

Towards inclusive education in Finland

Perspectives on teacher competences



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Key words in Finnish basic education

- Educational equality
- Individuality
- Lifelong learning
- Co-operation

Some perspectives on teachers' competences

General western system

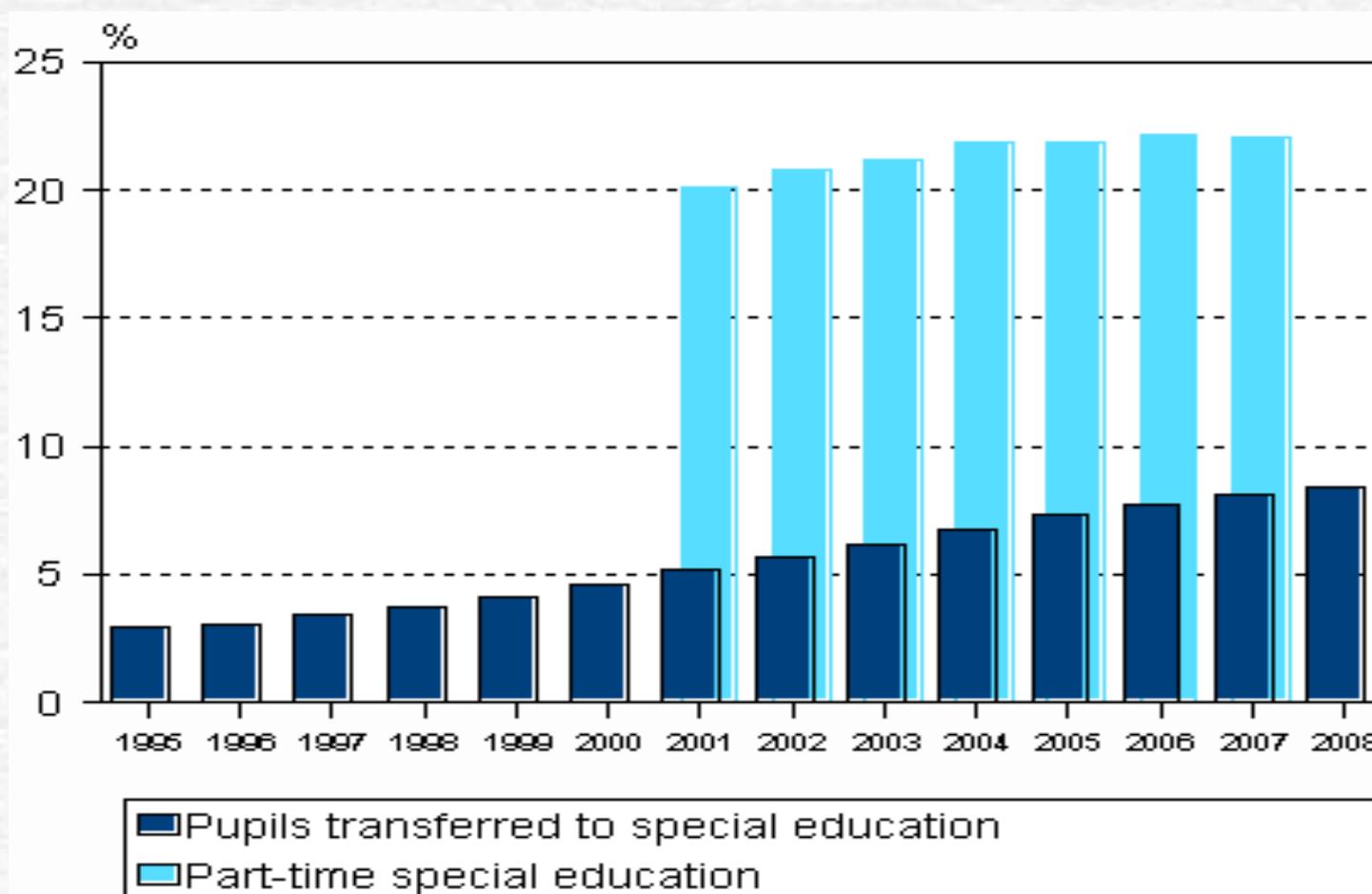
- **Standardisation**
 - Strict standards for schools, teachers, students to guarantee the quality of outcomes
- **Emphasis on literary and numeracy**
 - Basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science as prime target of education reform
- **Consequential accountability**
 - Evaluation by inspection

The finnish system

- **Flexibility and diversity**
 - School-based curriculum development
 - Steering by information and support
- **Emphasis on broad knowledge**
 - Equal value to all aspects of individual growth and learning: personality, morality, creativity, knowledge, skills
- **Trust through professionalism**
 - A culture of trust on teachers-professionalism in judging what is best for students and reporting of progress

A national dilemma

Full-time and part-time special support



A national dilemma

- Eight per cent of comprehensive school students are transferred to special education.
 - Ministry has subsidized the students with special needs (permanent / transferred status)
- 
- The number has been growing for more than a decade
 - Twenty-two per cent of comprehensive school students receive part-time special teaching

Part-time special support

Reading-writing-speaking:

One out of four (25,4 %) of the pupils on classes 1-6 and one out of six (15,6 %) pupils of classes 7-9 receive part-time special support

- Difficulties in Reading 43%
- Difficulties in Math 20,3%
- Speech (articulation) problems 15,3%
- Language disorders 9,1 %
- Difficulties in emotional adaptation 5,0%

Ongoing reform for inclusive education

- The reform is based on the Salamanca statement (1992) and the Strategy for Special Needs Education and Inclusion (2007)
- Process of renewing the
 - Act of Basic Education (in preparation)
 - National Core Curriculum (in preparation)
- The changes are now in the Parliament for passing the law.

Ongoing reform for inclusive education

- The strategy (2007) has been formulated in the framework of inclusive education but it still consists of the elements of special education
- The essential goal is to **develop and strengthen mainstream basic education** instead of the dual system of general and special education.
- The emphasis is on the importance of the wide basic education network which supports the right of every student to attend the nearest mainstream school:
 - no student will be excluded and send to another school
- The focus is on a clearly earlier support and prevention

Stepped-up support system in Finland

National level

Municipality
level

School level

Teacher level

Focus on an early
support and
prevention

Special support

Intensified support

Common support

1. Differentiating
2. Flexible grouping
6. Co-teaching
7. Multiagency working
8. Councelling
9. Plan of special support
10. Part-time-special support
11. Co-operating with parents

The common support and intensified support will be used to bolster learning and growth and prevent escalation of problems relating to learning, social interaction or development

Ongoing reform for inclusive education

- The municipalities all over Finland join the renewing work by developing new practices at schools and by teachers' in-service education.
- The future change is being prepared with the help of a massive national development projects:
 - Ministry of Education has allocated financial resources for municipalities in order to draw up a plan for arranging education on new way.
 - KELPO & OSAAVA: CPD (continuing professional development)
 - VERME: Induction
 - Heavy investments in teacher education
 - Still, the municipal financial crisis has a delayed impact on the inclusive reform in Finland

Ongoing reform for inclusive education

*If you want truly to understand something, try to **change it** . Kurt Lewin (1890-1947)*

Inclusion - a complex phenomena



Thank you!



Some perspectives on teacher competencies

- Teaching profession is highly respected in Finland
 - 10 per cent of the applicants are admitted.
- Teaching qualifications are prescribed by law and vary for different kinds of teachers
- The national requirements guarantee that the standard of education remains high
- The majority of teacher education students study in universities
- All new basic education teachers must have a master's degree.
- **However, teacher competencies are not defined.**

Professional competence studies

- Teaching practice
- Didactic studies of the subject to be taught
- Multi-field studies
- Optional studies: special education – studies
 - traditionally focus on specialist SEN identifying, diagnosing, training...
 - new shift on educational systems holistically, classroom organisation, teaching and learning

Teacher competencies

- In order to enhance teachers' competencies in renewing education the Ministry of education has set up the Osaava-programme for ensuring that teachers receive regular continuing education and in-service training to improve their professional competence
- The changes requires also heavy investments in teacher education

Perspective on teachers' competencies

- Teamwork
 - Responsibility
 - Commitment to career
 - Career motivation
 - Decision making
 - Communication
 - Leadership
 - Trustworthiness and ethics
 - Problem solving
 - Organisation
- = generic skills
- > They seldom are openly declared in ITE curricula

The finnish system

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Competence areas

- As a whole the teacher education is based on the principle of a teacher as a researcher.
- Teachers are trained to reflect and analyze their work all the time and adjust their teaching as a continuous process. At the same time teachers are trained to think scientifically.

Attitudes and Values:

In addition...

- make teachers examine their own world of values, and promote their ability to meet diversity with open and understanding hearts and minds
- promote their professional growth and personal identity
- increase their positive expectations of the future
- reform their attitudes in an ideal way
- increase the strengths in their personality in every possible way

Knowledge and understanding

In addition...

- enable teachers to update their knowledge and continue their process of lifelong learning
- update their knowledge of the policies of educational institutions, support systems and classroom practices.
- promote educational discussions, where a certain solution-orientated psychological point of view is taken.
- arrange national and international online benchmarking systems
 - arrange practicing sections where the newest theoretical frameworks are given by the lectures and introduced or implemented by different kinds of exercises.
 - pupil observations in teams, teaching in pairs, group teaching for each discipline, interviewing other teachers, pupils, students with the needs of special support, headmasters and drawing up of reports.
 - team-based teachership and the competence to encounter and teach diverse children are seen as important sectors of inclusive teacher education.
 - encourage intensive co-operation with
 - teachers and a school welfare officers
 - teachers and parents
 - peer groups

Skills and abilities

...in addition

- to encounter challenges in classroom work
 - Commitment and collaboration
 - True interest on pupils' personal lives and narratives
 - co-operative literature clubs concerning inclusive settings
 - case study analyses and after the meetings with parents
- to encourage teamwork
 - Teachers' reflective peer groups seeking for solutions and making plans for pupils' learning environment and rehabilitation
 - Reflective multiagency
 - During the teaching practice the class teacher and the special education teacher can supervise the student teachers together. The student teachers get examples of co-operation between teachers and sometimes co-operative teaching, too.

Initial Teacher Education

- All universities offer single courses of couple of ECTS on inclusive and multicultural education.
- All students must include in their studies **“General Pedagogy”**, which familiarizes them with the ideology, theory and practices of inclusion with themes:
 - inclusive diversity in education,
 - education related to multiculturalism,
 - global education and
 - special needs education
- **“Welfare in a learning environment”** includes the following themes:
 - A group as a resource
 - Youngsters’ mental health at school
 - Good managing and supervising skills required of a teacher
 - Collaborative methods
 - Development of learning environments

THE FINNISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

