5 Nordic and European comparisons

Finnish primary teacher training and international references in Committee Reports from the 1860s to the 1960s

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Introduction

This chapter discusses Finnish primary teacher training from a historical perspective, from the 1860s to the beginning of the 1960s. It analyses Committee Reports released during this period by the bodies constituted to guide Finnish teacher education, and examines how teacher training systems in other Nordic countries were described and compared in these reports. The Committee Reports are presented in the context of developmental changes in Finnish teacher education, of which academisation is a central characteristic (Jauhiainen, Kivirauma and Rinne, 1998; Rinne, 2017). The concept of academisation here refers to two things: professional education is organised by academic institutions, and it is research-based. Although the final step towards academic teacher education was only taken in the 1970s, when teacher education was finally moved to universities, researchers have pointed out that academisation was a long, slow process and its early signs can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century (Jauhiainen, Kivirauma and Rinne, 1998; Valtonen and Rautiainen, 2013).

The primary sources for this article comprise five Committee Reports: proposals for new statutes and the arguments on which the proposals were based. Sometimes they included a broader account of the situation of teacher training. The committees were an administrative instrument which did the preparatory work and gave suggestions for reforms before the actual parliamentary proceedings and legislative work. The committees and their members were appointed by the Finnish government, and though their recommendations did not necessarily lead to legislative reform, the reports offer an interesting view on the arguments behind their suggestions.

In this chapter, the history of Finnish teacher training will be discussed in detail and the Committee Reports examined more closely. The following sections are arranged in chronological order to bring out the structural changes in teacher education. The next section discusses the historical background of teacher education and the early phase of the establishment of teacher training in Finland.

Historical background and the era before college-style teacher education, 1863–1934

Before the Finnish state-municipal education system, with its teacher seminaries, was instituted, mass education was organised by parish clerk teachers and schoolmasters. This early mass education system was faced with shortages of qualified teachers and weak educational standards. The launch in the 1860s of the state municipal education system, with its own teacher training system, was part of a national project in which citizens' health and education were attached to new population and labour policies. According to the new ideas in economics at the time, citizens were considered a source of wealth for the nation and their education was therefore an important state issue. The establishment of state municipal basic education was a small step towards educational equality, and the beginning of the separation of mass education from the authority of the church. These changes in the education system were intertwined with nation-building and state-making projects. Although the welfare state project proceeded slowly at the turn of the twentieth century, ideas of educating and civilising people had already materialised in mass education. The mass education system, with teacher training, thus became connected with social processes (Buchardt, Markkola and Valtonen, 2013; Rantala, 2011; Rinne, 2017). Ahonen notes that primary school teachers became the vanguard of state-municipal mass education and that their rise to being seen as historical agents was part of the awakening of Finnish civil society (Ahonen, 2003, p. 57).

When the new mass education system was under development in the 1850s–1860s, the question was not only the formation of the education system but also the organisation of teacher training and its syllabus. To create solid grounds for its planning, the Finnish Senate considered it necessary to collect knowledge about the education and teacher training systems of other European countries. Priest, parish schoolmaster and the chief of a church school Uno Cygnaeus (1810–1888), who was later appointed chief school inspector and director of the teacher seminary, was chosen to investigate the situation abroad. He acquainted himself with the primary schools and teacher training institutions of Nordic countries and Central Europe during visits to Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands during 1858–1859 (Halila, 1949a, pp. 270–278; Kangas, 2009). Cygnaeus was not convinced of the strengths of teacher training in Sweden and Denmark; it is reported, for instance, that he gave more guidance than he received during his visit to Sweden. Nevertheless, Cygnaeus's views became more positive when he made the acquaintance of the work of Torsten Rudenschöld, a Swede, and his social ideas about educating poor people. In Denmark, Cygnaeus found teacher seminaries to have a more modern form of organisation than in Sweden. Cygnaeus was – even before his travels – influenced by German pedagogy, and greatly appreciated the ideas of Pestalozzi, Fröbel, Rousseau and Diesterweg (Halila, 1949a, pp. 270–278; Rautakilpi, 2007, pp. 189–190). In his travel accounts, he commended especially the teacher training system in Wetting, Switzerland, as an example for the Finnish teacher training system (Halila, 1949a, pp. 270–278; Kangas, 2009). Cygnaeus emphasised the need for teachers with knowledge of pedagogy and

educational science (Kangas, 2009), and his educational thinking can be characterised as social pedagogy influenced by Pestalozzi, and emphasising Christian ethics (Rautakilpi, 2007, pp. 189–190).

Cygnaeus's ideas had a strong influence on the new seminary for teacher education established in Jyväskylä in 1863. He aimed to ensure seminaries were of a high standard, and therefore the competence requirements set for teachers at the seminary in Jyväskylä were high (Kangas, 2009). This was a coeducational institution, with separate departments for women and men, and the training lasted four years: two years longer than teacher training in Sweden. By the end of the nineteenth century, seven seminaries – coeducational or single-sex – had been established around the country, mostly in small, rural towns (Ahonen, 2011, pp. 242–245; Rantala, 2011; Rinne, 2017; Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 201–212).

This educational system, based on the thinking of Cygnaeus, prevailed till the 1880s when teacher educators encountered Herbart-Zillerism, a pragmatic pedagogical system developed by German pedagogues (Ahonen, 2011, pp. 245–247; Paksuniemi, Uusiautti and Määttä, 2013, pp. xii–xiii). Two professors of education, Waldemar Ruin (1857–1938) and Mikael Soininen (1860–1924), were influential supporters of Herbart-Zillerism. Soininen (known as Johnsson until 1907) has been called the second reformer of primary education. Like Cygnaeus, he explored Nordic and European school systems and, while his educational thinking was based on Herbart-Zillerism, he was familiar with experimental psychology. By the end of his very successful career, he was the chief director of the National Board of Education (1917–1924) and was also an active politician: Member of Parliament (1907–1922) and Minister of Education (1918–1920) (Paksuniemi, 2013, pp. 41–43).

Positivism and experimental psychology gained ground in the 1910s and had as their main advocates Professor Albert Lilius (1873–1947), seminary director Aukusti Salo (1887–1951) who later reached the position of professor and seminary teacher Kaarle Oksala (1873–1949), who was later professor and rector of the College of Education in Jyväskylä. Influences from abroad included John Dewey's *Learning by Doing* and Georg Kerschensteiner's pedagogical thinking, both of which influenced teacher training (Ahonen, 2011, pp. 245–247).

As early as the 1890s, the idea of university-level further education for primary school teachers had been introduced, and although it did not immediately lead to academic education, it was the first attempt to establish an academic degree for the profession (Jauhiainen, Kivirauma and Rinne, 1998; Rantala, 2011; Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 201–212). As Jauhiainen, Kivirauma and Rinne (1998) note, the demand for postgraduate education for primary school teachers was repeatedly raised by the Finnish union (established in 1893), especially in its professional journal for teachers (published from 1906 onwards).

This aim was also supported in academic circles, and in 1908, primary school teachers were granted permission to take university courses, though not yet complete degrees (Rantala, 2011). Besides further training, the university courses offered a route to getting the qualifications needed for senior positions in the school system, such as school inspectors and seminary lecturers. Since female teachers could not be

appointed as school inspectors until 1926, male teachers were slightly more eager to gain university degrees (Halila, 1949d, pp. 98–110; Halila, 1950, p. 344).

The idea of academic courses was based on foreign examples: the plan to organise courses for non-grammarschool¹ graduates came to the Nordic countries from Britain and the first academic course was instituted in Uppsala in 1893. In Finland, primary school teachers welcomed the idea, and courses for both Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking teachers were organised soon after (Halila, 1949b, pp. 382–384). These short-term courses were held every other year from 1894 to 1910. Year-long university-level further education courses for primary school teachers were conducted from 1907 to 1915 and again from 1918 onwards (Committee Report [CR] 1922:3, p. 358). The great reformer Mikael Soininen was in charge of arranging university-level further education courses for primary school teachers (Halila, 1949c, p. 330). Another step was taken when the summer university started its first term in 1912 in Jyväskylä – a development which has been dubbed the first victory for those who favoured the idea of teacher colleges outside Helsinki (Halila, 1963, pp. 277–278; Kangas, 2009, p. 115).

Soininen and Waldemar Ruin also suggested transferring teacher education from seminaries to universities in 1913. The arguments in favour of academic education relied on the notion that a uniform education for all teachers, both for primary and grammar school, would strengthen solidarity between teachers and narrow the gap between the two groups. The academic degrees were also hoped to raise the social status of primary school teachers and give them grounds for demanding higher salaries (Jauhiainen, Kivirauma and Rinne, 1998).

The first signs of the academisation of teacher training were connected to the professionalisation of teachers' work and the formation of teachers' place in society as experts on societal questions – a role that was partly adopted by teachers, and partly given to them (Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 201–212; Valtonen and Rautiainen, 2013). In speaking of the professionalisation of teachers' work, the education required by profession was emphasised, as well as professional skills and competencies (Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 59–61). Seminary lecturers had a major role in the process. Even as they sought to strengthen the professional identity of primary school teachers and to reinforce teachers' professional position in society, they simultaneously advanced features of teacher education which could be characterised as pre-academic. In addition, as society modernised, teaching was amongst the professions that had the characteristics of expertise emphasised by the welfare state (Kangas, 2009; Valtonen and Rautiainen, 2013).

During the era before college-based teacher education, only one committee was appointed to reappraise the statutes concerning teacher training and teacher seminaries (CR, 1895:5). The committee, appointed in 1892, was led by chief school inspector Anders Wilhelm Floman (1833–1905) who later became the assistant to the director of the National Board of Education. Floman warmly supported the ideas of Cygnaeus and had had a long career in schools and as a seminary director (Halila, 1949b, pp. 411–413). The other members of the committee represented the senior administration and teaching staff of seminaries and primary schools (CR, 1895:5). The Committee Report, which was released three years later, took a stand on concrete questions around organising teacher training but its suggestions

did not greatly influence teacher education (CR, 1895:5; Halila, 1949c, p. 312). In addition, the report did not contain any mentions or comments on the teacher education systems of other countries, including Nordic countries (CR, 1895:5).

The beginning of college-style teacher education in 1934

Before the 1930s, there were discussions and attempts to develop the system of teacher seminaries. In the discussions of the need to change the Finnish system, the national administration of education and academics in the educational sciences were fully aware of debates about teacher training in other countries (Halila, 1950, pp. 294–296). For example, in 1919, at the initiative of the National Board of Education, a committee was appointed to plan the reforms of teacher seminaries. It was led by Kaarlo Franssila (1860–1950), the assistant director of the department of primary education at the National Board of Education, and who initially favoured the idea of college-style teacher education (CR, 1922:3; Kangas, 2009, p. 122; Sääntti, 2011). Besides Franssila, the committee had two members: a seminary lecturer and a senior lecturer at a grammar school. Other experts in the field of primary education and teacher training also participated in committee meetings, representing expertise on various school subjects. In addition, at the request of the committee, Waldemar Ruin, Albert Lilius and Ernst Lindelöf (1870–1946) gave their views on teachers' entitlement to university studies (CR, 1922:3, pp. 1–3).

The Committee Report that ensued in 1922 was thorough and contained a description of teacher seminaries in various Western countries, including all the other Nordic countries, excluding Iceland. Teacher education in Germany and Switzerland was explained more thoroughly than in other countries (CR, 1922:3, pp. 16–21, 355–357). The Nordic countries were mentioned where the report described the lengths of teacher training, and the high entrance requirements for students in different Nordic countries:

In Sweden, seminaries remained four years long after the reform in 1914; but the entrance requirements rose substantially to over six years of primary school....

Denmark have even stricter entrance requirements. When the Danish contemporary seminary law was passed in 1894, on account of its high entrance requirements, it was considered possible to retain the seminary as a three year course of study.

In Norway, the duration of seminary education has also been three years since 1902 and seminary entrance is based on seven years of primary school.

(CR, 1922:3, p. 16)

One of the main questions was whether eligibility to enter teacher education was based on primary school or grammar school completion in Finland. Although the committee forecasted the number of grammar school graduates would rise in the future, it also wanted to keep the seminaries open to primary school graduates. The report notes: '... what is the best solution for big industrial countries would not be beneficial in sparsely populated Finland, where the majority of the inhabitants are

farmers' (CR, 1922:3, p. 22). The 'big industrial countries' the report refers to were not Nordic countries but, for example, Switzerland and Scotland, where teacher education was based on grammar schools (CR, 1922:3, pp. 16–19, 21–22).

The committee also made comparisons about details in the syllabus. Furthermore, the committee took a stand on academic studies when it planned teacher education for grammar school graduates and when it outlined further education for primary school teachers. The committee favoured the plan to organise primary school teachers' further education in the university and argued against other options: '...the committee wants to note that the success of further education requires that lessons are held in the university where teachers will have an opportunity to study other academic subjects along with pedagogy which is their main subject' (CR, 1922:3, pp. 359–360). Again, the Committee Report mentioned big industrial countries, especially Germany.

Although the so-called Franssila Committee's suggestions were widely accepted, they were never implemented because of the sudden death of the chief director of the National Board of Education, Mikael Soininen, who had been the promoter of the committee's proposals. The reforms were also hindered by the economic recession of the 1920s (Halila, 1950, pp. 284–286).

The next phase in the academisation of teacher education started in the 1930s, when education policy began to favour the expansion of new opportunities for the increasing number of grammar school graduates (Säntti, 2011). At the same time, the question of a new teacher training institute came to a head and the Ministry of Education assigned the National Board of Education to prepare a proposal (Halila, 1950, p. 300). The influential agents behind the idea of college-style teacher training were Kaarle Oksala and Oskari Mantere (1874–1942), the chief director of the National Board of Education. They presented Germany as an example, where teacher seminaries had been changed to colleges (Kangas, 2009, p. 121; Säntti, 2011). The university education policy was favourable to the new institutes of higher education, for example, the college of social studies in Tampere received the permission to grant master's degrees in 1933 (Kangas, 2009, p. 121). The perseverance of the supporters of college-style education produced significant results in 1934 when the seminary in Jyväskylä was transformed into a teacher training college. Rinne and Jauhiainen note that the establishment of the college in Jyväskylä was a direct consequence of primary school teachers' persistent efforts to increase their educational assets and professional status (Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, p. 219). College-style teacher training was based on educational and, especially, psychological research and expertise (Rinne, 2017).

The requirements for college included the completion of grammar school (*gymnasium*) and the matriculation examination. This was a significant requirement, in the light of the fact that only 4% of nineteen-year-olds graduated from grammar school. Because of this, the special route for grammar school graduates gained permanent institutional form (Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 219–222).

Administratively, the College of Education in Jyväskylä came under the Ministry of Education and therefore differed from teacher seminaries. The college also differed from universities, because it did not at first have a faculty. However, as new professors were appointed, it came to join the group of institutes of higher

education such as the University of Technology in Helsinki (Säntti, 2011). In addition, when the Ministry of Education decided to accept the academic library donated to the College of Education by the University Association of Jyväskylä, it, at the same time, agreed that the establishment of the College of Education was a partial solution to the question of whether to establish a university at Jyväskylä (Kangas, 2009, p. 122).

After the establishment of the College of Education in Jyväskylä, discussions about the levels and requirements of teacher training took on a new tone in the 1930s. The question was whether all teacher seminaries should be transformed into colleges and require grammar school education for admission. Although the new college and its research emphasis were highly appreciated and welcomed, there were some conflicting attitudes toward altering the entire teacher education system. The main argument in favour of training in seminaries was the idea that the teaching profession was a special vocation – a calling – and seminary training valued that idea highly (Jauhiainen, Kivirauma and Rinne, 1998; Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, p. 220).

In 1944, the College of Education in Jyväskylä received the right to grant university degrees and the first student graduated in 1946 (Rinne, 2017; Valtonen, 2009b, p. 185). From then on, the college had two different programmes: teacher training and a degree programme in educational science which prepared students for master's degrees. Although the number of graduates of the degree programme remained low, academic studies were popular among students (Valtonen, 2009b, p. 185). Academic studies, in particular, fulfilled the aims of primary school teachers to further education (Rinne, 2017). Such academic courses had been offered since the end of the nineteenth century at the University of Helsinki and they had opened to primary school teachers, opportunities to become government inspectors of primary schools or lecturers in seminaries (Rantala, 2011). The academic master's degree at the College of Education strengthened that development, and it expanded further when, in the 1950s, primary school teachers who had not passed the matriculation examination gained the right to study for a master's degree (Valtonen, 2009b, p. 185).

The establishment of temporary teacher training colleges after the Second World War

The Second World War created exceptional circumstances that influenced teacher training. Firstly, evacuated teachers from Karelia had to be relocated and secondly, the need for teachers grew due to the number of teachers killed during the war and the post-war baby boom. In the countryside, for example, 20% of teachers were unqualified (Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, p. 223). After the war, the state began to take measures to increase the number of qualified teachers (Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 224–225; Säntti, 2011). The National Board of Education led in this effort by establishing new teacher training colleges (Nurmi, 1990, pp. 39–40). Temporary colleges were established in Helsinki (1947), Turku (1949) and Oulu (1953), and two new seminaries were inaugurated in Northern and Eastern Finland. At the same time, student intake at the old seminaries was increased (Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 224–225; Säntti, 2011). In addition, a law was

enacted in 1948, under which grammar school graduates could receive teacher qualifications after two years of college or seminary training, or after one year and two summers in either training stream (Rinne, 2017).

The establishment of temporary teacher training colleges was not a straightforward process although the need for qualified new teachers was substantial. Plans for reforming teacher training had been made by the committee appointed in 1937. The Second World War delayed the work of the committee and its reports were only completed in 1945 and 1947 (CR, 1945:5; CR, 1947:2; Nurmi, 1990, pp. 13–14). The chair of the committee was Kaarlo Saarialho (1886–1976) who had previously worked as seminary director and who had been appointed to the post of school counsellor in the National Board of Education in 1934. Other members represented various fields of education and included a professor, school inspectors, the seminary director and teaching staff. Interestingly, this committee also featured a large number of parliament members (CR, 1945:5, pp. 3–4).

Compared with the previous legislative initiatives, the reports by the committee did not contain thorough descriptions of the teacher training systems of other countries. Instead, the Committee Reports had only short comments on the length of teacher training in other Nordic countries as well as in some European countries, and remarks on the minimum and maximum age limits of student teachers (CR, 1945:5; CR, 1947:2, pp. 42–43). The committee justified the lower age limit with reference to other Nordic countries: ‘The committee did not see any grounds to propose abandoning the existing minimum age limit which is also applied in Nordic countries, especially as the length of training remained unchanged’ (CR, 1947:2, p. 43). With regard to the upper age limit, the Committee Report mentioned only Sweden: ‘In Swedish seminaries, the maximum age on admission is 24 years in the four-year programme and 28 years in the programme for grammar school graduates.’ The committee proposed setting the maximum age for entry to a Finnish teacher education programme at thirty years. This was based on its suggestion to admit vocational school graduates (CR, 1947:2, p. 43). As these examples show, the committee used other Nordic countries as a basis for its arguments.

The suggestions by the committee related to teacher training in seminaries as well as teacher education, especially teachers’ further education, at teacher colleges. The Nordic comparisons in the reports dealt only with seminary training (CR, 1945:5; CR, 1947:2). The suggestions by the committee were not implemented immediately and, in 1948, the National Board of Education made its own proposal about teacher colleges to the Ministry of Education. Behind the proposal were Kaarlo Saarialho and Alfred Salmela (1897–1979); both of whom had been members of the committee (Nurmi, 1990, pp. 13–14).

When a new college was planned in Turku, the National Board of Education presented the suggestion to transfer teacher training to universities. Although the proposition was not actualised, it points to the view favouring the placement of teacher training in higher education (Nurmi, 1990, pp. 132–133; Sääntti, 2011).

The new temporary teacher training colleges had their opponents, and the attempts to make them permanent institutions did not succeed. One influential opponent was the rector of the College of Education in Jyväskylä who strongly opposed attempts to consolidate the teacher college in Helsinki. He wanted to

increase opportunities to develop the college of Jyväskylä and argued vigorously against other solutions (Nurmi, 1990, pp. 41–47; Sääntti, 2011). In addition, both the primary school teachers' union and parliament resisted the establishment of permanent colleges other than the one in Jyväskylä (Nurmi, 1990, pp. 46–47).

The establishment of the temporary teacher training colleges consolidated the two-stream system and, during 1946–1967, seminaries and colleges offered two different routes into the primary school teaching profession (Rinne and Jauhainen, 1988, pp. 224–225; Sääntti, 2011). The temporary colleges indicated an expansion of grammar-school-based teacher training and a growing investment in modern urban university education. This showed a departure from the traditional and often patriarchal system of seminaries in rural towns (Rinne, 2017; Rinne and Jauhainen, 1988, p. 225). Sääntti states that teacher training colleges were a necessary intermediate stage, a transitional period while the pragmatic rural seminary training slowly transformed into university-level education (Sääntti, 2011).

Teacher training at the College of Education in Jyväskylä expanded at the end of the 1950s when programmes to qualify teachers for grammar schools were established (Valtonen, 2009b, pp. 209–210). The establishment of the new training programmes consolidated praxis, narrowed the educational gap between primary school and grammar school teachers and bridged to future reforms in the teacher training system.

In the 1950s, the Finnish government appointed only one committee on primary teacher education. The committee concentrated on training in seminaries and did not take a position on the question of teacher training colleges. Kaarlo Saarialho and Alfred Salmela were again members of the committee, and its work relied mostly on the Committee Reports of 1945 and 1947. The committee was only involved in the routine issues of organising seminary training, and the academisation of teacher education was not a focus. The report the committee released in 1952 did not contain any descriptions or comments about Nordic countries but, in the preface, it was mentioned that Professor Matti Koskeniemi (1908–2001), who also participated in the committee's work, was acquainted with Swedish teacher training. He had visited Swedish teacher seminaries in 1950 and became familiar with the results of some pilot projects:

The most important of these results concerned different school subjects in seminaries, different seminary programmes, the organising of teaching practice and the teaching methods of training schools. Prof. Koskeniemi gave an account of his observations. He also gave literature which enlightens the newest aims and solutions concerning Swedish teacher education.

(CR, 1952:B 15, p. 2)

Conclusion

The era of teacher training in colleges and seminaries ended during the 1970s when all the seminaries were replaced by modern teacher training situated in universities. The final impetus for the academisation of teacher training at the university level occurred in the 1960s, when the establishment of comprehensive schools

was finalised and the older grammar schools were phased out. The school reform was carried out gradually in the 1970s, and during that process, it became necessary to unite the two streams of teacher training and to make academic teacher education the standard (Rinne, 2017; Rinne and Jauhiainen, 1988, pp. 228–229). As Rinne and Jauhiainen (1988, p. 228) note, research-based teacher education was quickly instituted, requiring substantial academic resources. Although the final phase of the academisation of teacher training was organised swiftly, the process was not easy or straightforward. The changes in the national education system roused numerous stakeholders. Furuhausen and Holmén (2017) point out the demanding and difficult process of committee work and legislation and the conflicting interests of various agents: political groups, teacher unions as well as representatives of the educational sciences.

In the 1980s, academic teacher education programmes solidified their place in eight universities and twelve different Finnish towns. Rinne (2017) notes that the fruits of academisation are apparent in the new millennium. Academic primary teacher education, and faculties of educational sciences, have achieved a legitimate and distinguished position among other faculties and programmes at universities (Rinne, 2017).

This chapter has focused on the early phase of the academisation process and examined how the teacher training systems in other Nordic countries were depicted and compared in Committee Reports. It has also provided historical context for teacher education in Finland and showed that although the Committee Reports included descriptions and mentions of other Nordic countries, these depictions did not substantially differ from their references to other countries. Indeed, Nordic countries were no more readily referred to than, for example, Great Britain and Germany. The historically close relations between Nordic countries are thus not so clearly apparent in the Committee Reports. However, the reports show that the members of the committees were aware of the circumstances of teacher education in the Nordic countries, especially in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. On some occasions, the Committee Reports even indicated that the committees used Nordic countries as a basis for their own arguments.

Note

- 1 Before the school reforms of the 1970s, Finland had a separate type of secondary school: the *oppikoulu* or grammar school. These selective schools prepared students for the matriculation examination, the requirement for university entry.

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