought that the analysis is based on. We then proceed to analyse the works critically, examining how the learning process is characterised, what kind of meaning is given to experience and emotion in interaction, and how power is understood as a part of university pedagogy. The analysis shows that process, experiences and emotion are important in both pedagogical orientations – although their status in the learning process is viewed differently. Accordingly, the textbooks view learning as a series of well-planned tasks for reaching a target; good teaching is focusing on methods, not content; and knowledge is seen as value neutral. Teachers are positioned either as old-fashioned and content-oriented, or as modern, teaching-oriented actors. Students are positioned as representatives of their

ethnic or gender groups, although the ideal student is described as a hardworking, goal-oriented individual whose gendered, social or ethnic background is meaningless in the learning process.

Research material and analysis

Teaching for Quality Learning at University (TQLU) is used internationallyⁱ. Enjoying robust sales and being in its fourth edition, the textbook can be assumed to have a prominent place among Western universities. We have analysed the fourth, updated edition, which features a newly written introduction. The book is meant for ‘teachers, staff developers and administrators’ (xx) for practical purposes and written according to the pedagogical principle of ‘constructive alignment’, offering examples from everyday university life and boxes for testing the knowledge acquired through the learning process.ⁱⁱ

The book addresses the need for more effective teaching practices for universities in change. According to the authors, the Bologna Process (Bologna Process <http://www.ehea.info/>) in Europe, the need to attract more fee-paying students from abroad and the diversity of students have increased pressure for developing teaching methods (TQLU, 3–4). The book observes that universities are dependent on student fees and are therefore ‘forced to rely on international students as a major source of their income’ (xviii). Incoming students expect well-taught programmes that will improve their position in the labour market. This leads to institutions offering ‘more professionally or vocationally oriented programmes’. The pressure on staff increases when ‘some [students], using the logic that education is a commodity to be bought, feel that having paid for the degree they are entitled to be awarded one’. The ‘massification’ of universities has increased diversity among students: students now come

from different backgrounds and their academic orientation and commitment also vary more than before (4–5).

The version of *Yliopisto-opettajan käsikirja* (YK) we have analysed is the second, unrevised editionⁱⁱⁱ, and it is commonly used in Finnish universities. Actually, there are no competing textbooks in this field. The structure of the book differs from that of TQLU; it is an anthology of 20 articles written by 24 Finnish authors representing different academic disciplines.^{iv} The book contains presentations of learning theories, examples of research in university pedagogy, as well as practical advice.^v

While TQLU is clearly based on economic demands, which are considered self-evident, YK does not mention universities' deteriorating economy or the need to offer attractive programmes for foreign students as a reason for developing teaching. The reason for this may be that studying in Finnish universities has been free of charge for all. From 2017 on, students coming from outside the EU are required to pay tuition. Instead of the logic of economy, the book emphasises the changing character of the work of university staff: 'The educational challenges of university pedagogy are closely linked to the challenges of research-oriented universities to raise the value of teaching that would place it on par with research.' (YK, 28)

We read the texts in a deconstructive manner, analysing the ways in which language works. In the context of feminist cultural research, the term 'resistant reading' (Fetterley 1978) is also used, meaning reflective questioning of the gender assumptions in discourse and attention to details that seem to be irrelevant. In queer studies, such reading is called '*paranoid reading*' (Vänskä 2011). Careful attention is paid to what is said explicitly but also

to what is left outside the text. Deconstructive reading seeks to ‘make explicit the unspoken, unarticulated conditions of (philosophical) discourse’ (Grosz 2005, 92). Typically, these conditions are silent details that are ignored due to their cultural obviousness. Tutta Palin (2004, 46), a feminist researcher of cultural history, observes that such particulars say a great deal and are in fact loud. She says: ‘They become loud only after they have been identified as objects and cannot be ignored anymore.’ Approaching our material in this way, we will reveal the ideological assumptions that have shaped the conceptions of knowledge presented in the works. Feminist deconstructive reading does not deny academic traditions as such but challenges them by asking new questions and by unsettling coherent, generalising conceptions of Western science. The purpose is not to freeze the meanings but to open up the reading for an infinite and open process of movement (Berger 2005, 55–6).

The main principles of feminist knowledge

In feminist perspective, knowledge is constantly connected to human activities (Tanesini 1999). This seemingly simple thought has its implications for the definition and practice of teaching. It stresses knowledge and knowing as parts of social reality: an individual subject cannot be the source of knowledge. Moreover, not only knowledge but also the objects of knowing are constituted socially: human beings do not have direct access to reality; it can only be reached via language. Values are always part of linguistic meaning systems, norms and values, and this means that knowledge can never be value neutral (Tanesini 1999, 12–3, 269; Harding 2004, 132–6). Knowledge is not something to be transformed or absorbed but it is constituted in the interdependence of the people involved and materials used. The results cannot be guaranteed beforehand, because students are actively constructing their own understandings.

Feminist pedagogy emphasises the social context in learning. Knowing is not a state or property; it does not mean increasing the number of ‘facts’ one commands but challenging and changing one’s understanding of previous knowledge. It is an ongoing movement from knowing to not knowing (Britzman 1991, 8). This means that more important than knowing outcomes or answers is understanding how the learner and teacher have come to the conclusions they have, that is, what choices have been made and what kind of knowledge has been included and excluded. The process is understood as a moving back and forth between ignorance and knowing without ever reaching total certainty or the truth. Understandings are not replaced with knowledge but with other understandings (Tanesini 1999). The process entails a need to open up the social, cultural and historical terms of knowledge; they help to analyse and understand the power that has legitimated some ideas as knowledge, or even as truth.

Feminist pedagogy acknowledges the political aspect of all teaching and knowing. Even if knowledge may seem to be neutral and objective, it is always a result of choices from among a large number of possibilities. Instead of stressing coherent truth, feminist pedagogy emphasises differences and different viewpoints, even discrepancies, as an ethical aspect of teaching. Thus, knowing and ignorance are not opposites. Knowing is always limited; it is possible to know something by ignoring something else in the realm of knowledge. The task of teaching is to analyse the boundaries of knowing, to explore what kind of knowledge is outside the imagination, what we can bear to know and what is excluded (Britzman 1995, 5–15). As Annamari Vänskä (2011) and Eve Sedgwick (2003) point out, feminist pedagogy in particular is interested in how pedagogical literature, using hegemonic power, remains silent on gender, sexuality, ethnicity and other differences and how these differences are merged into a presupposed sameness.

Learning process shapes knowledge

Learning as progress through a taxonomy

In YK, learning is understood as a systemic process that is divided into physical, individual and social realities: ‘Human activity, learning included, takes place in keeping with the biological conditions and possibilities that apply to people as a species and as individuals. Goal-oriented learning is regulated, promoted or hindered by individual factors, such as limitations on the ability to process information, heredity, goals, conceptions and beliefs.’ (72)

The textbook goes on to stress that where the aim is to enhance learning, it is important to be familiar with natural biological and psychological processes such as memory, intrinsic models and motivation. Social interaction as well is reduced to being biological in origin: ‘A human being is biologically a cultural and social creature.’ (72) The biological state must be elevated to a conscious learning process in order to achieve certain aims.

In both textbooks the most important part of learning seems to be the success of the teacher’s teaching process, from setting objectives to assessment. This process guarantees *constructive alignment*, which means that all factors, aims, methods and criteria for assessment will be in order as the teaching proceeds toward deep learning with the help of constructive learning theory (YK, 138). The Finnish book refers here to TQLU (edition 2007) and shares the work’s principles of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and, more specifically, Outcomes-Based Teaching and Learning (OBTL). OBTL means that the outcomes of a particular course are named, most students can achieve them and there are good means to assess the extent to which the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) have been achieved. Taxonomies that indicate the level of knowing are needed for assessment and specific definition of outcomes. Both

sources cite the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO), a more sophisticated taxonomy that has been developed on the basis of Bloom's taxonomy^{vi} (TQLU, 87–94; YK 147).

SOLO (TQLU, 123–4) consists of four hierarchical steps from low- to high-level knowing, from a unistructural to an extended abstract level. Unistructural knowing is described using terms such as *memorise, identify, recognise, count, define, draw, find, label, match, name, quote, recall, recite, order, tell, write* and *imitate*. This kind of learning presumes that knowledge is a system of rules or pieces of 'pure' knowledge which are gathered and taken for granted.

Multistructural knowing at the higher levels consists of descriptive acts such as *describing, listing, reporting, illustrating, narrating, computing and outlining*. The gaze of the feminist reader is quick to discern acts such as *distinguishing, classifying, selecting and sequencing*. In a social context, they translate into categorising, a form of using power in teaching. The process of categorising is symbolic evaluation in which value is attributed from the outset; categories are never neutral but carry norms with them as a result of historical struggle (Skeggs 2004, 27).

Relational knowing can be seen as relevant in university studies in the sense that it involves *explaining, analysing, reviewing, arguing, contrasting, debating, constructing, rewriting and examining*.^{vii} In feminist pedagogy the term 'relational knowing' means being able to recognise the connections knowledge has to the social, cultural and political meanings, which are not taken into account in the definitions of the SOLO taxonomy. The last, highest level of knowing is described as *extended and abstract*. It stresses creativity with terms like *create*,

compose, invent and originate. Also expected of those learning at the highest level are abilities such as *theorising, hypothesising, generalising, reflecting, generating, proving from first principles, making an original case and solving from first principles*. Knowing is anchored to ‘first principles’, keeping knowledge inside the box and thus not encouraging students to challenge readings or to engage in deconstruction. A feminist approach does not presume ‘first principles’ or emphasise generalisation but rather sees differences. Also striking in feminist perspective is that even at the highest level of SOLO, the purpose of learning is not to question or criticise; these are the core functions of feminist teaching and research from the outset.

Bloom’s taxonomy was used widely in the 1970s but has since been problematised for its behaviourist approach with predetermined aims of teaching and learning. Criticism has been levelled at its understanding of learning as a ‘closed mechanist universe’ in which the world and its events are understood linearly and in terms of a mechanistic causality (Doll 1993, 36–7). In YK (142), SOLO’s behaviourist tone is acknowledged but the taxonomy is still considered important in defining learning aims. Ideally, students define their learning objectives themselves. In practice, with universities becoming massified, this is not possible; someone who is the ‘subject supposed to know’ (Lacan 1991) will set the ‘core curriculum’ and decide what is worth knowing.

In both books, learning processes are seen as mainly individual, one-dimensional paths from ignorance to knowledge. The learning process is described as a naturalised and universalised cognitive and psychological process. The teacher’s task is to construct a step-by-step progression for students to follow; with proper tasks the students will rise from one level to another and ultimately solve problems, achieving the best understanding of the subject

studied. Making the political aspect of these theories visible demands deconstructing the myth of the neutrality of knowledge (Boler & Zembylas 2003, 115).

The kind of knowing depicted in the textbooks can be applied to learning practical skills such as those required in engineering, law and medicine. Thus, it serves the demands made of universities to increase the number of ‘more professionally or vocationally oriented programmes’ (*TQLU*, 4) that were mentioned previously as a motive for developing teaching in universities. Finland, for example, favours disciplines that have a direct correlation to industry, innovations and economic utilisation. This change threatens the position of social, humanist and critical sciences and pedagogical practices that value knowledge for its own sake, not for its value in solving practical problems (Furedi 2009, 20) and serving the global economy. What is lacking is a questioning of first principles and challenging students to leave their comfort zones in order to view the world from a different perspective and understand the political aspects of knowledge.

From surface to deep, content to method

In both textbooks there are two approaches to learning, surface and deep, that have, according to YK (93), been the central research topics in university learning during the last 30 years. The deep approach – striving for understanding and analysing the meaning of knowledge – is seen as being the more successful. The criteria for success are higher grades, more points and more successfully completed courses and modules. Thus, the approach means, on the one hand, an individual process of developing from ignorance to knowing and, on the other, progress – the faster, the better – through the study programme.

In TQLU this hierarchical dichotomy simplifies the learning process into two separate categories, which are described using two imagined, gendered student stereotypes - academic Susan and non-academic Robert:

Susan is academically committed; she is bright, interested in her studies and wants to do well. She has clear academic or career plans and what she learns is important to her. When she learns, she goes about it in an 'academic' way. She comes to the lecture with sound, relevant background knowledge, possibly some questions she wants answering. In the lecture, she finds an answer to a preformed question; it forms the keystone for a particular arch of knowledge she is constructing. Or it may not be the answer she is looking for and she speculates, wondering why it isn't. In either event she reflects on the personal significance of what she is learning. (TQLU 2011, 5)

While Susan is depicted as a sort of model student, Robert attends the courses to 'obtain a qualification for a decent job... He comes to lectures with no or few questions. He wants only to put in sufficient effort to pass and obtain that meal ticket' (5). Even if the purpose of the examples is not to construct stereotypes of students but to illustrate learning styles, the descriptions are gendered and create hierarchical values. The definitions constitute images of essential categories of Susan-like 'good' and Robert-like 'poor' students (6). Susan, as a girl, is portrayed as a 'good student', first in terms of achievement and individual abilities as having good educational potential, and second in terms of conduct as having characteristics such as obedience, eagerness to learn and do one's best, orderliness, ambition and reflexivity (See Youdell 2006, 36; Llamas 2006). This kind of one-dimensional categorisation reinforces common-sense assumptions of gender dualism and fails to take into account intersectional differences such as social class, sexuality and religion among gender groups.

The power of such categories lies in naturalisation: when repeated they make some characteristics – lazy boys and diligent girls – seem ‘natural’. From a feminist poststructural perspective, dichotomies could be deconstructed using an intersectional approach that addresses differences as complex processes, not essential identities or characteristics (Karkulehto et al. 2012).

Actually, Susan typifies a neoliberal subject conforming to the entrepreneurial ethos (Rose 1992), strongly future oriented and ambitious with ‘clear academic or career plans.’ She realises that she is an individual responsible for her own future; she is not wasting time on knowledge with no exchange value but ‘does reflect on the personal significance of what she is learning’.

YK (211) recognises the danger of categorising students in classroom contacts, pointing out that in order to ensure a good teacher-student relationship, a teacher should reflect on her or his own prejudices and tendency to categorise students into ‘easy and difficult’, ‘talented and losers’ or ‘quick and slow’.

Surface and deep learning approaches correspond to teaching styles that emphasise content and methods, respectively. YK sets out to train the focus on teaching methods. The data collected from researchers at the University of Helsinki were interpreted as showing that teaching approaches are either content or learning oriented (YK, 46). The teachers stressing content were seen as satisfied with ‘...conveying detailed information to students’, whereas teachers with a learning orientation were described as student-oriented actors, meaning that they constructed knowledge together with their students (50). A teaching orientation was also associated with students’ learning outcomes: ‘It has been demonstrated that learning-oriented

teaching promotes deep learning among students, whereas a content-oriented approach correlates with a superficial type of learning' (63).

Not only students but also teachers are defined as either surface- or deep- oriented, representing the 'old' or 'new' teaching culture. The new, learning-oriented teacher is interested in learning and wants to provide an environment for good learning. The old-fashioned, researcher-type teacher is described as an authoritarian, teacher-centred educator who contents her- or himself with passivity among students and superficial learning outcomes (YK, 46–49). We interpret this point of view as meaning that researchers should take on the position of professional teachers who follow teaching practices with specific objectives for every course, even a single lecture, according to the 'intended learning outcomes' (ILO) that students are to achieve (Ball 2004, 14). The starting point may be in the experiences of students but the outcomes must be evaluated by uniform criteria. This kind of pedagogical approach has been adopted as part of modern disciplinary power. It produces an analytical, highly detailed pedagogy that splits learning entities into credits that can be compared quantitatively (Foucault 1977).

Pedagogical practices are many, and the improvement of methods is greeted with pleasure; however, putting the emphasis on methods – what today has increasingly become known as the 'digital leap' – easily shifts the focus from hard brainwork to serving the audience. Frank Furedi (2009, 24) refers to Hannah Arendt's (2006/1976) view that educational progressivism ignores historical knowledge in its 'pathos of the new' and fails to see that 'fundamental educational needs of students do not alter every time a new technology impacts on people's lives.' The new, managerialist university culture emphasises evaluation. Teachers are assessed regularly and students have learned their role as customers. Thus, this ethos

constructs not only students but also teachers as enterprising selves who are responsible for students' success – and the success of the university, which depends on students as customers. Concentrating on methods may mean productisation of teaching: the emphasis shifts to pleasing customers at the expense of mastering content and intellectual argumentation (Liesner 2006, 489).

Feminist teaching aims for deep understanding by challenging supposed first principles and scientific 'facts'. As it is critical of norms and seeks to cross boundaries, requiring students to leave their comfort zones and confront issues that are not nice to know, feminist teaching cannot please students or the university. A pedagogy of discomfort (Boler and Zembylas 2003, 111) may be needed if students are reluctant to analyse demanding political issues such as sexism, homophobia, racism and hate speech. In feminist pedagogy, which adheres to feminist epistemology, the main point in teaching is to help students to understand how knowledge is constructed in certain historical and social power relations. Different methods can be used but the focus is on a critical attitude and passion for knowledge that cannot be forced into the structure of certain practices (see Rowland et al. 1998, 135). Instead of solving problems, students learn to problematise; instead of giving answers they learn to ask questions; and instead of learning research results they learn how the results are reached, that is, what the starting points have been, what the viewpoints and assumptions of the researcher are, what kinds of methods have been used and what the excluded viewpoints are.

Experiences and emotions in constructing teacher and student positions

Whose experiences? Whose knowledge?

Experiences and students' viewpoints are stressed in both textbooks. As mentioned earlier, students should be included in setting the objectives of their learning. In fact, all the learning

theories introduced in YK – Problem-based learning, Activating lecturing, Exploratory learning, Humanist theories, Social constructive theories, Cognitive theories and Experiential theories – stress the importance of students' experiences.

In feminist tradition, experience has been a crucial concept for challenging privileged, apparently neutral, universal and mainly male-oriented knowledge. Later in feminist thought, experience has maintained its importance although it has been extensively analysed and problematised (see e.g. Britzman 1991; Scott 1992; Saresma 2010). If understood as based on individual experiences, learning may become 'self-oriented' instead of 'content-oriented'. Experiences cannot be an unproblematic approach to and indisputable evidence in explaining (Saresma 2010, 59).

On the one hand, the definition of 'experience' in the textbooks seems to be quite unproblematic, referring to an assumption of students' individual, genuine experiences of previous successes and difficulties as learners. On the other hand, many aspects of experiences are ignored, especially those related to gendered, sexual and ethnic differences. In TQLU the need to acknowledge ethnic differences is recognised, addressing a shortcoming pointed out in the feedback on the third edition. However, the work notes that 'in the space available here, our focus must remain on the design of a teaching and learning system, not on the student as a "person"' (xx). Differences are understood as personal and individual, something that people possess endogenously, not constructed by education and other meaning systems. In other words, they can be compared to the differences in academic orientation and commitment of students seen in the case of Susan and Robert. Naturalisation of race and gender is a facet of essentialism, in which certain phenomena are defined as products of nature, not society (Tanesini 1999, 116). When a phenomenon is taken for granted,

considered ‘natural’, it will implicitly be seen as normal. Normalities are created by exercising power in the form of boundaries and making distinctions between ‘we’ and ‘them’ (Fahlgren and Sawyer 2011, 537). Differences within a group of girls or boys, or in an ethnic group, will then be minimised. What is more, the textbook associates ethnic differences with international students only. Westerners are described as representing humanity, not ethnicity:

While international students undoubtedly have special needs with regard to provision for language and social support, problems of learning in a second language, of homesickness, of cultural isolation, these are areas that need to be addressed by other supportive specialists and structures, not necessarily by their classroom teachers. (TQLU, 4–5)

Foreign students are described as representing otherness in sameness, and different groups of students are seen as opposites. It is assumed that international students have special needs and problems that are excluded from public discussions and relegated to the private realm (Rhoads and Calderone 2007) or transferred to ‘other specialists’. Instead of being a resource that could help other students to determine their positions and the origin of knowledge offered, as well as to question ready-made definitions (Tuori 2012, 117), foreign students are seen as potential obstacles to efficient learning. Not recognising differences is an instance of the power of sameness, which presupposes the same circumstances for all students and hides possible experiences of racism and sexism (Ahmed 2012). Students who cannot identify with the values and worldviews that knowledge is based on may become excluded.

In TQLU (38), ethnicity is openly stereotyped: ‘Westerners differ significantly from the Chinese in their attributions for success and failure. Westerners tend to see success as being attributable more to ability than to effort, while ethnic Chinese see effort as more important.

This is possibly one reason that Chinese students do so well in international comparisons of attainment. First, abstract categories of ‘Westerners’ and ‘Chinese’ as opposite groups are constructed. Secondly, ethnicity is represented as affecting different mental characteristics: Chinese students are defined as hardworking, and because they work hard, like Susan in the gendered stereotypes, they are very successful. This characterisation entails an assumption that Chinese students represent diligence more than intelligence.

Ethnicity is seen here as an essential category, like gender above. Other differences, such as social and cultural background, abilities or gender, are not discussed. In the teaching process this kind of thinking prevents teachers seeing beyond the dichotomies to engage with students as individuals, not representatives of their ethnic groups. According to intersectional pedagogy, differences are not essential categories but ones socially constructed in the teaching process; therefore the teacher must carefully reflect on her/his sensitivity to multiple differences.

Disturbing emotions

In TQLU (25), emotions are mentioned in the context of classroom atmosphere and the emotions that the learning process can arouse. Using a surface approach may result in a negative atmosphere:

Anxiety, produced for example by intimidation, sarcasm, threats of failure or heavy use of sanctions, simply creates an intense need to get out of the situation. The student’s behaviour is therefore directed towards that end, rather than towards proper task engagement. Anxiety makes a mess of a student’s priorities. Cynicism works in a more coldly cognitive way. Perceptions that the teacher is degrading the task or belittling students encourages students to be

cynical and, with that, to take a deliberate decision not to engage the task honestly. (42)

In this extract, the teacher is described as working with negative emotions that lead to negative responses on the part of students. Sanctions or ‘belittling’ are associated with a surface approach. The teacher is reminiscent of an old-fashioned ‘schoolmaster’ and the emotions described are personal characteristics of the teacher. A negative atmosphere and distressing emotions are not discussed as being potential aspects of a managerial university culture and working conditions.

One solution put forward for avoiding negative emotions is adventure learning because it develops skills that students will need professionally (62). Another option is to use affects to stimulate student interest. ‘Attention grabbers’, such as starting a class with a video clip or the like, rely not on structure for their effect but on their emotional impact. In any event, humour and shock are not recommended: ‘Both have their place but work on different principles – our interest here is in the structure of the material, not in its shock value.’ (68)

In YK, emotions are discussed in the context of cooperative learning, starting from the perception that ‘in the university culture, talking about emotions, atmosphere and relations between the members of a group is quite strange although all students and teachers know from experience that very strong emotions may appear in learning situations.’ (YK 113). An improvement is suggested:

In order to achieve the aims and stay together a group should be cohesive. In addition there should be enough trust among its members. Without a firm belief

that the group wants its members to learn, there will be no interactional discussion and discussion that advances learning. (113)

Positive emotions such as mutual trust and a good atmosphere mean that singularity of purpose is seen as a prerequisite for good learning results. Moreover, in exploratory learning, where the task is to find problems and not only solve them, the consensus of the group is expected. As the textbook notes, 'The task of the people in the group is to define together the problems which they will investigate....It is essential that all parts of the process are divided among the participants.' (YK 260)

In feminist pedagogy disagreement is seen as fertile ground for achieving deep and rich understanding and for allowing different voices to be heard. It may also be the case that conflicts between different groups are so large that cooperation is impossible; that is, the group will not agree to common aims. The purpose must not be to achieve a consensus that may mean a presumption of a falsely homogenous identity; rather, the emphasis may be on contradictions and rejecting dogmas and truths, in an asymmetrical reciprocity (Young 1997) that means meeting each other because of, not despite, different experiences.

In YK, there is an entire chapter, 'Good learning atmosphere and meeting the student', that deals with situations in which teachers encounter strong emotions among their students. These are connected to personal problems students are having in their private lives, an example being 'You are going to teach a class and you see a student crying in the corridor.' (127) Emotions must also be taken into account when handling students who behave disruptively in lectures and when dealing with upsetting events such as accidents outside the university. One example described in the book is connected to the knowledge taught: 'A

student starts arguing with you in an aggressive tone while you are teaching a group. She/he claims that the knowledge you have presented is based on a theory with faults that a prestigious researcher has demonstrated.’(130) This situation could give a teacher a chance to analyse the character of knowledge and its power to challenge either students or the teacher to initiate a discussion from different starting points or worldviews. However, the situation is considered mostly from the viewpoint of a student’s personal mentality, with the teacher’s task being to defuse the emotions.

Instructions are given on how to handle emotional situations. Teachers are guided practically – step by step – in how to handle situations where emotions are visible. They are also advised to confront and defuse students’ emotions as well as their own. Emotions are understood as individual obstacles to good learning outcomes, things that need to be dealt with in order to get back to business. Emotional episodes are seen as ‘taking room away from teaching and learning. Learning is not possible unless students are happy and can answer the ontological question, ‘Who am I?’(YK 123–4). This is an example of the therapeutic ethos, in which emotional management of people is seen as a precondition for education (Brunila 2012, 480; Furedi 2009, 181). This ethos may place feminist teachers in traditional care-taking positions that will run counter to the reality of university occupations. Teachers may begin to value themselves not according to their expertise but according to students’ satisfaction and happiness (Berlant 1997, 153–4).

Feminist researchers have challenged the mainstream pedagogy that sustains the list of culturally defined appropriate emotions (Brunila 2012, 483), which does not include frustration, disappointment or anxiety. For example, bell hooks (1994, 42–3) has pointed out that developing critical consciousness and giving up old understandings cause discomfort and

pain that must be respected, not rejected. Many feminist authors (see e.g. Ahmed 2004) recognise emotions as a site of political resistance and, as Megan Boler (1999, 142) has pointed out, emphasise ‘teaching students how to combine passionate response with critical analysis, to define and identify how and when particular emotions inform and define knowledge’.

Relations between knowledge, power, and society

One of the central points in Kolb’s theory (1984) is the understanding of teaching as an adaptive force helping students to conform to the society in which they will live and work. Furedi (2009, 28–32) has noted that discourses of ‘newness’ and ‘change’ dominate the educational field and have led to our understating the meaning of history and denying the fact that change depends on decision making; it is not some powerful force that is just happening and to which people have to adapt. In critical and feminist thinking, the purpose of university learning is to help students to understand how changes are brought about by people in political negotiations and thereby to help them to work for worthwhile change.

Despite their being written to help institutions and teachers in coping with changed circumstances, the textbooks analysed do not openly discuss the political aspect and power of knowledge. In the 2007 edition of TQLU (Biggs and Tang 2007, 4), the authors disavow any interest in advancing managerial university politics, saying that ‘...the last thing this book is meant to be is an apology for managerialism’. In the 2011 edition this comment has been removed. The changes in university culture – massification, students as customers, assessment and like developments – are described as results of ‘natural change’, not of conscious political decisions and the values of marketisation. Promoting practices that support such changes means subscribing to the politics behind the new ‘market university’.

However, the negative influences of that politics on teaching are recognised: ‘Since universities have gone corporate, passing students affects funding, so that teachers are not encouraged to report plagiarism, because of the fear of scandal and loss of funds from failed students’ (TQLU 270).

In TQLU (82–3, 92) ‘declarative knowledge’ is distinguished from ‘functioning knowledge’, the latter being based on previous learning that can be ‘put to work’, or ‘put to empowered use’. Repeating the information taught is not enough; rather, students should learn to see the world differently and change their ‘behaviour towards it’. In professional courses like medicine and physics, students should learn to ‘solve novel or unseen problems’. The world must be changed, not primarily in political and ethical respects but for getting better credits and skills (98). TQLU (98) uses the term ‘empowerment’ in the sense of a capacity for growth of an individual student. ‘That view, and instances of the empowerment that learning gives the student, should guide the design of the intended learning outcomes for a course or programme.’ Empowerment in feminist thought stresses the term ‘power’: A student should recognise power relations in order to change society. The emphasis is not only on strengthening personal capacity for fulfilling demands set by others but on taking a critical stance on the restrictive norms of society. In the neoliberal discourse, empowerment, like ‘voice’, has changed from being a vehicle for emancipation to a ‘technology of self’. Students must be empowered in order to better adapt to the demands of society, not to challenge them (Bragg 2007).

Mainstream pedagogy tends to pay attention to individual and cognitive processes. As discussed above, instead of stressing the social aspects of learning, the current mainstream pedagogical thinking emphasises the internal cognitive processes of individual learners (see

Usher, Bryant, Johnston 1997). However, students are not just individuals with particular cognitive abilities and characteristics: they belong to certain social, ethnic, age, gender and sexual groups. This fact encourages us to be sensitive to the different backgrounds of people, to understand the power of knowledge and to acknowledge the need for students and teachers alike to reflect on their positions (e.g. Ackerly and True 2010, 36–7).

In feminist thinking, knowing is never an individual process but is possible only in social and material practices relating to objects that are permeated by cultural values. This is why the central criterion of knowledge is ethics: the teacher, together with his or her students, has to consider how power works in the knowing processes and what the consequences of knowledge are. The feminist understanding of knowledge emphasises the meaning of positionality. This means that there is no ‘objective’ knowledge that could be separated from the knower. The need to recognise differences applies not only to students’ different contexts but to the time-space connection of the theories and knowledge taught (Naskali 2013).

Ethnic stereotypes, described above, can be seen as an exercise of power. Describing Westerners and Chinese students as having separate talents construct them as uniform groups. In education, normalisation and naturalisation are part of the governing processes in which subjects are produced. Although the subject and object of a text are represented as abstract and universal, the text simultaneously produces differences by stereotyping gender and ethnicity. Categorising students into ‘good’ Susans and ‘poor’ Roberts, or Western and foreign students, constructs a power relation that means tolerating differences in the hope that if the pedagogical principles of constructive alignment are adhered to, the gaps between these groups will be reduced even if not entirely closed.

Concluding remarks

In this article we have analysed two widely used textbooks in feminist perspective, concentrating on teaching, learning, knowledge and student and teacher positions. The books share the same pedagogical principles even though the Finnish textbook has been written especially for the Finnish university context. We did not find any noteworthy differences between the books. Our analysis shows that learning is seen as a process which follows strictly defined hierarchical steps towards pre-defined aims. Learning means increasing one's understanding of the content taught, which that can then be evaluated using technical taxonomies. Teaching and learning methods are based on assumptions of universal laws of learning. Teachers' teaching and students' learning practices are stressed and methods emphasised at the expense of content. Emotions are seen mostly as obstacles to a smooth learning process and the teacher's task is to learn to handle emotionally volatile situations.

As expected, gendered, sexualised and other differences were not among the themes focused on in the textbooks. In YK, teachers' gender is mentioned in extracts (e.g. male teacher, Faculty of Law) when referring to the teachers interviewed, but their gender is not taken into account in the analysis. In TQLU gender and ethnicity are addressed in a stereotyping and categorising way.

Because of its emphasis on teaching methods and assessment in the learning process, mainstream pedagogy does not discuss the power of the knowledge taught; knowledge is not analysed as a political consideration but as a neutral way to produce degrees in universities that train students to adapt to the world. We did not detect any emphasis on critical thinking in learning processes, let alone any intention of pushing students out of their comfort zone.

Academics are not seen as researchers who produce knowledge, perceive historical processes or develop methods, theories and concepts, but as professional teachers who master teaching methods and forms, motivate, entertain, facilitate and serve. The focus is on 'needs' and the assumed skills of students are those learned in sciences like medicine and engineering; however, education as such can never be totally reducible to requirements that students presume to be relevant for them (Furedi 2009, 55). Students as customers are individualised, and their problems, characteristics and skills are psychologised and categorised by gender and nationality. The dominating assumption is that of sameness – universal human beings – which is based on a self-evident hegemony of 'Western' culture. We identify in the textbooks a desire to abandon the old – old pedagogy, old approaches to university study – for the new, which is necessarily considered better. We submit that this 'pathos of the new', in the sense of forgetting the past, may be dangerous in the present era, with the challenging social, cultural and political global processes we see at work in it.

University pedagogy still has the task of affirming the university as a place between the past and the future, a place for broad understanding of knowledge as historically and culturally located and as a permanently changing process. Feminist and queer pedagogies - among other critical approaches, such as intersectional (Bhopal & Preston 2012; Hemmings 2011), norm critical (Bromseth & Darj 2010) and indigenous pedagogy (Kuokkanen 2007) - can offer a space for students from different backgrounds to emancipate themselves and become equal parties in academic discussions. We propose that feminist pedagogy is needed to unsettle the assumptions of the neutrality of knowledge and to show how all knowledge is based on human values and processes of selection. It is needed to free teachers from the position of 'schoolmasters', facilitators or customer servants, allowing them to become researchers who

construct knowledge collaboratively with their students while still retaining their theoretical authority and academic self-esteem.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Kirsti Lempiäinen and Richard Foley for their support during the writing process and the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable contributions in helping us to clarify the text.

Research material:

YK: Lindblom-Ylänne, S., and A. Nevgi, eds. 2009. *Yliopisto-opettajan Käsikirja. (Handbook for a University Teacher)* Helsinki: WSOY.

TQLU: Biggs, J., and C. Tang. 2011. *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.

References:

Ackerly, B., and J. True. 2010. *Doing feminist research in political & social science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ahmed, S. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York, Routledge.

Ahmed, S. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Arendt, H. 2006/1986. *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin Books.

Bailey, G. 2014. Accountability and the rise of ‘play safe’ pedagogical practices. *Education + Training* 56 (7): 663–74.

Ball, S. 2004. Suorituskeskeisyys ja yksityistäminen jälkihyvinvointivaltion koulutuspolitiikassa. (Performativity, privatisation and the educational policy of the post-welfare state.) Translated into Finnish by Hannu Hiilos. *Kasvatus* 35 (1): 6–20.

Banks, J. 1994. *An Introduction to Multicultural education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Berger, A-E. 2005. Sexing Differences. *Differences* 16 (3): 52–67.

Berlant, L. 1997. Feminism and the Institutions of Intimacy. In *The Politics of Research*, eds. Ann Kaplan, and George Levine, 143–161. New Brunswick & New Jersey: Rutgers.

Bhopal, K., and J. Preston. 2012. *Intersectionality and “race” in Education*. New York: Routledge.

Biggs, J., and C. Tang. 2007. *Teaching for quality learning at university: what the student does*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.

Bloom, B. 1974/1956. *Taxonomy of educational objectives: the classification of educational goals. Handbook 1, Cognitive domain*. New York: McKay.

Boler, M. 1999. *Feeling power: emotions and education*. New York: Routledge.

Boler, M., and M. Zembylas. 2003. Discomforting Truths: The Emotional Terrain of Understanding Difference. In *Pedagogies of Difference*, ed. Peter Trifonas, 110–36. New York & London: Routledge.

Bologna process. <http://www.ehea.info/> Bologna process. European Higher Education Arena. (Accessed 15.2.2016)

Bragg, S. 2007. ‘Student Voice’ and Governmentality: The production of enterprising subjects? *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education* 28 (3): 343–58.

Britzman, D. P. 1991. *Practice makes practice. A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Britzman, D. P. 1995. Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight. *Educational Theory* 45 (2): 151–66.

Bromseth, J., and F. Darj. 2010. *Normkritisk pedagogik: Makt, lärande och strategier för förändring. (Norm critical pedagogy: Power, teaching and strategies for change)* Uppsala: Centrum för genusvetenskap.

Brunila, K. 2012. A Diminished Self: entrepreneurial and therapeutic ethos operating with a common aim. *European Educational Research Journal* 11 (4): 477–86.

Doll, W. E. Jr. 1993. *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*. New York and London: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Fahlgren, S., and L. Sawyer. 2011. The power of positioning: on the normalisation of gender, race/ethnicity, nation and class positions in a Swedish social work textbook. *Gender and Education* 23 (5): 535–48.

- Fairlough, N. 2003. *Analysing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Fetterley, J. 1978. *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Furedi, F. 2009. *Wasted: why education isn't educating*. London: Continuum.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.
- Grosz, E. 2005. Derrida and Feminism: A Remembrance. *Differences* 16 (3): 88–94.
- Harding, S. 2004. Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity'? In *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader. Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. S. Harding, 127–40. New York: Routledge.
- Hemmings, C. 2011. Collective powers: Rupture and displacement in feminist pedagogic practice. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 18, 297–303.
- hooks, b. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Karkulehto, S., T. Saresma, H. Harjunen & J. Kantola, 2012. Intersektionaalisuus metodologiana ja performatiivisen intersektionaalisuuden haaste. (Intersectionality as Methodology, and the Challenge of Performative Intersectionality) *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* 25 (4): 17–28.
- Kolb, D. A. 1984. *Experiential Learning. Experience as a source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, N-J: Prentice Hall.
- Kumashiro, K. K. 2000. Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of educational research* 70: 25–54.
- Kuokkanen, R. 2007. *Reshaping the University. Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes and the logic of Gift*. Vancouver & Toronto: UBC Press.
- Lacan, J. 1991. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. New York: Penguin Books. (English translation Alan Sheridan.)
- Lempiäinen, K., and P. Naskali. 2011. Feminist researchers learning to teach: A Finnish case of university pedagogy in women's studies. *Women's Studies International Forum* 34: 195–205.

- Liesner, A. 2006. Education or Service? Remarks on teaching and learning in the entrepreneurial university. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 38 (4): 483–95.
- Liljeström, M. 2004. *Feministinen metodologia – mitä se on?* (Feminist methodology – what is it?). In *Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta (Feminist Knowing. Discussing Methodology)*, ed. M. Liljeström, 9–21. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Llamas, J. M. C. 2006. Technologies of disciplinary power in action: The norm of the ‘Good student’. *Higher Education* 52, Spring: 665–86.
- MacKeracher, D. 1994. Women as Learners. In *The Craft of Teaching Adults*, eds. T. Barer-Stein, and J. A. Draper, 71–86. Florida, Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company.
- Naskali, P. 2013. Rethinking positionality – universalism and localism in contact. In *Northern Insights. Feminist Inquiries into Politics of Place, Knowledge and Agency*, eds. S. Keskitalo-Foley, P. Naskali and P. Rantala, 19–42. Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press.
- Palin, T. 2004. *Oireileva miljöömuotokuva. Yksityiskohdat sukupuoli- ja säätyhierarkian haastajina* (The symptomatic milieu portrait. Details as challenges to the gender hierarchy and hierarchy of estates). Helsinki: Taide.
- Rhoads, R. A., and S. M. Calderone. 2007. Reconstituting the democratic subject: Sexuality, Schooling, and Citizenship. *Educational Theory* 57 (1): 105–21.
- Rose, N. 1992. Governing the enterprising self. In *The values of the enterprise culture. The moral debate*, eds. Paul Heelas, and Paul Morris, 141–64. London: Routledge.
- Rowland, S., C. Byron, F. Furedi, N. Padfield, and T. Smyth. 1998. Turning academics into teachers? *Teaching in Higher Education* 3 (2): 133–42.
- Saresma, T. 2010. Kokemuksen houkutus (Temptation of experience). In *Käsikirja sukupuoleen* (Handbook on Gender), eds. T. Saresma, L-M. Rossi, and T. Juvonen, 59–74. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Scott, J. W. 1992. Experience. In *Feminist Theorize the Political*, eds. J. Butler, and J. Scott, 22–40. New York & London: Routledge.
- Sedgwick, E. K. 2003. *Touching feeling: affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Skeggs, B. 2004. *Class, Self, Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Smith-Adcock, S., B. Ropers-Huilman, and L. Hensley Choate. 2004. Feminist teaching in Counselor Education: Promoting Multicultural Understanding. *Journal of Multicultural Counselling and Development* 32, Extra, 402–13.

Tanesini, A. 1999. *Feminist Epistemologies*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tuori, S. 2012. Kuunteleminen monikulttuurisuuden mahdollistajana (Listening as a provider of multiculturalism), in *Monikulttuurisuuden sukupuoli. (Gender of multiculturalism)*, eds. S. Keskinen, J. Vuori, and A. Hirsiaho, 101–20. Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Usher, R., I. Bryant, and R. Johnston. 1997. *Adult education and postmodern challenge: Learning beyond the limits*. London: Routledge.

Vänskä, A. 2011. Queer + pedagogia = mahdoton yhtälö (Queer + Pedagogy = An Unthinkable Equation). *Kasvatus* 42 (5): 455–67.

Youdell, D. 2006. Subjectivation and performative politics – Butler thinking Althusser and Foucault: intelligibility, agency and the raced-nationed-religioned subjects of education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27 (4): 511–28.

Young, I. M. 1997. *Intersecting Voices. Dilemmas of gender, political philosophy and policy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

ⁱ The textbook is 398 pages in length.

ⁱⁱ The book is divided into three parts: Effective teaching and learning for today's universities, Designing constructively aligned outcomes-based teaching and learning, and Constructive alignment in action.

ⁱⁱⁱ The textbook is 439 pages in length.

^{iv} We refer to the books by their names, even in the case of the Finnish volume. This is based on the idea that we are not analysing the personal ideas of the authors but the text they have produced. The purpose of our deconstructive reading is not to determine and present what the authors have meant but to reach discursive meanings constructed in the cultural practices discussed (Fairclough 2003).

^v The book is divided into six sections under the following titles: Renewing university pedagogy, Learning and the interaction of students and teachers, Programmatic learning and teaching at university, Theory and practice of learning, Guidelines for academic experts, and Developing university teaching: individual and community perspectives.

^{vi} Benjamin Bloom and his research group (1974/1956) developed a taxonomy in 1950s for classifying learning objectives. The objectives are organised in lists of verbs that cover the objectives in the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains. The first concerns knowledge, the second emotions and attitude, and the third skills. In the cognitive domain, the terms, in hierarchical order, are *knowing*, *comprehending*, *applying*, *analysing*, *synthesising* and *evaluating*.

^{vii} In relational knowledge the level of knowing is described also in terms of acquisition and organising: to apply, integrate, predict, conclude, summarise (précis), transfer, make a plan, characterise, compare, differentiate, organise, make a case, translate, paraphrase, and solve a problem.