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Language Shift as a Way of Acquiring New Citizenship and a Profession: The Educational Background of the First Female Students at the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary

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Abstract • This article sheds light on gendered aspects of the early years of the Finnish teacher training system. It focuses on the first generation of female students at the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary in central Finland, their educational background, and their language competences. My main sources are the students' applications to the seminary, which I explore with the help of the collective biographical method. The Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary, the first Finnish-language teacher training college for elementary school teachers in Finland, was established in central Finland in 1863, partly in response to the increasing significance of the Finnish language to the nation. For the girls who entered the seminary, their preparatory private education and the language shift they experienced there from Swedish to Finnish were significant factors both in their training as teachers and in the opportunity to gain a public profession of their own, as well as a new kind of female citizenship. Most of these women had graduated from private schools or had only private tutoring at home.

Keywords • female citizenship, multilingualism, professions, social motherhood, teacher training

Introduction

The young Finnish poet (Lovisa) Isa Asp (1853–1872) had an exceptional dream for a country girl of her time. She wanted to study at the new teacher training college, known then as the Teachers Seminary, in Jyväskylä, central Finland, to become an elementary school teacher. She also had a greater dream and ambition: to write poems, and someday to become an author or poet.[1] She believed becoming a teacher might leave her time to write, so this seemed an ideal profession for a girl who wanted to become a poet in 1860s Finland, where female authors were still a rarity.[2] She eventually became the first woman poet to have her work published in Finnish in the nineteenth century.[3]

This dream was why, in August 1871, she was excited to participate in an entrance examination in Jyväskylä far to the south, for which she had to travel for several days in a horse-drawn carriage from her home parish Puolanka in northern Finland.[4] There

1 Sofia Kotilainen, "How to Become an Author: The Poet Isa Asp and Her Childhood Fascination with Writing for Magazines," *Knygotyra* 76 (2021); Helmi Setälä, *Isa Asp*: *Nuoren pohjalaisen runoilijaneidon elämäntarina* (Helsinki: Otava, 1912), 71–72.

2 Heidi Grönstrand, "In Fredrika Bremer's Footsteps: Early Women Authors and the Rise of the Novel Genre in Finland," *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 16, no. 1 (2008), 46–47; Minna Maijala, *Herkkä*, *hellä*, *hehkuvainen*: *Minna Canth* (Helsinki: Otava, 2014), 341.

3 Toivo Hyyryläinen, ed., *Kohise*, *villi aalto*: *Isa Aspin runot* (Jyväskylä: Minerva, 2003); Erkki Hyytinen, *Isa Asp*: *Elämä ja valitut runot* ([Oulu]: Pohjoinen, 1983), 5.

4 Setälä (1912), 78–79.

were no train connections yet: railway traffic from western and southern Finland to Jyväskylä commenced only in 1897.[5]

Isa Asp was born in the countryside of northern Finland.[6] There were long distances to travel and hardly any schools, public or private, where girls from the families of the upper classes[7] (which consisted of the nobility, clergy, successful merchants, businessmen, the most successful factory owners and manufacturers, university figures, senior officers and public servants) could pursue their studies beyond the elementary level.[8] Asp was the daughter of an ironworks bookkeeper. Her mother's family were peasants, as were her father's forefathers. Her father taught her to speak and write Swedish,[9] which in Finland in those days was the main language of administration, education, the economy, and of the upper classes.[10] With the help of her paternal grandmother, Asp got the chance to attend a private girls' school in the town of Raahe on the west coast of Finland, approximately 200 kilometres from her home. She studied there for ten months in 1864–1865, but her family's inability to pay the school fees meant that she was forced to leave before graduating.[11] She had a sharp mind, however, and was a skilled writer, so she longed for more education.[12]

This article focuses on the first generation of female students at the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary, their educational background, and their language competences. The primary research objective is to investigate the fundamental educational opportunities and requirements facing the first female students at the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary, the inaugural Finnish-language teacher training college, established in 1863. The lens of analysis is employed to explore the processes of feminization and professionalization these women faced, that is, their pioneering endeavours to obtain qualifications through institutional education and thereby acquire professional identity, competence, and the potential to serve as elementary school teachers in public educational institu-

5 Päiviö Tommila, *Jyväskylän kaupungin historia 1837–1965, I* ([Jyväskylä]: Jyväskylän kaupunki, 1972), 303–4.

6 Setälä (1912), 9.

7 In Sweden and Finland, there was a four-estate system (nobles, clergy, burghers, and land-owning peasants) and in the Russian Empire's Grand Duchy of Finland, this system lasted until the latter half of the nineteenth century, but it was already breaking down from the mid-nineteenth century. The Diet of four estates (with a few extensions) remained in force to the beginning of the twentieth century. See e.g. Irma Sulkunen, "Suffrage, Nation and Political Mobilisation: The Finnish Case in an International Context," in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms*, ed. Pirjo Markkola, Seija Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Irma Sulkunen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 86.

8 Anne Ollila, *Jalo velvollisuus* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998), 35; Sisko Wilkama, *Naissivistyksen periaatteiden kehitys Suomessa 1840–1880-luvuilla*: *Pedagogis-aatehistoriallinen tutkimus* (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 1938), 37, 43.

9 Hyytinen (1983), 6–8; Setälä (1912), 9–13.

10 Erik Geber, "Språkets och språkens betydelse för Uno Cygnaeus reformarbete," in *Koulu ja menneisyys* 48 (Helsinki: Suomen kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen historian seura, 2010), 19; Kaisa Häkkinen, *Suomalaisen oppikirjan vaiheita* ([Helsinki]: Suomen tietokirjailijat, 2002), 41, 55–56; Irma Sulkunen, *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 1831–1892* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2004), 11, 122, 129.

11 Setälä (1912), 22–24, 39; see also Sofia Kotilainen, "Seminaarin kahdeksan Augustaa: Isa Aspin tilapäisrunous ja nimipäivien vieton yleistyminen Suomessa," *Genos* 90, no. 3 (2019), 34.

12 Setälä (1912), 12, 16, 28, 34, 81.

tions.[13] The ideology of social motherhood and the national need for mass education of the rural population suddenly justified a new and public role for women in Finnish society compared with earlier generations. In the nineteenth century, as nation-states were built and women's role in society was mainly restricted to the home, especially in upper- and middle-class families, motherhood was seen as a woman's highest calling.[14] In the role of teacher – an otherwise new and somewhat suspect public role for a woman – it was considered more gender-appropriate for a woman to devote herself to a professional career in which she could be seen as implementing social motherhood in her work outside the home.[15] This was regarded as a continuation of the woman's private role, but allowed her to support herself through her own work.

The central research inquiry is structured by three interrelated questions. The initial research query examines the nature of the basic or upper secondary education that most female teachers received in their own childhood and youth in elementary and private schools, along with other educational avenues accessible to girls during their formative years. The second question presents an analysis of home schools and private tutoring for women beyond the formalized education provided for girls. This investigation includes a consideration of the gendered[16] experiences associated with multilingual learning, literacies, and education,[17] acknowledging the historical constraints that reserved higher education and vocational training predominantly for men. Women during this period engaged in language studies within domestic settings involving family, friends, and governesses; they participated in activities such as reading literature, composing letters, and learning from informal sources.[18]

The third research question extends the inquiry by exploring how the linguistic

13 Christina Florin, *Kampen om katedern: Feminiserings- och professionaliseringsprocessen inom den svenska folkskolans lärarkår 1860–1906* (Umeå: Universitet i Umeå, 1987), 72–76; Vanessa Heggie, "Women Doctors and Lady Nurses: Class, Education, and the Professional Victorian Woman," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89, no. 2 (2015), 267–68, 291–92.

14 E.g. Johanna Annola, "Maternalism and Workhouse Matrons in Nineteenth-Century Finland," *Women's History Review* 28, no. 6 (2019), 953–56; Eileen Janes Yeo, "The Creation of 'Motherhood' and Women's Responses in Britain and France, 1750–1914," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999), 201–18.

15 Marjo Nieminen, "Breakers of Glass Ceilings: The Professional Careers of Women in Finland and the Graduates of Three Girls' Upper Secondary Schools (1890s–1910s)," *Paedagogica Historica* 60, no. 2 (2022a), 7. The vast majority of Finns obtained their livelihood from agriculture, and women worked hard on (e.g. their father's or husband's) farms, not just in the house. Women had for centuries taken part in heavy labour, tending cattle and working in the fields and forest. In the early twentieth century about 90% of Finnish people still lived in the countryside. Sulkunen (2009), 100.

16 Gender is referred here to as socially constructed differences between the sexes and socially constructed understandings of how women were supposed, for example, to live, study and work in a nineteenth-century society that was still predominantly male dominated in both public and private spheres. See Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986), 1053–75. https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376.

17 See e.g. Susan N. Bayley, "The English Miss, German Fräulein and French Mademoiselle: Foreign Governesses and National Stereotyping in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Europe," *History of Education* 43, no. 2 (2014); Michelle Levy, "Do Women Have a Book History?" *Studies in Romanticism* 53, no. 3 (2014); Marjo Nieminen, "Women Teachers and the Feminisation of the Teaching Profession in a Finnish Journal for Primary School Teachers (*The Teacher*), 1915–1920," *Paedagogica Historica* 58, no. 1 (2022b). Cf. the Swedish teachers: Emil Marklund, *Teachers' Lives in Transition*: *Gendered Experiences of Work and Family Among Primary School Teachers in Northern Sweden, c. 1860–1940* (Umeå: Umeå university, 2021a).

18 Ollila (1998), 29; Wilkama (1938), 3.

identities of female seminary students as aspiring professional teachers were shaped by their multilingual reading and writing skills. This examination takes into account the expectations placed upon these often native-Swedish-speaking women to teach in Finnish, considering the prevailing linguistic demographics, whereby the majority of the population spoke Finnish. Additionally, it acknowledges the gradual entry of new Finnish-speaking pupils into the emerging elementary schools, particularly in rural areas. Notably, girls' schools and private tutoring often emphasized foreign languages, such as French, German, or Russian[19].

Within this broader context, the article investigates the diverse educational backgrounds of the seminary students. They had studied a range of subjects including religion, geography, history, mathematics, and singing, and some were talented at painting, drawing, music, or writing.[20] This article, however, will specifically focus on the linguistic qualifications of the future elementary school teachers. I will also consider the significance of private education and of the language shift from Swedish to Finnish.

As a micro-historical illustration, the article delves into the exceptional educational trajectory of Isa Asp, examining her and her classmates' multilingual identity as they pursued their studies to become early elementary school teachers. As the first published female native-Finnish-speaking poet of the nineteenth century,[21] Isa Asp presents a unique case, having initially studied and written poems in Swedish during private girls' school,[22] and eventually transitioning to writing poetry in Finnish during her time in Jyväskylä.[23]

Previous research on the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary

The Finnish school reformation was influenced by western and central European views of women's education, but Swedish and even east European models (adopted via St Petersburg) were also important. Uno Cygnaeus is seen as the father of Finnish elementary education in the 1850s and 1860s. As he prepared his plan for the Finnish elementary educational system, he travelled widely in the neighbouring regions as well as in central Europe. Cygnaeus had a profound influence on the content of the Elementary Education Act of 1866. He wanted school pupils to learn practical disciplines as well, such as handicrafts and gymnastics.[24] Unlike some other educational planners of the period, Cygnaeus also wanted women to be able to study to become teachers; but their main duty was to be to teach the youngest children.[25]

Linguistic skills had their own value for the early seminary teachers and lecturers, because they made several study trips to Europe in order to adopt new pedagogical

19 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students 1863–1872; Wilkama (1938), 39, 119.

20 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students 1863–1872.

21 Hyyryläinen (2003); Setälä (1912), 95.

22 Setälä (1912), 21–22.

23 E.g. Hyyryläinen (2003).

24 Aimo Halila, *Jyväskylän seminaarin historia* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1963), 14, 102–4, 108–12; Veli Nurmi, *Uno Cygnaeus: Suomalainen koulumies ja kasvattaja* (Helsinki: Kouluhallitus, 1988), 76–77, 93–104.

25 Marja Jalava, "Kansanopetuksen suuri murros ja 1860-luvun väittely kansakoulusta," in *Valistus ja koulunpenkki: Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa 1860-luvulta 1960-luvulle*, ed. Anja Heikkinen and Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2011), 84; Ollila (1998), 43.

ideas and transform and utilize them in developing the work of the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary.[26] Some of the elementary school teachers who graduated from the seminary continued their studies by travelling in Europe and familiarizing themselves with new ideas.[27] This is also one reason why a multilingual approach was necessary in improving the Finnish educational system.

The educationalist scholar, Veli Nurmi, studied the early history of the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary and the development of the elementary education system in Finland, as well as the training of elementary school teachers, and his research forms a basis for later research.[28] Previously, in the 1940s, the social and cultural historian Aimo Halila studied the students of Jyväskylä seminary quantitatively and published the results of his comparison of student's social status, educational and linguistic background, and skills.[29] Halila conducted basic research on the students and his work covered several decades, but it seems that he did not systematically use all the original sources included in the seminary archives.

Halila's study of early elementary school teachers[30] was largely based on a commemorative register of 1937. Published in 1937,[31] this included remembrances from the seminary years as well as a register of teachers and students. However, Halila did not mention specifically what use he made of the lists of accepted applicants following the entrance exam, or of the personal files register of seminary students (both of which are in the seminary archives), if at all, alongside the published register. Halila also mentioned that the information in the published register was not complete, especially for the older generations of students.[32]

Some of the early female students of Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary have been studied in more detail and have been the subject of their own biographies, often more than one.[33] Among these women are the best-known national and public figures, such as the author, Minna Canth (1844–1897), the principal teacher, feminist and politician, Lucina Hagman (1853–1946), and the head teacher and educationalist, Ottilia Stenbäck (1848–1939). But the seminary students and seminary classes, as well as the first female students, have not been studied in detail, whether as a whole or systematically, either as female professionals in education or as women who had the possibility or necessity to pursue a career of their own. As a group they represent a new kind of female citizen,[34] members of society who achieved greater independence as public actors than was the norm for women in those days.

26 E.g. Halila (1963), 70.

27 J. M. Mikkola, Artturi Leinonen, and Sulo Rekola, eds., *Jyväskylän seminaari 1863–1937: Muistojulkaisu* (Helsinki: Valistus, 1937).

28 E.g. Veli Nurmi, *Suomen kansakouluopettajaseminaarien historia* (Helsinki: Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö OAJ, 1995); Nurmi (1998).

29 Aimo Halila, *Suomen vanhin kansakoulunopettajisto: Yhteiskuntahistoriallinen tutkielma* (Helsinki: Suomen kansakoulunopettajain liitto, 1949).

30 Halila (1949), 17.

31 Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

32 Halila (1949), 17.

33 E.g. Maijala (2014); Ollila (1998); Tyyni Tuulio, *Ottilia Stenbäck ja hänen aatemaailmansa* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1950).

34 Ollila (1998), 138–39, 230. In other Nordic countries, see e.g. Marklund (2021a).

The history of Finnish home education and of governesses or private tutors is not very well known and has yet to be studied widely in a systematic way.[35] Many upper-class (often noble or wealthy) families had private teachers prior to the establishment of the public elementary and secondary school system, but other upper social groups as well, such as the junior clergy (e.g. curates), tried to provide their children with a private education, if possible.[36] Information on their work is scarce, sources are fragmented, and knowledge is based on unofficial family sources or other secondary sources, so the work of these tutors and governesses is not recorded systematically. This is a part of Finnish education history that calls for more comprehensive study, though there is some international research on this theme.[37]

Method and sources

To explore the female students' biographical sources, I have used the *collective biographical method*, which means studying a group of persons, their identities, and networks.[38] Taken as a group, the lives of the female teacher candidates yield a more thorough description of the path a nineteenth-century Finnish woman took to acquire her professional skills. The collective biographical method is also required in the analysis of teachers' group identities because it makes it possible to investigate these female teachers' ideas and linguistic biographies in relation to the different networks in their life and their professional development. I approach the multilingual identities of the female teacher trainees from the 1860s and 1870s mainly as a qualitative case, but I have also made some numerical calculations[39] about their backgrounds.

Collective biography is particularly valuable in the context of microhistory because it helps place everyday events and phenomena in a meaningful context while distinguishing between isolated occurrences and shared patterns.[40] By microhistory, I refer particularly to the Nordic approach to microhistory. Where Italian micro-historians have traditionally sought to clarify the histories of exceptional persons and their

35 See also Sofia Kotilainen, "Maaseutupappilat tyttöjä jatko-opintoihin valmistaneina kotikouluina," in *Kirkko, papisto ja yhteiskunta 1600–1800*, ed. Ella Viitaniemi (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2023), 90–123.

36 Timo Joutsivuo, "Papeiksi ja virkamiehiksi," in *Huoneentaulun maailma: Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa keskiajalta 1860-luvulle*, ed. Jussi Hanska and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2010), 180; Liisa Lagerstam and Jessica Parland-von Essen, "Aatelin kasvatus," in *Huoneentaulun maailma: Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa keskiajalta 1860-luvulle*, ed. Jussi Hanska and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2010), 209. Students of Jyväskylä Seminary, see FNA, AJS, the personal files register of female seminary students 1863–1872.

37 See e.g. Bayley (2014), 160–86; Christina de Bellaigue, "Home Education 1750–1900: Domestic Pedagogies in England and Wales in Historical Perspective," *Oxford Review of Education* 41, no. 4 (2015), 421–29; Nora Gilbert, "A Servitude of One's Own: Isolation, Authorship, and the Nineteenth-Century British Governess," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 69, no. 4 (2015), 455–80; Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993).

38 Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (London: Red Globe Press, 2019 [2010]), 60–65; Katharine S. B. Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography Approaches and Applications: A Handbook* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2007).

39 I have counted the numbers of the students accepted at the Teachers Seminary, and some percentages of their cohort according to their age, father's occupation, social position, and basic education.

40 See Koenraad Verboven, Myriam Carlier and Jan Dumolyn, "A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography," in *Prosopography Approaches and Applications: A Handbook*, ed. Katharine S. B. Keats-Rohan (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2007), 41.

worldviews,[41] Nordic researchers have used microhistory more to analyse the person as a representative member of their local community. A small group of people can also provide a micro-historical example of phenomena which would otherwise be difficult to observe. The multiple sources which have been preserved of so-called ordinary Nordic people have made this possible.[42] Collective biography and microhistory have a common interest in that the objective of microhistory is to provide insights into social structures and processes that shape everyday life.

A micro-historical approach enables a more profound analysis of a previously little-studied theme. Generally, there has been little research on the experiences, as a group, of young Finnish lower-class women from the countryside who sought teaching careers and a professional identity of their own in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The choice of a collective biographical approach also involves the question of whose story *deserves* to be told using a historiographical methodology. Given that the Teachers Seminary in Jyväskylä was the first and only Finnish-speaking seminary at that time, studying Isa Asp and her classmates as a micro-historical example can train a shaft of light on the early foundations of female teacher training in Finland.

The benefit of the collective biographical method is the space it gives for analysis: the whole group describes the women of the age in a more multifaceted and reliable way than any one life story. Even though Isa Asp is the main character of my research, I want to shed light on a larger group of female students, including her lesser-known fellow students. Asp died young, before she graduated, and the sources describing her life have been insufficiently preserved. If information on the whole life of one woman is lacking and the sources are fragmented (as they often are), the first group of seminary students can describe more thoroughly the life of a young female teacher in those days. I want to take the research to a more general and theoretical level beyond that of a single biography, because as a group these students represent the birth and early history of the whole elementary school teacher training system in Finland – and what it meant to women.

Fluent literacy skills formed important cultural capital that a person could utilize – for example, by graduating as an elementary school teacher. As a theoretical framework in my analysis, I use Pierre Bourdieu's concept of immaterial capital, and more specifically of social and cultural capital.[43] This concept includes, for example, linguistic capital and literacy skills, which can also indirectly create social and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, it is possible to gain access to new possibilities and opportunities in society through active utilizing of one's cultural capital, that is, immaterial personal capital.[44] I am interested in the ways female teacher candidates utilized the cultural immaterial capital they possessed in the exceptional situation in which they

41 Carlo Ginzburg, *Juusto ja madot: 1500-luvun myllärin maailmankuva* [The cheese and the worms] (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2007 [1976]. However, e.g. Giovanni Levi, *Aineeton perintö: Manaajapappi ja talonpoikaisyhteisö 1600-luvun Italiassa* (Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto, 1992) shows the importance of communal relations and family and kin networks to an individual.

42 E.g. Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, *Emotional Experience and Microhistory*: *A Life Story of a Destitute Pauper Poet in the 19th Century* (London: Routledge, 2020), 28.

43 In his theory Bourdieu divides capital between economic (which is often material), social, and cultural capital.

44 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986 [1983]), 243–45.

could obtain qualifications to be a teacher. Women had also worked in earlier periods as, for example, private teachers and school mistresses, but had lacked any official position as a part of society or in public schoolhouses.

Bourdieu's theory can be extended to studying historical communities. It can help us to determine the immaterial cultural capital these women had previously acquired (linguistic, social networks, education), which they could now utilize as they studied to be professional teachers in the Jyväskylä seminary. Bourdieu's theory combines these different viewpoints, which were essential in early formal teacher training. Students of the seminary formed tight and durable networks of future colleagues who could support each other later on. They became linked to one another through their shared profession (a form of social capital), which gave them an identity of their own and, to varying extents, institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance (i.e. cultural capital).[45] Elementary school teachers were expected not only to have the academic qualification, but also "a certificate of cultural competence"[46]; and all the former students of the Jyväskylä seminary shared these values and identities at the end of the nineteenth century.[47] For most of the female students, the language shift from Swedish to Finnish also strengthened both their national identity and their ability to communicate with the ordinary people of the countryside.

As my main sources, I have used the archives of the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary. The most important sources are the lists of applicants, as well as applications to the seminary from its first ten years of training women as teachers.[48] Furthermore, the personal files register of seminary students is an important source because it shows who the applicants were and who was accepted after the entrance examinations held in August. Students and teachers started the new semester in September, but all accepted candidates did not begin their studies in the same autumn – or ever.[49] Therefore, it is important to compare the different lists to confirm who of the accepted students were actually studying in the seminary.

A significant proportion of the women left the seminary in their second, third, or fourth year, before graduating. Their reasons for leaving included poverty, sickness, or marriage, but it was possible that women who had not graduated from the seminary still worked the rest of their life as elementary school teachers, even though they lacked the formal qualifications and diploma.[50] As elementary schools became established everywhere in the countryside, the need for capable teachers in the early years exceeded the number with a formal qualification.

I have compared the numbers of students in Isa Asp's class, of the women who applied to the seminary, and of those who started their studies in 1871. I have also used the published register from 1937. However, not all students are mentioned in the

45 Bourdieu (1986), 247–49.

46 Bourdieu (1986), 248.

47 See also Sofia Kotilainen, "Seminaarin mallikoulun idea ja suomenkielisen opetusharjoittelukoulun synty," in Janne Haikari and Sofia Kotilainen, *Opettajuuden mallia*: *Jyväskylän Normaalikoulun historia 1864–2015* (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän normaalikoulu, Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2016), 90.

48 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students; Lists of applicants of entrance exam.

49 FNA, AJS, the personal files register of female seminary students 1863–1872; Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

50 FNA, AJS, the personal files register of female seminary students 1863–1872.

published register.[51] This is why it is necessary to combine the original sources with the printed register, as is done in this article. These sources complement each other and give a more precise understanding of who the first students were.

Women's education in Finland before the 1860s

Before the nineteenth century, most Finnish women were left outside public education.[52] In Finland, the nature and extent of education had for centuries depended on a family's social position.[53] Many practices were similar to those in Sweden, such as private tutoring in upper-class families,[54] and Swedish culture and language held an important position in the society still in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Swedish language had been the language of administration, justice, and higher education,[55] and it was until the mid-nineteenth century mainly used in local administration, including in the Finnish-speaking parishes, and still for some decades afterwards alongside the Finnish language.[56]

The nobility and upper class had used Swedish, the language of mother country and central administration, in everyday life since the seventeenth century. This had created not only geographical language barriers in society, but also "social language barriers." Many members of this class were also fluent in Finnish, but Swedish carried greater social prestige and a higher cultural status in society. Swedish was also spoken by Swedish-speaking Finns from lower social groups, especially in the coastal areas of Finland.[57]

Since the Reformation, the Evangelical Lutheran church had taught the basics of Christian doctrine in Finnish. The clergymen and civil servants in Finnish-speaking areas therefore required competence in Finnish language in their everyday work.[58] There were not many local schools for Finnish-speaking agrarian children before 1860s, except for the teaching of elementary reading skills, which was controlled by the church in the rural parishes as a means of imparting basic Christian teachings to the people. The peasant families were supposed to take care of the elementary instruction of their children; in cases where this was not possible, the junior clergy or cantors might help with the rudiments, and local skilled people held Sunday schools for children.[59]

51 Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

52 Wilkama (1938), 17–22, 37–39.

53 Joutsivuo (2010), 179.

54 Lagerstam and Parland-von Essen (2010), 185, 190. See also Marjatta Rahikainen, "Shaping Middle-Class and Upper-Class Girls: Women as Teachers of Daughters of Good Families in the Baltic Sea World, c. 1780–1850," in *Early Professional Women in Northern Europe, 1650–1850*, ed. Johanna Ilmakunnas, Marjatta Rahikainen, and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (London: Routledge, 2018), 247.

55 Anna-Riitta Lindgren, Klaus Lindgren, and Mirja Saari, "From Swedish to Finnish in the 19th Century: A Historical Case of Emancipatory Language Shift," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 209 (2011), 19.

56 Matti Klinge, "Poliittisen ja kulttuurisen Suomen muodostaminen," in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria II*, ed. Päiviö Tommila, Aimo Reitala, and Veikko Kallio (Porvoo – Helsinki – Juva: WSOY, 1980), 23.

57 Lindgren, Lindgren, and Saari (2011), 18–19.

58 Klinge (1980), 23.

59 Esko M. Laine and Tuija Laine, "Kirkollinen kansanopetus," in *Huoneentaulun maailma: Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa keskiajalta 1860-luvulle*, ed. Jussi Hanska and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2010), 260–66, 277–79.

During the nineteenth century, nationalist Finnish ideas flourished, and Finnish as a language gained more esteem.[60] The Fennoman nationalist movement aspired to elevate the Finnish language and culture from peasant status to a national language and culture. At the same time, there were many among the church and statesmen, educators, social and state philosophers, and many authorities who for nationalistic reasons wanted to discuss and renew the traditional schooling system, to detach it from the church's religious duties, and to provide public elementary education for the whole population.[61] In the first decades of the nineteenth century, wealthy Finnish clergy, merchant, burgher, and civil servant families often sent their daughters to be educated in private pension(ate) and private boarding schools – often to Sweden, the former mother country, and, during the period of autonomy after 1809, also to St Petersburg, where there were more of these schools. There were a few, rare, boarding schools also in Finland.[62] Little by little, the education of girls moved away from the home and became institutionalized. In the private boarding schools, the purpose of teaching was not to provide girls with a well-rounded general education or train them to be public servants but to impart the social skills needed in high society: namely, foreign languages, discussion skills, needlework, and musical proficiency.[63]

The question of women's education was being publicly debated by the 1840s and 1850s, especially among the upper class and in the universities,[64] intensified by the Fennomanian ideology, which urged that the whole of the population should be educated, a goal that was conditional on improving the position of Finnish as the language of schooling.[65] Educating women was one of the most important controversial issues in Finnish public discussion. It was only in the following decade, however, that new schools and the Jyväskylä seminary were established with reformed legislation.[66] There were many such reforms[67] in Finnish society after Russia's defeat in the Crimean war of 1853–1856.[68] After the reforms of the 1860s, teacher training gradually became professionalized, as teacher seminaries offered equal pedagogical education to women as well as men.[69]

In the 1840s, critics of the private schools and of education for girls had advocated

60 Häkkinen (2002), 55–56; Ilkka Liikanen, *Fennomania ja kansa: Joukkojärjestäytymisen läpimurto ja Suomalaisen puolueen synty* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1995), 97–99.

61 Jalava (2011), 75; Soili Tiimonen, *Valoa kansalle: Luterilainen kirkko ja kansanopetuksen kehittämispyrkimykset autonomisessa Suomessa 1809–1848* (Helsinki: Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura, 2001), 381–90.

62 Jessica Parland-von Essen, *Behagets betydelser: Döttrarnas edukation i det sena 1700-talets adelskultur* (Helsingfors: Helsingfors universitet, 2005), 70–71; Rahikainen (2018), 252–53.

63 Wilkama (1938), 2–6.

64 Tiimonen (2001), 214; Wilkama (1938), 64–67.

65 Arvo Inkilä, *Kansanvalistusseura Suomen vapaassa kansansivistystyössä 1874–1959* (Helsinki: Otava, 1960), 18–27; Liikanen (1995), 99–101.

66 Jalava (2011), 91–93.

67 After the loss in the Crimean War, Czar Alexander II carried out major social reforms to modernize and industrialize Russia. In Finland, several reforms created the foundation for the state's future independence. The Diet of Finland could assemble regularly, Finnish became the official language, elementary schools were established, local municipal administrations were developed, and Finland got its own currency, the mark.

68 Liikanen (1995), 121.

69 Halila (1963), 13.

the teaching of practical and general subjects rather than educating girls in the social skills of high society. Many argued that girls should be equipped to follow what was considered to be their natural calling, as mothers of the family and keepers of the household.[70] The statute of national education issued by Catharine the Great in 1786 had instituted an school system that provided for public education for girls in the territory of Old Finland,[71] but other areas of Finland, which had been part of the Swedish kingdom until 1809, lacked a similar school system. However, the school legislation of 1786 influenced autonomous Finland's own school act in 1843,[72] and public education for women ultimately became widely accepted. In the largest towns of Finland, private girls' schools were established. The first private Swedish girls' school opened in Helsinki in 1835, and in 1843, the provision of public school for girls written into Finland's own act on schooling had the effect that in the following year public Swedish schools for girls were established for the first time in Helsinki and Turku. These schools, however, still had quite traditional curriculums, and did not prepare students for careers in the civil service or other similar roles, but to be mothers and housekeepers of their own home.[73]

Thus, women in Finland were only able to enter higher education and, in this way, increase their immaterial capital in the last decades of the century. The first women completed their matriculation examination from upper secondary school from the 1870s. Prior to 1901, they had to apply for dispensation to gain the right to study at the University of Helsinki.[74] Women's university studies became more common only in the twentieth century.[75]

The first female students of the Teachers Seminary

The Finnish society was intensively modernised after the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War. Partly in response to the increasing significance of the Finnish language to the nation, in 1863 the first Finnish-language teacher training college for men and women, the Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary, was established in central Finland to meet the demand for qualified teachers.[76] In the following year, the first Finnish-language upper secondary school for girls was opened in Jyväskylä. Many of the founders of this private girls' school were lecturers and teachers from the seminary or from the Jyväskylä Lyceum (originally Jyväskylän yläalkeiskoulu, the first Finnish-language

70 Tiimonen (2001), 214; Wilkama (1938), 64–67.

71 The areas in south-east Finland that Russia gained from Sweden in the Great Northern War (1700–1721) and in the Russo-Swedish War (1741–1743). Old Finland was joined to the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland as Viipuri (Vyborg) Province in 1812.

72 Wilkama (1938), 342.

73 Wilkama (1938), 21, 37–41.

74 The University of Helsinki, the Imperial Alexander University in Finland (1828–1919), founded in the city of Turku (in Swedish *Åbo*) in 1640 as the Royal Academy of Åbo, at that time part of the Swedish empire, was the only university in Finland as late as 1901.

75 Mervi Kaarninen, "Maisteri Emma Irene Åström: Legenda jo eläessään," in *Naisten aika: Valkoinen varis ja muita oppineita naisia*, ed. Riitta Mäkinen and Marja Engman (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2015), 45–49; Matti Klinge, *Helsingin yliopiston ylioppilaskunnan historia kolmas osa 1872–1917* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1968), 143–45; Nieminen (2022a), 5.

76 Inkilä (1960), 11; Jalava (2011), 75; Kotilainen (2016), 25–26; Nurmi (1995), 15. The University of Jyväskylä has continued the legacy of the Teachers Seminary into modern times with its teacher training programmes.

upper secondary school for boys, established in 1858)[77] who wanted to provide for girls (and also their own daughters) the opportunity to study in Finnish.[78]

During the 1860s, Jyväskylä became a significant town for education in the interior of Finland, including for women, as several Finnish-language schools were founded there. With the Elementary Education Act of 1866, which ordered towns to establish elementary schools for all children[79], the whole Finnish educational system was renewed (as had happened in several Western and Nordic countries already in the first decades of the century).[80] At first, the establishment of elementary schools in the rural parishes was voluntary, so that many remote and poor areas were left without schools until the end of the century;[81] but the 1866 Act resulted in an increased demand for the new elementary schools and for teachers for Finnish-speaking children.

New teachers were needed to educate the Finnish-speaking masses who had previously been left outside the school system. Fennomen saw that rural young people had important immaterial linguistic capital, that is, fluent Finnish language skills, which many upper-class children and young people still lacked at this time. In families of upper social groups, the home language was still Swedish, until it became fashionable and ideologically necessary to switch to Finnish during the last decades of the century.[82] The significance of the Finnish language (the native tongue of the vast majority of the population) was truly realized in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when nationalist ideas and movements began to emphasize the importance of the people and its distinctive and original culture. It was also a way to maintain a national identity and show that the Finns had historical roots and a right to their existence within the Russian empire.[83]

Rural literacy had traditionally been a communally shared skill. Some in local communities had specialized in reading and writing on behalf of others when the skills were still rare (especially writing skills, until the latter half of the nineteenth century), or where people were semi-literate.[84] This was partly due to the subordinate position of Finnish for administrative purposes. However, the Evangelical Lutheran church had for centuries translated sermons and the central tenets of Christianity, as well as important announcements, into Finnish for the Finnish-speaking people.[85]

77 Halila (1963), 25.

78 Tyyne Wahlman, "Jyväskylän tyttökoulun ja tyttölyseon vaiheet 1864–1964," in *Jyväskylän tyttökoulu ja tyttölyseo 1864–1964*, ed. Tyyne Wahlman, Hilja Wesala, and Alma Tenhunen (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän tyttölyseon entisten oppilaiden yhdistys, 1964), 14–15, 41.

79 Elementary School Decree 12/11/5/1866.

80 Nurmi (1995), 15; Johannes Westberg, *Att bygga ett skolväsende: Folkskolans förutsättningar och framväxt 1840–1900* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2014), 21; Johannes Westberg, Lukas Boser, and Ingrid Brühwiler, eds., *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*: *Education Policy in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

81 Elementary School Decree 12/11/5/1866; Kotilainen (2016), 26–27; Nurmi (1995), 75.

82 Lindgren, Lindgren, and Saari (2011).

83 Liikanen (1995), 147–59.

84 Sofia Kotilainen, "Yhteisöllisesti jaettu luku-ja kirjoitustaito: Kollektiivibiografisesta menetelmästä luku-ja kirjoitustaidon historian tutkimuksessa," in *Kulttuurihistorian tutkimus: Lähteistä menetelmiin ja tulkintaan*, ed. Rami Mähkä et al., 85–102 (Turku: Turun yliopisto, 2022); Arja Rantanen, *Pennförare i periferin*: *Österbottniska sockenskrivare 1721–1868* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2014).

85 Laine and Laine (2010), 259–63, 296.

The ability to read and write and a school education increasingly provided a possible route to social mobility for young people in rural areas in the modernizing Finnish society,[86] but at the turn of the 1860s and 1870s, this was still a route primarily available to men, as women could not very often educate themselves or work in public professions at that time. The occupations of nurse or elementary school teacher were the first of these professions to be considered "appropriate" careers for women of middle or upper social groups.[87] The Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary was the first institute in Finland intended for Finnish-speaking teacher training – including for female students.[88]

The professionalization of elementary school teachers in Finland required many skills and the acquisition of a large amount of knowledge. The early students at the seminary had a heavy workload during the semesters. Duties and the study load were fairly equal for men and women, and in addition to attending class, they also had to work in the seminary garden.[89] Uno Cygnaeus, in common with other organizers of the early teaching seminary and other important educationalists of the nineteenth century, believed that gardening was healthy and pedagogically useful. These thinkers believed that work-oriented education should be integrated with the wider society, and that graduate teachers could provide a good example for the locals in their community and for their school children by spreading information about the new garden plants. Through working in the school gardens, pupils at school would also learn more about natural sciences and practical agricultural skills.[90]

The seminary presented an excellent opportunity for diligent Finnish-speaking rural women eager to learn to improve their social position.[91] In the early years, however, there were relatively few students from lower social groups, such as the working population or peasantry; throughout the 1860s and 1870s, most of the female students came from the families of civil servants or the clergy, although many of these families were in fact poor and a teacher's work was a necessity to earn a living, rather than necessarily a vocational

86 Kirsi Keravuori, "Self-Taught Writers, Family Correspondence, and Social Mobility in the 19th-Century Finnish Archipelago," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 44, no. 3 (2018), 318; Kotilainen (2016), 306; Kotilainen (2022).

87 Mineke van Essen, "Strategies of Women Teachers 1860–1920: Feminization in Dutch Elementary and Secondary Schools from a Comparative Perspective," *History of Education* 28, no. 4 (1999), 417; Narciso de Gabriel, "The Entrance of Women into the Teaching Profession in Spain (1855–1940)," *History of Education* 43, no. 3 (2014), 340; Heggie (2015), 268–69; Jukka Rantala, "Kansakoulunopettajat," in *Valistus ja koulunpenkki: Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa 1860-luvulta 1960-luvulle*, ed. Anja Heikkinen and Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2011), 268.

88 Halila (1963), 31.

89 Halila (1963), 16, 19–20, 42–43; J. M. Mikkola, "Seminaarin vaiheita," in *Jyväskylän seminaari 1863–1937: Muistojulkaisu*, ed. J. M. Mikkola, Artturi Leinonen, and Sulo Rekola (Helsinki: Valistus, 1937), 33–34.

90 Halila (1963), 11; Nurmi (1995), 31. For a comparison with international educational aims of school gardens, see e.g. Kate Gardner Burt, "A Complete History of the Social, Health, and Political Context of the School Gardening Movement in the United States: 1840–2014," *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 11, no. 3 (2016); Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "'A better crop of boys and girls': The school gardening movement, 1890–1920," *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2008). For the Nordic countries see Petter Åkerblom, "Footprints of School Gardens in Sweden," *Garden History* 32 (2004); Christian Larsen, "The Pedagogical School Garden and the Educationalization of Social Problems in Denmark," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 43, no. 1 (2023).

91 On the strategies used by female teachers to improve their position within the educational system, see van Essen (1999).

calling.[92] The first director of the seminary, the pastor Uno Cygnaeus, was pleased to see daughters of upper-class families becoming new elementary school teachers. He felt that this kind of popular educational duty would bring the educated groups and the people closer to each other.[93] Popular education was one of the most important ways to make people conscious of their culture, roots and identity – which is why the position of the Finnish language was also improved to create a stronger national identity.[94]

With the establishment of the Finnish-speaking Teachers Seminary, agrarian Finnish-speaking women were able to achieve a profession of their own and an independent position in society by utilizing their immaterial and linguistic capital to study for the teacher examination and then by working as teachers.

Social motherhood and the teacher's profession

Since 1859, Finnish women had already been allowed to pursue a trade or a profession in order to maintain themselves. In 1864, women gained new legal rights which made them more equal with men. Unmarried women were freed from the guardianship of their fathers or other male relatives in the name of equality and universal human rights, and from the age of twenty-five they were legally recognized as adults, thereby gaining full control over their property and income from that age. Married women, however, remained under the guardianship of their husband until 1930, when the Marriage Act was renewed.[95]

Thus, from the 1870s on, educated Finnish women were gaining new rights to work in public occupations as elementary school teachers or as civil servants in the role of, for example, postmistresses.[96] For other women belonging to the upper, middle and lower classes, there were opportunities to participate in voluntary organizations, temperance associations, youth associations, as well as in national, cultural and even political societies. These became the arenas of emancipation and for gathering experience of working in society outside the home for those who did not have public posts or for married women.[97] Finnish women eventually received the right to vote and the right to run for elected office in the parliamentary elections of 1906.[98]

Historically, upper-class families had educated their daughters at home or in private girls' schools so they would learn the skills they needed for marriage and in high society. Sometimes unmarried women ended up as teachers;[99] but formal elementary school teacher training only began with the Jyväskylä Teachers' Seminary. Only after the Finnish national awakening and the development of popular education did members of all social strata increasingly want to participate in elementary schools by the first decades of the twentieth century.[100] The upper classes also wanted to provide their

92 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students 1863–1872.

93 Nieminen (2022b), 142; Ollila (1998), 44.

94 Liikanen (1995), 160–62.

95 Anu Pylkkänen, *Trapped in Equality: Women as Legal Persons in the Modernisation of Finnish Law* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009), 42–43, 97.

96 Ollila (1998), 43. See also Nieminen (2022a), 3.

97 Sulkunen (1987), 162.

98 Sulkunen (2009); Tuulio (1950), 280.

99 Joutsivuo (2010), 183.

100 Jalava (2011), 94.

daughters (whose mother tongue up to that point had mainly been Swedish) with a general education and knowledge of Finnish language and culture, because educating them (and learning Finnish) also meant building the future of the nation.[101] Studying in Jyväskylä served this purpose well.

In this period, motherhood and taking care of the family and the home in the private sphere were still socially accepted as the most important goal for women.[102] From the end of the century, the idea of "social motherhood" arose, according to which mothers' roles as educators and caregivers were not limited to the home. Upper- and middle-class women in particular could now extend their care to the whole of society through the idea of social motherhood, usually to its lower and underprivileged strata.[103] They were to care for their immediate community, children and the disadvantaged in the lower social groups, and they were to educate them on how to care for the home and raise children. Every woman was considered to be motherly by nature; women without families could also participate in helping and educating the less fortunate and the poor through social motherhood, even if they did not have children of their own. In this case, motherhood was the justification for the social activities of women. From the late nineteenth century on and up to the first world war, social motherhood was driven especially by women from women's organizations and the temperance movement.[104]

For many unmarried girls from families of upper social classes, training as a teacher was not only a livelihood, but a way to fulfil their calling for (social) motherhood.[105] Being a teacher was seen as a continuation of the natural calling of women to be mothers, now expanded from the domestic sphere to society as a whole, and teaching in a public school was a part of social motherhood.[106] This idea of the teacher's social vocation was also reflected in the studies at the Jyväskylä seminar.

Basic education of the female seminary students

Like Isa Asp, many young men and women travelled hundreds of kilometres from home to study in Jyväskylä for four years and become elementary school teachers. The Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary also offered young persons from the Finnish-speaking countryside a route to social mobility and study for a profession since they could receive instruction there in their own mother tongue.[107]

The Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary was a "twin seminary," with separate departments for men and women. Male and female students met only rarely, and then only on well-supervised occasions.[108] In the first years, the students were, according to the

101 Halila (1963), 13; Jalava (2011), 82; Ollila (1998), 49.

102 van Essen (1999), 416.

103 Irma Sulkunen, "Naisten järjestäytyminen ja kaksijakoinen kansalaisuus," in *Kansa liikkeessä*, ed. Risto Alapuro et al. (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1987), 165–67.

104 Sulkunen 1987, 164–65.

105 Ollila (1998), 43.

106 van Essen (1999), 417–18; Wilkama (1938), 106–7.

107 Halila (1949), 22–23. On the socio-economic background and educational capital of primary school teachers, see also Emil Marklund, "Who was Going to Become a Teacher? The Socio-Economic Background of Primary School Teachers in Northern Sweden 1870–1950," *History of Education* 50, no. 1 (2021b).

108 Halila (1963), 19, 163.

historian Aimo Halila, strictly divided based on their gender and social background: with a few exceptions, the women were from upper social groups, and the men were from peasant families from the countryside.[109] Halila studied the social background of the early students at the Jyväskylä and Sortavala[110] teacher seminaries as a whole from 1863 to 1898, and he did not always separate male and female students in his examination of the results.[111] It is therefore important to note that his results are not completely accurate for the Jyväskylä students and do not provide a basis for comparison. More detailed research into the sources is needed.

The majority of female students accepted at the Jyväskylä seminary in its first year of operation came from upper class families rather than from agrarian homes. Most of these women, ranging in age from 18 to 31 years when they started their studies in autumn 1863, had previously studied in girls' schools.[112] In Asp's class eight years later, by contrast, the students' age ranged from 18 to 26 years.[113] These students had often graduated from girls' schools.

Table 1. The social position of early students of Jyväskylä Teachers Seminary, 1863–1872

Father's occupation or social position	**%**
Civil servants	24
(Lower) clergy	20
Land-owning peasant families	11
Workers	10
Merchants and manufacturers	7
Handicraftsmen	7
Cantors	5
Teachers	3
Others	13
TOTAL	100

Source: FNA, AJS, the personal files register of female seminary students 1863–1872; Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

109 Halila (1949), 31; Halila (1963), 32, 124.

110 Sortavala Teachers Seminary was the second Finnish-language teacher training college in Finland. It was situated between 1880 and 1944 in Karelia, on the northern coast of Lake Ladoga (near the present Finnish border with Russia). After the second world war, teacher training at Sortavala Seminary was continued in the town of Joensuu, nowadays at the University of Eastern Finland. Sortavala Seminary was a twin seminary. There were also two Swedish-language seminars in Ekenäs (Tammisaari 1871, for women) and Nykarleby (Uusikaarlepyy 1873, for men).

111 Halila (1949).

112 FNA, AJS, the personal files register of female seminary students 1863–1872; Mikkola et al. (1937). For some reason, Halila (1963, 29) has mentioned that the ages were ranging from 19 to 32.

113 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871; Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

From 1863 to 1872, a total of 213 female students were accepted as students at the seminary and started their studies in the same autumn. Of these, as shown in Table 1, a little over 20 per cent were daughters of the (lower) clergy, and 24 per cent of civil servants (rural police chiefs, land surveyors, district registrars, judges). Some 11 per cent came from land-owning peasant families, while 7 per cent were the daughters of merchants and manufacturers, 7 per cent of handicraftsmen, and approximately 10 per cent of workers. While fewer than 5 per cent were daughters of cantors, overall, more than 30 per cent – almost one-third of all the female students – were daughters of fathers who worked in the Evangelical Lutheran church parishes (clergy, ministers, pastors, cantors, sextons, gravediggers). Furthermore, nearly 3 per cent were the daughters of teachers (see Table 1). Popular education had traditionally been one of the major tasks of the church, and in the families of the clergy and of teachers, educating the people was seen as a suitable future occupation for their daughters, too.

Because the backgrounds were so varied, the basic education of the first students was often very different, and the immaterial capital of the future teachers was therefore heterogeneous. The agrarian men in particular had little earlier formal education, whereas the women had frequently studied in Swedish-language upper secondary schools[114] after receiving their elementary education either in elementary schools or at home or under the guidance of a private teacher.[115] Halila has shown, that of the students starting their studies at the seminary in the period between 1863 and 1898, a minority, about 32 per cent, had attended elementary school and had then also studied in other schools or institutes; most, around 73 per cent, came from rural parishes. Townspeople were in the minority.[116] However, in the first years there were not yet so many elementary schools in Finland, and many of the students who applied to the seminary did not have especially high education or very much formal basic education.

In Asp's year-group, 31 of the girls invited to take the entrance examination to the seminary in Jyväskylä in August 1871 were accepted as new students.[117] Approximately half of these girls had received their basic education in some public or private school outside the home,[118] while more than a third, 37.5 per cent, had prepared for their seminary studies by private study or studying at home. Fewer than a third had, like Lucina Hagman, the daughter of a regional police official (*nimismies*) from the parish of Kälviä, been at a girls' school in the largest towns (Hagman studied in Vaasa (Vasa) Swedish girls' school). Furthermore, two of the girls had elementary school as their basic education.[119] In the first years of the seminary, from 1863 to 1872, approximately 44 per cent of the Jyväskylä seminary female students had studied in girls' school before their admission to the seminary. Thirty-four per cent of them were the daughters of civil servants, 19.1 per cent were clergy's daughters, 10.1 per cent merchants' and 8.5 per cent land-owning peasants' daughters.[120] The daughters of clergy and teachers in

114 Halila (1949), 71.

115 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871; Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

116 Halila (1963), 128–29.

117 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871.

118 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871.

119 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871; Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

120 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871; Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

particular had received significant cultural and educational capital from home before arriving at the seminary, as these fathers frequently taught their children[121] as well as students and parishioners.

According to the register published in 1937, the basic education of one-quarter of the girls in Asp's class was unknown, or details are completely missing from the register.[122] Comparison of the printed register with the original lists of applicants shows that the commemorative publication of 1937, compiled several decades later, fails to include comprehensive information about all the students accepted in the entrance examinations and studying at the seminary, compared with the original archive sources.[123] For this reason, Halila's 1940s study does not include all the data on the early students, and his results are therefore less detailed than an analysis based on the original lists but supplemented by data from the register. Furthermore, the differentiation and differing backgrounds in the applicants' knowledge base demonstrates that there was a transitional phase going on in the education of girls from home education to public schooling, which became more common at the end of the century. This change cannot be observed as distinctly when looking at the whole period of more than thirty years 1863–1898.

The seminary archives and the entrance examination lists show that ten of the students accepted in autumn 1871, almost one-third, were daughters of the clergy. About 60 per cent of all the new female students who had been taught privately were from the families of clergy or cantors.[124] Asp, too, had received private teaching in the vicarage where she was taught by her friend's home tutor, Edla Niska; her best friend Sally was the daughter of the vicar of Puolanka, Johan Fredrik Thauvón.[125] Furthermore, Asp herself had studied at a girls' school but had not graduated. Other girls who had also not graduated from their previous schools may not have been documented clearly enough in the commemorative register of 1937, or in the entrance examination documents, and therefore may not have been registered as thoroughly as in the original personal files register of female seminary students.

Several rural students (especially men) were from impoverished families and were studying on credit. Some of them had only a few marks and some food with them when they arrived at Jyväskylä.[126] Most of the new female students in autumn 1871 were from a higher social status than Asp's own family. She was an exceptional student, because she had received private teaching with the help of networks outside her home. Asp was successful because of her skills in the entrance exam and got the second-best points after Lucina Hagman, who had graduated from a girls' school.[127]

Soon after the great famine of 1866–1868,[128] most of the female students accepted

121 See also Marklund (2021b), 46.

122 Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

123 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students; Lists of applicants of entrance exam.

124 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871.

125 Setälä (1912), 62–66. See also Kotilainen (2019), 33.

126 Halila (1949), 31.

127 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871.

128 There had been years of severe famine in Finland in 1857, 1862 and 1865. The famine of 1866–1868 was the last famine in Finland, known as "the great hunger years," and the last major famine in Northern Europe (along with the subsequent Swedish famine of 1867–1869). About 10% of the entire population of Finland died of hunger. For further information, see e.g. Henrik Mikael Forsberg, "'If They do not Want to Work and Suffer, They Must Starve and Die.' Irish and Finnish famine historiography compared," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 43, no. 4 (2018).

by the seminary in 1871 were no longer from the upper classes of Finnish society. Many of these successful applicants seem to have come to the seminary to find a more secure economic future by studying for a profession of their own and then supporting themselves by work as elementary school teachers. Most of Asp's classmates had been born in the early 1850s (75 per cent), and for almost half of these (47 per cent) their provider was given as "impoverished" or "very poor." Of these poorer students, only 53 per cent of these poorer students were, however, accepted as resident students in the first seminary year.[129] It seems that many of the girls with a higher social status than working women usually had – that is, those who were daughters of pastors and civil servants – simply had to start working as elementary school teachers to secure their future economically, both for lack of money and to support their families should their fathers die.[130] Another reason could have been the desire for an independent life without having a husband to decide what one should do or not do.[131]

Multilingualism at the Jyväskylä Seminary

An elementary school teacher was required to know both Finnish and Swedish. Both were taught at the seminary, but the language of schooling was Finnish, and it seems that the Finnish language gave the female teacher candidates more trouble.[132] Nearly half (over 40 per cent) of the girls who began their studies in 1863–1872 had previously attended a Swedish-language girls' school[133] (most of the girls' schools were Swedish-language), so their skills in Finnish probably needed strengthening during their seminary years. In her letters to her friend Sally Thauvón, Asp describes how the female students of the seminary had together decided to support the use of Finnish after enthusiastic encouragement by their teacher. From that moment, they stopped speaking Swedish among themselves.[134]

Many of the young women who came to Jyväskylä from Swedish-speaking families had to learn Finnish grammar from the basics (whereas male students were often Finnish-speaking peasants).[135] In 1866, once four years of classes were enrolled, Finnish was studied for six hours per week in years one and two, five in year three, and two in year four. Swedish, by contrast, was studied for two hours per week in all years in both men's and women's departments, with the exception of men in the first year at the beginning of the 1870s, who were taught Swedish for three hours per week. In year four, neither women nor men studied Swedish at all.[136] In this final year, Swedish was no longer seen as being as important as the other subjects and its place in the curriculum could be reduced.

129 FNA, AJS, Lists of applicants of entrance exam 1871.

130 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students 1863–1872; the personal files register of female seminary students 1863–1872.

131 Nieminen (2022b), 142.

132 Halila (1963), 38.

133 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students 1863–1872; the personal files register of female seminary students 1863–1872.

134 Setälä (1912), 93.

135 Halila (1963), 52, 88–91. Cf. similar situation in Norway in 1870s: male students were often sons of farmers and female teachers generally had a higher social background, which caused significant differences between the male and female teachers. Marklund (2021b), 32.

136 Mikkola (1937), 33, 40.

It was supposed that the students needed more practice in Finnish, because for most of the women it was a less familiar language. The male students, with low basic education before coming to the seminary, usually spoke dialects even if Finnish was their mother tongue, and often needed practice in the orthography of written Finnish. In the seminary's first decades, no further languages were taught,[137] in contrast to the girls' previous schools and private tutoring before entering the seminary, which had frequently concentrated on foreign languages such as French and German, sometimes even Russian.[138]

The call for seminary applicants in 1871 was published in several national and local newspapers in March of that year. Applicants were supposed to be able to write their applications to the seminary themselves, in Finnish. They needed to be able to read texts in their mother tongue fluently and be able to explain in spoken and written form the contents of what they read, also to know the correct spelling of their mother tongue and know the basic calculations.[139] According to this call for applicants, they did not need to know a foreign language. Sufficient knowledge of Finnish was, however, crucial for entry to an elementary school teacher training.

In their applications, the potential students highlighted their knowledge of Finnish; they could even send certificates demonstrating their knowledge,[140] especially if they had studied in Swedish-language girl's school. In the teachers' seminary, Finnish-language skills had a certain value because students would need them every day in their teaching profession. Many of the girls who had studied in the girls' schools were already multilingual; in theory this would have made it possible for them to continue their studies at the university or as civil servants, but in the 1860s and 1870s women were not usually supposed capable of doing either of these. The next seminary generation, of the 1890s and 1900s, were more likely to proceed to such positions. The first seminary students ended up as elementary school teachers. Some of them, however, also became school directors or head teachers, politicians, or leading feminists of the time.[141]

This shift in language had the greatest significance for the Swedish-speaking women who had started their studies in Jyväskylä. They had to acquire sufficiently good Finnish skills to be able to work as elementary school teachers in a society where Finnish was gradually gaining ground at the expense of Swedish; at the same time, a multilingual identity helped them as school teachers to acquire new pedagogical knowledge and to work with all social strata of Finnish society.[142] For women whose mother tongue was Finnish, multilingualism made it possible to acquire new knowledge and a profession of their own. At the end of the nineteenth century, Finnish was becoming a useful immaterial asset in a professional sense. Society was becoming more and more Finnish culturally, and the upper-class people were identifying themselves as Finnish-language users even when they were not very fluent speakers or writers. The national (language)

137 E.g. Halila (1963), 49, 341; Nurmi (1995), 47–48. However, female students could voluntarily read the basics of German if they were already proficient in Swedish language. Halila (1963), 91.

138 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students 1863–1872.

139 E.g. K. G. Leinberg, "Kansankoulu-asioita," *Tieto-Sanomia Suomen Kansalle,* March 22, 1871, 6.

140 FNA, AJS, Applications of female students 1863–1872.

141 Mikkola, Leinonen, and Rekola (1937).

142 Geber (2010), 39.

policy required a positive interest in Finnish and its position was significantly improved compared with earlier decades. This is why it was useful for an elementary school teacher to be able to utilize several languages.

Female professionals' multilingual identities

Asp's linguistic biography, with Finnish as her mother tongue but becoming an accomplished poet in Swedish, shows that for her, learning the Swedish language at an early age was the most significant advantage and immaterial capital for her later studies. For her generation, it was still supposed that a cultivated person or someone who wanted to become a civil servant or work in a public position would have fluent skills in Swedish. One might ask what multilingualism meant in practice for the Finns of the 1860s and 1870s.

Swedish had been the main language of administration, education, the economy and the upper classes for several hundred years; Finnish was just developing. It was still necessary to learn Swedish to be considered educated or to become a civil servant in this bilingual country, where Swedish was still the common language of the elite. This need for multilingual skills should be interpreted and seen in connection with Finland's history as part of the Swedish kingdom and Russian empire. Well before Finland gained independence as a nation, Finnish was an integral part of the national culture and identity; but despite its importance as a medium in many respects, those with only one language would not have been able to work in the multilingual society.

On the other hand, for those who spoke it as a mother tongue, using Finnish in one's studies and future profession meant the ability to fully develop one's professional linguistic identity. Asp benefited from her bilingualism and her early language shift. Her native language was Finnish, and this is why she was so skilful in using it; but Swedish was at first the language of her poetry. This was totally natural because as she grew up there were no Finnish-language poetry or novels, excluding psalms and folklore. The *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic, was published in 1835, and some poems by the national poet, Johan Ludvig Runeberg, were translated in Asp's day, but practically all the literature published in Finland at that time was in Swedish, and religious in nature.[143]

What of the educational opportunities and multilingual identities among Asp's classmates? Most of them had graduated from private girls' upper secondary schools or had only had some private tutoring at home. Many of these first students whose mother tongue was Swedish had to improve their Finnish to be able to work as elementary school teachers for Finnish-speaking pupils. Their previous private education and the subsequent language shift were significant for women in acquiring teacher training and a public profession of their own, along with the new kind of female citizenship. Many of those who taught in the new elementary schools also become active societal figures in societies and associations, along with their charity work.[144] In these ways they were seen to fulfil the social motherhood role and were expected to influence issues relating to family, children, and education in their society. Unmarried women of the upper-and middle classes were the first to study for a profession of their own and assume this role

143 Kai Häggman, *Paras tawara maailmassa*: *Suomalainen kustannustoiminta 1800-luvulta 2000-luvulle* (Helsinki: Otava, 2008), 114–15; Sulkunen (2004), 62–71.

144 Ollila (1998), 45–49; Tuulio (1950).

outside the private sphere in schools and associations. They provided an example of active, educated women for younger generations and for rural girls.

As with the clergy, who for centuries had taken care of popular education, elementary school teachers in the late nineteenth century often became an appreciated and valued part of their local communities because of their professional skills and knowledge.[145] For women, this new public role in the local community was also a way of achieving a more equal position in decision-making, local politics, and on many social questions in small rural communities where everyone knew the local teachers and they had their own recognized social position in the local hierarchy. It was probably not a coincidence that so many clergy and pastor families sent their daughters to the seminary: in many ways, the career of an elementary school teacher paralleled the status and the immaterial capital held by the clergy in the parishes and rural communities. Women were not accepted as priests in those days, but in their role as teachers they could, in some ways, continue the traditions of vicarages and parsons (and of their home and family) and be helpful and influential among the local population in many cases – not only in elementary education.

In the same way as the clergy had been for centuries, elementary school teachers were socially and linguistically a kind of interface between the lower social groups (who mainly spoke Finnish) and the upper social strata. They could mediate many cultural and social practices, ideas, and knowledge for both sides.[146] They spread new and modern ideas to the surrounding community in the classrooms as well as outside the schoolhouse. The social and cultural capital these women acquired in their childhood or youth and later cultivated at the Jyväskylä seminary became an important resource in their later work among local communities, and as they assumed a more independent position in society as professionals and citizens.

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145 Nieminen (2022b), 142. The situation was similar almost seventy years later, see Erkko Anttila and Ari Väänänen, "Rural Schoolteachers and the Pressures of Community Life: Local and Cosmopolitan Coping Strategies in Mid-Twentieth-Century Finland," *History of Education* 42, no. 2 (2013), 190, 201.

146 See also Kotilainen (2023), 115.

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