The Finnish Comprehensive and Upper Secondary Education and Inclusive Education in Finland

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*An additional 10th year is voluntary giving pupils an opportunity to improve their grades and clarify their career plans (3%)
EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Early childhood education (for 0-5 year-olds)
Pre-school education (for 6 year-olds)
Comprehensive basic education (9 years, for 7-16 year-olds)
  Voluntary 10th grade, 2 % of basic school graduates
Upper secondary general education (3 years)
  50.2 % of basic school graduates
Upper secondary vocational (3 years)
  41.2 % of basic school graduates
Polytechnics and Universities
Open adult education
SECONDARY EDUCATION

Lower secondary
1. grades 7-9 of the basic education
2. voluntary 10th grade

Upper secondary
- general (academic) upper secondary
- vocational upper secondary
DIVISION OF STUDENTS AFTER COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN 2009

School leavers (comprehensive school)
64,000 (year 2009)

- 50.2% upper secondary general education
- 41.2% upper secondary vocational education
- 2% optional 10th year in comprehensive school
- 6.6% did not continue directly in education
CENTRAL FEATURES OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION POLICY

Equal opportunities for education irrespective of age, domicile, sex, economic situation or mother tongue

Instruction free of charge

Education system almost entirely publicly funded

National core curriculum as a common base for all schools
CENTRAL FEATURES OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION POLICY

Flexibility

1. Flexible administration
2. Good interaction between national and municipal authorities and schools
3. Opportunities to build individual learning programmes
   - Possibility to choose the school
   - Optional subjects in basic education
   - Totally individual learning plan in upper secondary education
CENTRAL FEATURES OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION POLICY

Central guidelines and steering - local implementation
Supportive administration – spirit of trust
Development-oriented evaluation and pupil assessment
- no inspection system
- in basic education sample-based national testing of learning outcome, no ranking lists
- national matriculation examination at the end of the upper secondary education
CENTRAL FEATURES OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION POLICY

Individual support for learning and welfare of pupils – effort to minimise low achievement through early intervention

Individual guidance and counselling for building individual learning programmes

Teachers are highly qualified experts
  - all teachers have Master’s Degree from university

Active role of a student
THE STEERING SYSTEM OF BASIC EDUCATION

Basic Education Act and Decree

General National Objectives and Distribution of lesson hours 2001

National Core Curriculum 2004 (NBE)

Teacher training (universities, NBE, municipalities)

Local curriculum (municipalities, schools)

Study materials (publishing houses, NBE)

Teaching and learning

Osaamisen ja sivistyksen parhaaksi
National Core Curriculum
Government Decree on the General National Objectives and Distribution of lesson hours
Education Act and Decree
Conception of the Curriculum

- Continuum across the education system
- Goals are more important than contents
- Curriculum covers all areas of school life
- Strong future orientation – competence-based thinking
- Co-operation with parents, with other authorities and sectors of life
- Curriculum as a tool for development
Conception of Learning

Socio-constructivism, students’ active role
Learning is situational - importance of school culture and learning environment
Inclusive pedagogy
Balance between academic achievement and student welfare
Features of the Finnish education system

Strong individual support

All students have the same objectives and possibilities

The good quality of educational performance of the whole age group

Slow learners drop away from the pace of others without extra support

Every student has a right to be supported in learning and in personal development and welfare

The variation between schools is small

Small variation between students
Mean scores of the schools on the mathematic scale

Source: Sèvres 20 May, 2005

Finland

OECD
Variation of performance between schools

Variation of performance within schools

Variation in student performance

PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow’s World, Figure 4.1a.
Reading comprehension performance of Finnish 9th graders by percentiles compared to that of the average of students in the OECD countries.

OECD averages standardised to be equal to 0

New Strategy for Special Needs Education in Comprehensive Education

On 14.3.2006 the Ministry of Education appointed a steering group to prepare a proposal for a long-term strategy for the development of pre-primary and basic special education.


Changes in Basic Education Act, passed in June 2010

Changes in National Curricula for Pre-primary and Basic Education

Large development program - KELPO
Act Amending the Basic Education Act

The amendment supplements provisions on basic education and support given to pupils.

Shift of focus to early support

Planned support – more efficient use of existing forms of support

The aim is to strengthen the pupil's right to early, preventive support in learning and growth (intensified support) and special support, if needed

The support is intended to be intensified by stages

- general support integrated into mainstream teaching (remedial teaching and part-time special-needs education, pupil welfare services etc.)
- intensified support
- special support

Amendments to the provision on pupil welfare services
Finnish model
NEW APPROACH IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Support for studies and pupil welfare is shaped into three categories in the national core curriculum:

• General support
  > everyone has a subjective right to this (by law)
• Intensified support
  > if general support is not enough, pedagogical appraisal of the situation must be done and a plan for the intensified support must be handled in school’s welfare group
  > after that, an individual learning plan (ILP) must be drawn up for the pupil
Finnish model
NEW APPROACH IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

• Special support
  > if intensified support is not enough, new appraisal must be done
  > official decision concerning the special support must be made by the local education authority
  > individual education plan (IEP) must be drawn up for the pupil; this plan must be evaluated at least twice during the basic school years
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM

Legislation and curriculum are not enough, there must be national support for the implementation of the curriculum.

The goal of this support is to enhance teacher autonomy and professionalism:

1. In-service education for teachers
2. Nationally organized and local networks, peer learning, benchmarking
3. Supporting materials for teachers
4. Good learning materials for students, supporting differentiation of teaching
KEYS TO INCLUSION AND SUCCESS

- Education system
  - comprehensive 6-16
  - inclusive
  - coherent

- Trust and support
  - Individual support
  - Early intervention
  - Active role of student
  - Good student – teacher relationship

- Learning culture
  - Valued teachers, good teaching, high level of teacher education

Irmeli Halinen 2010
Links:
www.edu.fi/english
www.oph.fi/english