When you have turned 40 it is at last acceptable to use the phrase «in the old days». By turning 40, the association NFPF/NERA has reached a position where it can definitely talk about its past! NERA’s history is made up of shared internal experiences and stories, which, together with the wider environment, have shaped this intuition.

NFPF/NERA was born in the beginning of the 1970s and its birth was related to the discussions going on at that time on epistemological issues and, particularly, the critique of positivism. Other influences include the student protest movement, civil rights movements, and women’s rights movements.

The activities of NFPF/NERA also reflect the development of educational research within the higher education sector, especially in the Nordic countries. The inclusion of teacher training as part of higher education has impacted the profile of our congress as well as our journal. NFPF/NERA has in turn played an important role in the development of educational research [pedagogisk forskning] in teacher education in the Nordic countries.

Another major influence for NFPF/NERA has been the development of doctoral education. Over the last few decades, forms of doctoral studies have undergone radical changes in Nordic countries, as in other parts of the world. Numerous PhD candidates have used our congress as an important venue for presenting their research projects and our journal as an important channel for publishing articles. One of the most im-
important tasks of NFPF/NERA is to play a significant role in qualifying the next generation of researchers in the field of education/pedagogy. At the same time, by taking care of its tradition, NFPF/NERA offers a meeting point for different approaches and ways of conceptualising our field of inquiry. The PhD candidates’ new theoretical and methodological approaches have contributed to pushing our congress to the frontier of research. New members continuously make their footprints visible by introducing alternative perspectives and innovative research practices.

One of NFPF/NERA’s strengths throughout its history is its academic breath. The diversity of our field is reflected in the different networks as well as the broad scope of our journal. However, we can also see a move towards more specialisation, with new associations and journals popping up in these more specific fields. Research communities that are more thematically focused are needed, yet at the same time the role of associations like NFPF/NERA is important in ensuring the breath of disciplinary culture of educational sciences/pedagogy.

The Nordic dimension is another characteristic of our association. Although our research questions can be placed in an international context, it is nevertheless necessary to also situate them in a Nordic setting. There are certain similarities between the Nordic countries that call for research collaboration. At the same time, there are also differences to be taken into consideration, which may challenge our conventional conceptions of a Nordic model of education.

As many other 40-years olds, NFPF/NERA has had its ups and downs. There have been challenging issues to be resolved, as well as tensions with regard to our profile and priorities. The «downs» are always easy to find, but it is the «ups» that keep us committed by reminding us of the good scholarly work of the association. We very much owe the «ups» to the enthusiasts and idealists in our field. I would like to thank them for their engagement, critical discussions, and actions, all of which have strengthened the quality of NFPF/NERA’s work. Thanks for believing in the importance of educational research (pedagogic) and Nordic collaboration. Thanks for introducing new generations of researchers into the Nordic society. Thank you for emphasising education as a public good and learning as an opportunity for all, and for supporting research as an open and manifold activity.

The 41st congress of our association will take place in Reykjavik this year, hosted by the School of Education at the University of Iceland. I am certain it will be a success, as was the previous one held by the same institution. The congress theme is «Disruptions and eruptions as opportunities for transforming education», a theme reflecting the financial and economic crises of our time, which have led to cut-backs in the public sector, including education. At the congress, we are invited to discuss whether the egalitarian principles of Nordic education are losing ground in intensified international competition. This theme, as well as many of the themes at the earlier congresses, reveals a concern about critical issues in contemporary society.

To strengthen the culture of publication among Nordic researchers, the Ahlström Award was initiated in 1994, thanks to the publication of a book in honour of Professor Karl-Georg Ahlström at Uppsala University upon his retirement. Ever since the establishment of NFPF/NERA in 1972, Ahlström has been one of its major supporters. We are all very grateful for his generosity. Since 2010, the award is given every other year to one or more co-researchers working in the Nordic countries who are considered to have best developed an outstanding and crit-
ical contribution to NERA’s journal *Nordic Studies in Education*.

This journal, *(Nordisk Pedagogik until 2010)* has been at the core of NFPF/NERA’s activity for many years. In 2010 the journal was evaluated by NOP-HS (Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences) and we were rather pleased with the conclusion. One of the reviewers concluded by stating that «it is beyond doubt the most important site of exchange for Nordic educational research, which is not connected to highly specialized communities».

After 30 years as a member of the editorial board and more than 20 years as the chief editor, Biörn Hasselgren is now stepping down. Biörn’s contribution has been remarkable and we are immensely grateful for his work and effort. Biörn is by nationality a Swede, but as an editor he has been a «Nordician» with a strong concern for the Nordic profile of the journal with respect to both its content and the national diversity of authors. Thanks Biörn, it has been a great pleasure to work with you!

Let me also welcome Biörn’s successor, Fritjof Sahlström from the University of Helsinki. He has been appointed by the Board as the chief editor for a period of two years. We are convinced that Fritjof will continue the good work and further develop the quality and the reputation of the journal.