

Recipient of the Bernhard and Mimmi Lagus Prize 2008

Marja-Kristiina Lerkkanen, Ph.D. (Educ.)

Dr. Marja-Kristiina Lerkkanen's book *Lukemaan oppiminen ja opettaminen esi- ja alkuopetuksessa* (Learning to read and reading instruction in preschool and early primary school), which was published by WSOY in 2006 and appeared in an Estonian translation in 2007, is an excellent handbook for pre-school and primary school teachers, special teachers and teachers of Finnish as the native language, and is also useful for teacher training purposes. The book provides an up-to-date and comprehensive collected work on learning to read and write, in which theoretical information from the latest research alternates in an insightful manner with practical experiences and successfully tested ideas. Dr. Lerkkanen's research has focused on the process of learning to read, problems in reading and writing, methodological questions and pedagogical development work. Her doctoral thesis, *Learning to read: Reciprocal processes and individual pathways*, published in 2003, was an analysis of 1st and 2nd grade pupils as they learned to read. The results suggested that Finnish children learn the basic skill of reading (decoding words) ve-

ry quickly but there are more differences between children in reading comprehension which calls for much more practice.

The European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction presented its Outstanding Publication Award for 2005 to Dr. Lerkkanen, and she also received the Reading/Literacy Research Fellowship Award for 2007 from the International Reading Association in Toronto, Canada.

Marja-Kristiina Lerkkanen has been a lecturer in early school years pedagogy at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, since 1994 and is at present a post doctoral researcher with the Academy of Finland, engaged on the *Alkuportaati* (First Steps) follow-up study within *Oppiminen ja motivaatio* (Learning and Motivation) centre of excellence programme. She has also been involved in drawing up the principles for the national curriculum in pre-school education and early primary grades and in constructing teaching materials for this, including *Pikkumetsän Aapinen* (The Little Forest ABC book, 2007) and *Pikkumetsän lukikirja* (The Little Forest Reader's book, 2008).

Lea Pulkkinen