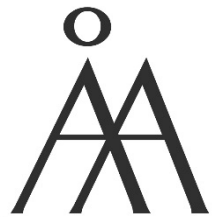


# Finnish Education System: teachers matter



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# Outline of the presentation

- Teachers matter in the Finnish school system
- Teacher Education in Finland



# Teachers matter in the Finnish school system

# Main cornerstones of the Finnish education policy

## **A. Common, consistent and long-term policy**

- basic models for teacher education and compulsory education are about 40 years old
- National curriculum reform every 10 years (1985, 1994, 2004, 2014/2016)

## **B. Educational equality**

- compulsory education organised mainly in public schools: free of charge to all students including e.g. books, meals
- two official languages (Finnish, Swedish)
- In practice, no streaming, no selection, no magnet schools with a special curriculum to draw students from wider areas

# Main cornerstones of the Finnish education policy

## **C. Devolution of decision power to the local level**

- local authorities (together with schools and teachers) plan local curricula, outline assessment based on the national curriculum and allocate resources for schools
- Teachers choose learning materials, design and organise assessment, are also involved with curriculum process

## **D. The culture of trust**

- no school inspectors, no national exams, only sample-based monitoring...

# Assessment as part of everyday school work

- Teachers are seen as autonomous academic professionals, who are able to plan, implement, and assess teaching and learning
- Assessment data is used in the classroom for improving teaching and learning
  - Internal assessment including all assessment forms is carried out mainly by teachers themselves

**NOTE:** no national level examination of the whole age group before the end of upper secondary school (grade 12)

- only sample-based monitoring in the core subjects

# Finnish assessment system

- Devolution of decision power and responsibility at the local level
- No school inspections, national exams or pre-evaluation of learning materials
- Assessment data is used within the classroom
- Teachers autonomous academic professionals

# Some key facts and figures

- Total amount of lesson hours in compulsory education is 5,750 (cf. OECD average 6,500; Italy 8,300)
- Mathematics lesson hours (a' 45 minutes):  
6 (Grades 1-2), 15 (Grades 3-6), 11 (Grades 7-9)  
in all 32 lesson hours (Grades 1-9)
- Schools are various size and rather small
  - About 44% of all schools < 100 pupils (12% of all pupils)
  - About 22% of all schools > 300 pupils (54% of all pupils)
  - Average class size: primary 19.8 (OECD 21.4)  
and secondary 20.1 (OECD 23.7)





# Teacher Education in Finland

# Teachers in Finnish school system

## **A primary school teacher**

- teaches grades 1 to 6 (ages 7 to 13)
- is typically qualified to teach all school subjects at primary school level

## **A subject teacher**

- typically teaches grades 7 to 12 (ages 13 to 19)
- is qualified to teach only in his/her major or minor subject
- typically teaches two school subjects (e.g., math and physics)

# Primary and subject teachers

## Primary school teacher

- 5 year program (3 BA + 2 MA)
- Majoring in education
- Minor in school subjects (Finnish, math, biology, geography etc)
- Minor in one or two other subjects
- E.g. primary school teacher minor in mathematics

## Subject teacher

- 5 year program (3 BA + 2 MA)
- Majoring in one subject
- Minor in one or two other subjects
- Minor in education (= teacher's pedagogical studies)
- E.g. Math major, chemistry + physics minor

# University level pre-service TE

## Primary teacher education

- provided by nine university units
- Swedish Programme in Vaasa and Helsinki (starting autumn 2016)

## Subject teacher education

- Pedagogical course is provided also by some polytechnics
- Swedish Programme organised by Åbo Akademi University and UH



# Teacher Training Schools

- university teacher training schools belong to the universities' faculties of education: altogether 11 schools in Finland
- play a central role in the training of prospective teachers
- combining theory and practice closely during initial teacher education
- The duties of teacher training schools
  - Provision of teaching for comprehensive and upper secondary levels
  - Supervision and tutoring of student teachers
  - Teaching experiments and research
  - Provision of in -service education

# Research-based teacher education

- All teaching is to be based on research
  - Teacher educators are required to research
  - teaching is based on one's own or others' research
- Activities are organized so as to give students the opportunity to practise argumentation, decision making and justification when inquiring into and solving pedagogical problems.
- Students learn formal research skills during their studies when they move up to the M.A. thesis level.

# Admission to the teacher education programmes: UH as an example

## **Primary teacher education:**

### *Master's of education*

- 1564 (1807) applicants, 120 study places (7.7% [6.6%], 2015)
- Two-phase entrance exam:
  - 1) book exam, based on which 25 % are invited to
  - 2) an interview.
- The applicants need to have upper secondary education.

## **Subject teacher education:**

### *Pedagogical course module*

- 605 (755) applicants and 434 accepted (72% [57%], 2015)
- Acceptance rate varies between subjects
- Entrance exam consists of an interview.
- The applicants need to have a study place in a subject faculty and certain amount of studies OR a completed Master's degree including studies in a school subject.

# Future prospects

- Critical issues to be addressed in Finnish mathematics education in the future
  - pupils' declining interest and skills in mathematics
  - rather low school well-being
  - addressing the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
  - declining interest in studying mathematics at the university level

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# Some further information

Finnish National Board of Education

[www.oph.fi/english](http://www.oph.fi/english)

Ministry of Education and Culture <http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en>

Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki

<http://www.helsinki.fi/teachereducation/>

Teacher Training Schools

<http://www.enorssi.fi/ftts/about-us-1>