Participatory Action Research - Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers: Professor Emerita, Dr. Rauni Räsänen, and Dr. Mervi Kaukko

Re-Visioning Finnish Teacher Education & Ethics through Action Research
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#16, Season 2 Episode 4 - Host **Patricia Maguire**

Guests Professor Emerita, Dr. Rauni Räsänen, and Dr. Mervi Kaukko

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[00:00:00] **Patricia Maguire:** Hi, you're listening to Participatory Action Research Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers. I'm your host, Patricia Maguire. Our PARFEM podcast amplifies the contributions of feminist trailblazers to participatory and action research; and we talk about their successes and their challenges bringing intersectional feminist values and ways of being to participatory action research. And all of this is to encourage you to keep your action research well connected to its radical roots. Our guests today are Professor Emerita, Dr. Rauni Räsänen, and Dr. Mervi Kaukko. Rauni, welcome. It's a privilege to have you here.

[00:00:56] **Rauni Räsänen:** Thank you very much. Happy to be here.

[00:00:58] **Patricia Maguire:** Mervi, welcome to you as well.

[00:01:01] **Mervi Kaukko:** Thank you, Patricia.

[00:01:02] **Patricia Maguire:** So let me do a few brief introductions here. Dr. Rauni Räsänen is Professor Emerita in the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu, Finland. In the 1960s, she started out as a primary and secondary school teacher and a provisional supervisor for language teaching. And I think in the 1970s, she was a Fulbright Scholar in the U. S. and has said elsewhere that she was influenced by Angela Davis on civil rights and anti-racist work.

[00:01:32] **Rauni** Räsänen**:** Exactly!

[00:01:33] **Patricia Maguire:** At Oulu University, she coordinated two groundbreaking international programs, the Master of Education International Program, which is now Intercultural Teacher Education, and the Education and Globalization Master's Program.

[00:01:48] **Patricia Maguire:** As a global education professor, her main interest has been developing pedagogy that facilitates future educators' awareness of the many forms of diversity, as well as the individual and structural barriers to overcoming inequity, mono-

culturation, and ethnocentrism. And her main research interests are wide. They include ethics of education, teachers' professional ethics, diversity in education, inclusive education, intercultural education, and international or global education. She's committed to the transformative potential of education and has decades of experience reforming teacher education through action research, which is part of what we're really going to dig into today. And she has worked in several research networks in Finland and abroad and as a member of the National UNESCO Commission.

{00:02:45] **Patricia Maguire:** Dr. Mervi Kaukko is Professor of Multicultural Education at Tampere University in Finland. What's particularly unique about our episode today is that Mervi studied in the International Master of Education program at Oulu University. And she has said that that program was life changing for her and that it was an introduction to the interconnectedness of ethics, diversity, and educational praxis. So, after working as a teacher for a few years, Mervi started her PhD doing participatory action research with unaccompanied asylum-seeking girls in a Finnish reception center.

[00:03:27] **Patricia Maguire:** And that PAR focused on what children's participation might look like in the extraordinary situation of unaccompanied girls, taking into consideration the intersection of their status, their gender, their age, ethnicity, and so forth. But it also expanded into what is still an ongoing collaboration between Oulu University teacher students and the local reception center for refugees.

[00:03:54] **Patricia Maguire:** Mervi's most recent action research projects focus on refugee and asylum-seeking children in Finland and Australia; and she's the Finnish coordinator of an International Action Research Practice Theory Network - Pedagogy, Education and Praxis.

[00:04:11] **Patricia Maguire:** So let's get started. Rauni, among your many distinctions is doing THE first action research PhD in the field of Education in Finland in the 1990s. You started, I believe, doing action research with university students who wanted a course on teacher's ethics. Tell us about your journey into action research. How did you get started?

[00:04:34] **Rauni Räsänen:** Well, now when you reminded about Angela Davis and so on, I began to think that maybe the roots go further than 1990s, but about 1980s - 1990s, first I had to tell a little bit about teacher education in Finland. As you maybe know, the teacher education in Finland has been university level training since 1970s. And which was rather exceptional, particularly thinking of primary school teachers. And due to that, teachers' autonomy was very much emphasized very early on, and particularly since 1990s. And that maybe was one of the reasons why teacher educators like myself, we started to, or we're very active in the movement called *Teachers as Researchers*.

And mostly we were female teacher educators and did a lot of cooperation in, in the early 1990s. And started a very big experiment in Oulu to radically change teacher education which we thought was still very normative, consisted of very small courses, and didn't seem to have anything very clearly express what connected the different courses.

[00:06:18] So we started to experiment, to try in a way to clean the whole table, and started to develop new teacher education together with students. [00:06:33] And very much cooperating and listening to each other's lectures, planning and experimenting with students. And that lasted for two years. It was a very, very heavy process. But, although it ended as the research project for the whole department, many things remained. The studies were organized into bigger units.

[00:07:09] **Rauni Räsänen:** Students had much more to say. Students did little experiments, because they were supposed to be autonomous teachers, and they were supposed to do experiments in their schools. And we totally renewed the evaluation system, saying that if you are supposed to cooperate, why do we compete all the time? And why do we evaluate all little things and, and courses during the program?

[00:07:41] Connected with that, I had been teaching Philosophy of Education. And there was a group of older students, special group, who had a lot of experience already about teaching. They came to me, maybe because I taught Philosophy of Education. They came to say that, how is it possible we don't have any ethics in our training anymore? And can't we start experimenting or doing something about it. And that's how my action research started. And I wanted to have it as my doctoral dissertation because I wasn't a doctor yet. And I have to thank also my supervisor, Professor Leena Syrjälä, who took the risk and said that it's okay to do your doctoral dissertation as an action research.

[00:08:47] So, we started the process of developing professional ethics for teachers. And that lasted altogether for three years. So I had three different groups with whom I developed the course. Having emphasis a little bit on different things with the different groups, depending on what we had done before. And that was definitely a learning experience for all of us, because I had studied teacher's professional ethics in my, when I was in teacher training in 1960s. But it was very much based on Christian ethics and Christianity. And now having the society had changed. We had students, of course, in schools from different denominations. So we couldn't have exactly the same basis for our course.

And students were very, very helpful because having had experience, they also brought examples - what sort of ethical problems they had had in their work. And then we started to solve dilemmas and studied ethics at the same time.

[00:10:12] **Rauni Räsänen:** And then included also their internships, their trainings at schools in the courses. And with the last group, for instance, we changed the order of the course and teaching practices so that we had some part of the course before, then the practice in between, and then again continued with the course so that we could follow up what happened in the practice.

[00:10:43] **Patricia Maguire:** Essentially, you're describing that you were involved with your students in this ongoing action research project about your program or the university program and that you were really honoring and making processes that brought in the voices of the student teachers so that they essentially had a say as teachers as researchers.

Mervi, you were a student in that program and of course you came along many years after many of these innovations were made. Give us a little bit of your experience in the program.

[00:11:18] **Mervi Kaukko:** Thanks Patricia. I think you summarized it well at the beginning when you quoted me maybe from our previous discussions and said that it was life changing and it was. I took a few years off after I finished high school because I didn't know what I wanted to do and I think the program in Oulu was a perfect match for young, mostly women. We were very much mostly women in the program, at least when I was a student, and I still think it's still a very female dominated program for students who weren't sure what they wanted to do, but they were very idealist and they wanted to change the world and they wanted to do something good.

[00:11:59] **Mervi Kaukko:** So I think the whole program was marketed with that, kind of a philosophy and it was true to what the program actually was. So I think many of us in my age cohort at least did not stay as teachers. We graduated to different jobs and my course mates now work in NGOs and in research and in public sector and many, many places.

[00:12:24] **Mervi Kaukko:** Many are also teachers as well.

[00:12:25] **Mervi Kaukko:** So my experience was that I loved everything about the program. And I'm not just saying this to be nice to Rauni or others who have designed it. But it combined the elements of ethics. And also, I think at that time, a pretty radical view of education, acknowledging the problem that the Finnish education system was very much built on with, with the idea of a Finnish normal standard student in mind, or from a Finnish background, speaking Finnish from a Lutheran family, middle class, and it didn't fit everybody anymore.

[00:13:04] **Mervi Kaukko:** I think it's much more acknowledged nowadays, but when I started in 2003, I think this was the only program in teacher education that really talked about these things. So I think the idea was wonderful, acknowledging that Finland is

changing, the world is changing, and we need teachers who, who can work in the changed circumstances. And also that not all the knowledge is in the heads of the professors, but also the students might, might have some justified good views of, of how the program could be developed.

[00:13:38] **Mervi Kaukko:** Rauni mentioned the fact that the courses weren't as fragmented maybe than in, compared to some other programs, but you could really see the overarching emphasis on ethics and, and diversity and the changing world, and what we need as educators to know to work in this changed world.

[00:13:58] **Patricia Maguire:** Well, it's well known that Finland has been a pioneer in gender equality, and so talk some about how feminist theories and perspectives are expressed in the program and in your action research work in the Finnish context.

[00:14:16] **Rauni Räsänen:** Yes, when we think of equity in Finland, it's very often said, and that's partly true, that equity between men and women has been fairly early on addressed in the curricula and in education as a whole, compared to, for instance, ethnicity and sexual minorities and religion, in which in those aspects, Finland has been rather monocultural and it has been rather difficult to open up discussion about those issues.

[00:14:58] **Rauni Räsänen:** As for gender, I was very lucky that I had a very, very good team of colleagues. And although we all were sensitive to all these aspects to a certain extent, some of us were more focusing on, on ethnicity, others on, on gender issues, and, others on worldviews, and, and so on. And as we were later on [00:15:31] particularly in the intercultural programs, we were working very closely together. We were teaching also each other, so that we very much learned from each other. But also when I was teaching ethics, of course very early on, I began to realize, thinking of action research, for instance, that why are all these action researchers, starting from Lewin and going on, well, they were male. And still us who were in the faculty were doing action research, we were women.

And also the more we got international students, or minorities in Finland, we began to ask that- whose knowledge are we talking about? And of course, as a small country, Finland is very much teaching of its history.

[00:16:33] And when you look at the history books, you were asking that where is women's history? Where's children's history? And of course we were talking a lot when I was discussing ethics with students, we came across the discussion between different views on ethics when you compare Kohlberg and, and Gilligan and Nel Noddings and bell hooks and, and, and so on and so forth. [00:17:03] So, the sort of intersectional approach became very natural in, in the program from the very beginning.

[00:17:12] **Patricia Maguire:** Mervi, you have anything to add to that?

[00:17:14] **Mervi Kaukko:** I completely agree with what Rauni said. And I, we were just chatting on the phone with Rauni a few days ago. And we were talking about some action research texts that I wrote recently. [00:17:30] And I realized when talking that all of the things I wrote about Gilligan and Kohlberg and Noddings and, and all those big names, bell hooks, they originate from what I've learned from Rauni and, and also our other dear professor, Rauni's colleague, Maria Järvelä. So I think it all came so naturally as part of everything we learned in the program that the focus of on of intersectionality in everything we do and and say and write in relation to education, but also in relation to research that that, I didn't even realize where, where all those thoughts come to my head from, but yes, they come from the program.

[00:18:19] **Patricia Maguire:** You know, I think, while it's well known that Finland has been a pioneer in gender equality, I think what's less well known now is what I've seen called the Nordic Paradox. And where there's a trend in Scandinavian nations, including Finland, that despite promoting gender equality in economic and political life, there are actually high rates of gender-based violence.

[00:18:45] So I want to make sort of a leap, if you will, to academia from that, because I think even in nations with a history of gender equality, sometimes in academia, feminists, feminist theories, intersectional feminisms, encounters resistance. And so can you talk some about either the resistance or the challenges you may have faced integrating an intersectional feminism into your program and how you dealt with that, how you handled that?

[00:19:14] **Rauni Räsänen:** There are different kinds of resistance. First of all, when I think of the faculty, there were those who didn't accept action research and were saying that it's not proper research. That you, you can't be a teacher and a researcher at the same time. [00:19:36] And you have to keep a distance from the action to be a proper researcher. So that was one part of it.

The second one, which I find also rather interesting, that even among the researchers who were very active in the *Teachers as Researchers Movement*, there were researchers who were suspicious about action research. And even those who accepted action research, they could doubt whether we should have such a strong focus on gender issues or ethnicity or, sexual minorities or, or religion. So, definitely there were, there were also people who were against those themes or those approaches.

[00:20:33] **Rauni Räsänen:** So at least those different kinds of difficulties there were. And when I think nowadays the situation is getting better. But there still are voices who are against feminist approaches or intersectional approaches.

[00:20:53] **Patricia Maguire:** And action research.

[00:20:56] **Rauni Räsänen:** And action research. Yes, exactly. As for the violence in Finland, of course, we always say that it's connected to the history also, long periods of war. I was discussing that with a friend of mine from Germany. And, she was also very surprised that although politically it has been very, very early on in Finland we have recognized these things and in the policy papers. There can be still a very masculine culture in certain situations and in certain places.

[00:21:40] **Patricia Maguire:** Mervi, you, you came along in this program, perhaps 20 years into it, what kind of challenges did you see to either intersectional feminisms or action research as an approach to knowledge creation?

[00:21:56] **Mervi Kaukko:** Your answer Rauni make me remember one of my first practices at a school. And I think it's rooted to the fact that we in the intercultural teacher education program, I think we were in a little bit of a bubble. We all thought that the ideas of feminism and intersectionality were really important and we should always take into consideration of different genders and ethnicities and religions and worldviews.

[00:22:23] **Mervi Kaukko:** And I went to this rural school in northern part of Finland and I had a plan which I didn't think was very radical. I wanted to speak with first or second graders, I don't remember, about different families. And I had this lovely picture book by Parr, I don't remember the first name. I can look it up. It was, Perhekirja family book or something like that.

[00:22:49] And it was just a nice little story of different kinds of families. I think the figures were penguins or something. They were, at least they were not all humans, but it showed families with two dads or two moms or different combinations of people or other animals. I don't remember. So it was a story, but the idea was to show that different families exist. They are all equal.

And I was told not to use the book in teaching at all. And the principal of that school told this to me in a little bit of an apologetic manner, somehow acknowledging that they were a little bit old-fashioned there. But he told me that they would get a lot of negative comments from families if somebody would take a such book to build children. It's not, it's not a suitable topic.

[00:23:38] I was surprised because I, I didn't see that coming. And that was maybe the first or the second year of my studies.

Then when I started teaching after graduating as a primary school teacher, I again went to a rural school where I think every single student was born in Finland. And they spoke Finnish

as their first and only language, and I was teaching English. And I tried to sneak in a little bit of multicultural education and a little bit of ethics and discussion about values and diversity. And I liked the school. It was nice, nice community, but my attempts for discussion didn't really take root and, and flourish. But I think my challenge that I think many graduates from the program face, and I think one of our colleagues has done research about this as well, is that the ideologies and the reality may clash when they come from such a wonderful program with so good ideas and then go to a school where the students and teachers and the families might not be ready yet. But it's changing. I'm hoping it's changing. What do you think, Rauni?

[00:24:47] **Rauni Räsänen:** Well slowly but surely. I also remembered one thing from the program. Some of the colleagues were also complaining that our students were too active. They were complaining if there was something that they, they disagreed about or, or they discussed about issues which maybe were too radical or involved society in your discussions and so on and so forth. Or people were not always happy. Although, at the same time, some were very, very proud about having such students who were active and initiative and had courage to talk about issues.

[00:25:33] **Patricia Maguire:** One of the challenges with creating spaces for students or community members to have a voice is we don't always like what they have to say, you know.

[00:25:43] **Rauni Räsänen:** Exactly, yes, it becomes dangerous.

[00:25:47] **Mervi Kaukko:** I remember Rauni, you saying that there were also some concerns of other staff members that you were too close to students, that you really gave them voice, which meant that you also had a relationship, unlike some other professors. I thought that was the beauty of the program, but maybe, maybe not everybody viewed it that way.

[00:26:08] **Rauni Räsänen:** No, no.

[00:26:10] **Patricia Maguire:** And I think that's one of the ways that feminisms has influenced action research is attention to relationships.

[00:26:17] **Rauni Räsänen:** Yes.

[00:26:18] **Patricia Maguire:** You know, that, that research isn't an autopsy. It's a relational interchange and experience with people. And therefore you do have relationships and you look at you know, relationships.

[00:26:32] **Rauni Räsänen:** Yes. And you are interested in your students as human beings.

[00:26:38] **Mervi Kaukko:** I think it tells something about the relationships that we had at 20-year reunion last summer and we have a, we were a group of 20 students and we are now in all parts of the world, not everybody in Finland, and in Finland very much spread outside of Oulu. And we had an idea that we'll have dinner, and we'll invite Rauni and another professor, Maria Järvelä, and I think it tells very much about the relationships that almost everybody came. And Rauni and Maria came, also it was lovely.

[00:27:14] **Rauni:** And if you knew how much we talk about you with Maria and follow up what you are doing.

[00:27:20] **Mervi Kaukko:** That's nice to hear.

[00:27:21] **Patricia Maguire:** You know, Rauni, you and your colleagues started what were very radical changes, if you will, in the teacher education program in the 1990s. How has it been sustained because many programs can't, once the sort of pioneering people move on, they can't sustain the changes that they made. What do you account for these programs that you helped with colleagues create, sustaining these changes over time?

[00:27:55] **Rauni Räsänen:** Well, one of the reasons, of course, is that three of us, those who, who started it, stayed in the, in the position for a long, long time. But even then, whenever you got a new dean, or whenever you got a new leading person in the faculty, you had to have a long, long discussion. And be persistent. And have also the support from your colleagues. And little by little, of course, you get allies and you need the other people who are supporting you. It's very difficult if you don't have anybody. And even talking about the problems with your colleagues helps it. But yes, we have been lucky.

[00:28:46] **Rauni Räsänen:** We have had also enough people in the leadership, who, well at least have not disturbed or have let you do what you want to do. And then others who have been really encouraging. So leadership is also important. And having discussions with the with the deans and directors and, and so on, but more and more, I began to appreciate good colleagues, at least some with whom you can do it together and you can support each other.

[00:29:23] **Rauni Räsänen:** And of course, the students, then you get a lot of joy from them. And sometimes they have also saved us and gone to talk to the director or to the dean or even to the ministry once. So also empowered students can do a lot.

[00:29:43] **Mervi Kaukko:** your question about how the program has continued, even after the action research part by Rauni and colleagues, I think part of it is also because it's still connected to its time. It changes with time. And a lot of other students are still, I think most of the students are still very active in addressing societal problems with their own projects and experiments.

This reminded me of the year 2015 when I was working in the program as a lecturer. And that was when a lot of asylum seekers and refugees came suddenly to Europe. And it was all over the media. It was very visible in society as well. And many of the ITE and EdGlo students then took that as to be part of their projects. I remember one, one student made an app connecting asylum-seeking young adults with possibilities for work or volunteering or for other things, hobbies, which was really like at the beginning it was very simple, but it was such a good idea. Then a big company took it and it became bigger. And then you mentioned at the beginning the collaboration with the local reception center and teacher students and that started at that time too from a student's initiative. I've heard that with Corona, they had Corona-related projects. So it's, it's not, even though it started with the burning, pressing issues of the 1990s, it didn't stay there, but it's constantly evolving with new things.

[00:31:29] **Patricia Maguire:** Rauni, you have mentioned how important collaboration was. Collaboration that you had, enough supportive colleagues, you had enough support, certainly support from students, and some support across administration. You know, what do you say to people who are out there trying to do action research or participatory action research, and they don't have that either kind of collaboration or they're not in university settings where there's support for action research. What can you say to our listeners who might be in that situation?

[00:32:10] **Rauni Räsänen:** I think you can start with the little things. Don't try to win the whole world at once. And although in the beginning you don't have any team or any people working with you, little by little you can get allies. When I think, for instance our group, we got good lecturers, of course, from outside the program who were supporting. We got also from the ministries, through students, because we, we happened to have a couple of students whose parents were working in the ministry or were diplomats and so on. So don't be worried, but start with a little experiment in the beginning with a few people and little by little win more and more people to work with you.

[00:33:07] **Patricia Maguire:** Mervi, anything you would like to add to that?

[00:33:10] **Mervi Kaukko:** Rauni's answer was mostly about changing something in your own context in work. I think Rauni is the right person to answer that because she's done it very well. I've also heard from other sources that Rauni is a very good negotiator because she's very diplomatic. She listens to the other side, and very politely and with a nice smile on her face, still gets her way through. So, those kind of skills help in that in that situation.

I think that same advice starting with something little and not trying to change the whole world all at once applies also for doing action research because it's not the easiest kind of

research to get funding. And I know many students and researchers want, want to still do it because of the change idea behind it. And I think you, you can start also that with something small if you just don't over plan it very much or don't think about the future challenges that you will face, but get on with action and document what you are doing and you might end up having a really nice action research project that will change something.

[00:34:26] **Rauni Räsänen:** And it's a research where you can see the change. Also in the practice that keeps you going.

[00:34:31] **Mervi:** Exactly.

[00:34:32] **Patricia Maguire:** Is there something else that you came prepared to talk about today regarding action research or intersectional feminisms in action research that we haven't gotten to yet. Something else as you were preparing that you go, oh, I really want to talk about this.

[00:34:48] **Rauni Räsänen:** Well, if I talk about my experience, it's a long journey, but really life changing journey because you learn yourself all the time. And, and it's a joy to work with others.

[00:35:04] **Mervi Kaukko:**What I have learned about intersectionality and action research starts from, from the programs in Oulu, but maybe most significantly developed through my own PhD with unaccompanied asylum-seeking girls in Finland. And I didn't design it as a feminist intersectional study, but it was kind of built into it. I couldn't do it in any other way because these participants were in such unique situation as girls and as unaccompanied minors, so seeking asylum without their parents. And then also in this liminality because they didn't have their residency permit or their refugee status yet. And that was really a learning experience for me doing my first action research project in such a situation. And that made me think about also what kind of changes we try to achieve with our projects. Some classical texts in refugee research go as far as suggesting that if you work in, with people in such vulnerable situations and with so massive problems, then the research is only ethical if it tries to change the really big problems.

[00:36:22] And in my case, it would have meant to trying to do something with the the root causes of forced migration or something like that. And of course, that's beyond the reach of a PhD. And that with learning, learning more about feminist ideologies, and then also about the fact that it's okay to be in the study as your own person and, and be connected with the participants and really learning what make sense for them in that situation that helped me justify my little action research project with the asylum seeking girls as focusing on very small things that mattered for them in their lives.

[00:36:59] **Mervi Kaukko:** And I remember I've, I've been questioned about that because it, it might look too small, and it might not look like real research really at all, at least not transferable to any other setting. And I remember in my public defense of the PhD, the opponent was asking for my methodological choices. And I used the word fun as one of the rationales why, why we did what we did. And I hope I didn't scare you too much, Rauni, with that answer or my supervisor, Maria. But because that's how it shaped. They didn't want to try to change something that was beyond our reach, for example, their asylum decision, but they wanted to do things that were fun for them. And that's what we did. And and the opponent took that answer really well. He said something like that's fun, it's a serious commitment and that's how you, how you commit to your study. Yeah, that's what I learned with feminism in my action research.

[00:37:57] **Rauni Räsänen:** I think the intersectional use, the intersectional approach, what it meant to me is that I was looking at the school in a totally different way - asking all the time that whose school is this ? Who are the people we, we have planned, we plan our educational system? And who are the imagined students? And I think that that having that question in mind all the time when you work in education is a very important question.

[00:38:31] **Mervi Kaukko:** And also for what kind of society we educate them for.

[00:38:35] **Rauni Räsänen:** Exactly.

[00:38:36] **Mervi Kaukko:** Yeah.

[00:38:37] **Patricia Maguire:** And those are powerful questions to frame a teacher education program with. And I think, Rauni, as you were talking about the changes that you and your colleagues brought, you changed from these sort of disconnected siloed courses that didn't ask those larger thematic questions of you know, what kind of world are we trying to create not only for students, but also for teachers who work in schools on a daily basis? And I think that's that challenge of big picture, small picture. And probably one of the challenges of action research of, you know, as you said, Mervi, you're not going to change the whole world, but you start in the context of the people that you're working with. And so that contextual change is as important or perhaps even more important than some kind of abstract, generalizable change. I mean, it's just a whole different approach to knowledge creation.

Let's wrap up with what do you think is the kind of the current status, if you will, of action research within the Finnish context?

[00:39:47] **Rauni Räsänen:** There is action research going on. I'm still a little bit worried about action research within teacher education and education because it can be very conservative in the sense that you maybe experiment how to change methods, but you

don't really dare to touch the contents and relation between educational system and society.

When we talk about teachers being autonomous, for instance, we have to ask that, okay, in what respect ? What are they allowed to be autonomous about? And it's not very serious in Finland, but when we think of education internationally in some places, it seems that teachers are again becoming dangerous if they are too radical, or if they criticize society or, or political issues or, or the changes that are imposed on teachers or schools. At the moment, still fairly good, could be more critical. And I also see some symptoms in societies that maybe in the future teachers are not allowed to be so radical as they should be. I hope I'm wrong. What do you think, Mervi?

[00:41:31] **Mervi Kaukko:** I also hope you're wrong. I'm not sure. I, I think teachers are struggling with increasing workload and also these kind of institutional, administrative pressures that Finnish teachers have traditionally had very little compared to other countries. So they are doing now many more things apart from actually teaching the students. And that means that they might not have time to take on something that we would call action research. Which is troubling because I know many teachers and I think they all want to do their work better and they want to understand their work and improve their work if given the opportunities. So, I think, but that's a bigger question of the working conditions of teachers in, in general.

But I think action research in Finland is doing not so badly actually. And I can say this because we just finished writing a book on action research in Finnish with, with my lovely colleague, Hannu Heikkinen and Petri Salo and Tomi Kiilakoski, Rauno Huttunen, Reetta Niemi and some others. It took a few years, we tried to outline some sort of history, or actually many histories, but not the perfect history of what’s happened. And then also what's going on at the moment mapping the different approaches that we could understand as action research, but that's actually, they don't or even call themselves action research. And I think this is a global problem of action research where you specify yourself as something and then differentiate yourself from, from being action research. But we took a very open mind in this book and just looking at research that tries to change practices to work better and consider them as action research.

[00:43:23] **Mervi Kaukko:** And we found that a lot of good research is being done in Finland and the community of action research is hopefully growing, and it's becoming more and more acknowledged as a, as a good approach to research that tries to do good things and make difference and, and have practical relevance. So I'm, I'm not very pessimistic about that.

[00:43:46] **Rauni Räsänen:** Well, what came to my mind about teacher education and universities in Finland, one thing to be concerned about is that there are more and more neoliberal ideas in higher education also, which sets certain demands on the structures and maybe makes a little bit difficult to, to do action research at universities at the moment.

[00:44:16] **Mervi Kaukko:** Definitely. I agree. It's very hard to introduce anything new to a program because programs are packed and there are many things that have to be in the program. And then action research takes more time than some other kind of little study that we could do for our master's thesis, for example.

[00:44:36] **Rauni Räsänen:** Yes.

[00:44:38] **Patricia Maguire:** And I think you've also highlighted the tension between action research that's transformative versus sort of instrumental and disconnected from its essentially radical roots, which continues to be the challenge.

[00:44:52] **Mervi:** Yeah.

[00:44:54] **Patricia Maguire:** All right. Anything else that you want to add on before we wrap this up?

[00:44:58] **Rauni Räsänen:** As a researcher, I so much value the basic idea that was expressed by, by the early action researchers, that research without seeing any change is, is not enough for action researchers.

[00:45:15] **Mervi Kaukko:** Yeah I agree. Researchers say that research that only produces books is not enough.

[00:45:21] **Patricia Maguire:** Well, on that note, we're going to close it up and I want to thank you so much for joining me on this episode today. It's been a real privilege to have both of you. I want to thank our listeners also for tuning in. You can help expand our audience by sharing the episode link with your colleagues and networks. A transcript of today's podcast and additional information about our guests and some of their select publications will be on our companion website, which is parfemtrailblazers.net, all one word, parfemtrailblazers.net.

So that's it folks for Episode Four, Season Two of Participatory Action Research - Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers. And as civil rights icon John Lewis urged us, go make some good trouble of your own.