

From: asannino <annalisa.sannino@helsinki.fi>
Subject: Two announced open positions: Open message to share my concern
Date: 16 December 2016 at 23.36.26 GMT+2
To: <jukka.kola@helsinki.fi>, <patrik.scheinin@helsinki.fi>
Cc: kaytt-henkilokunta@helsinki.fi

Dear Rector Kola and Dean Scheinin,

I am turning to you with this open message to share my concern regarding the decision to open for applications the two professorships in Education with emphases on the focus areas “Learning and interaction” and “Education, society and culture.” In April this year, elected student representatives of general and adult education issued a statement concerning professorships in the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences focused on instruction and research on work-related adult education. In their statement, the student representatives asked the authorities to fill, without delay, two professorships in this area, as the retirement of two professors was leaving a gap with serious consequences for instruction and research in the faculty. In May 2016 I was a co-signatory of a letter sent to the Dean, subsequently brought also to the attention of the Rector. In our letter several professors currently employed in our faculty, as well as five docent-level scholars of whom two of foreign origins employed in the faculty, endorsed the student representatives’ request, offering also facts about the productivity of research and instruction in the area.

Dean Scheinin responded by promptly arranging a meeting in which also students took part. In the meeting the Dean explained that it was not yet clear when the positions could be announced, but showed optimism and support to our concern. The call for open positions finally appeared in Flamma last week. I could not help being puzzled by its contents. The wordings used to define these two professorships completely ignore the appeals of both the student representatives and the faculty members mentioned above. In the descriptions of the two positions, it is impossible to detect a reference to developmental and intervention based analyses of activities in work organizations and communities. I expect that if some applicants will make this connection, it will be most likely due to the reputation of the work done by a number of us in the faculty – often referred to in international contexts as the “Helsinki School.”

With this message I am asking you whether or not there is an intention to ensure the continuity of this area of instruction and research at University of Helsinki. This area offers students highly regarded research-based competences and eventually jobs in human resource development and organizational change design. While the focus areas of the two announced open positions do not directly exclude applicants from our area, they in no way guarantee the filling of the existing gap. If this university and faculty are run democratically as it is so often proclaimed, I believe that the

students and we scholars in question are entitled to receive an explanation. As leaders of this institution, you owe to the students and to the signatories of these appeals an explicit statement confirming or refuting that the University of Helsinki vision for the future includes investing in research and instruction in this area. Especially as far as our students are concerned, I think that this is a basic expectation of ethical conduct. I of course have a vested interest here, as a scholar in her early 40s who has invested a great deal of intellectual and personal resources to contribute to research and instruction in this area. It is evident that I am interested in understanding whether or not there are conditions for pursuing my career in this area at University of Helsinki. However, there is something at stake here that goes beyond individual career prospects, encompassing the interests of a wider academic community locally and internationally, and students currently enrolled in our faculty, with the expectation to gain competences applicable to resolving important problems of learning and development in working life.

With kind regards/Ystävällisin terveisin,

Annalisa Sannino
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