

Why is Finland a role model for Education?

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Why is Finland a role model for Education?

“This is what we do every day, prepare kids for life.”¹

If we want to be competitive, we need to educate everybody. It all came out of a need to survive.”²

The root of the success of Finnish Education system lies in its perspective of looking at education. The focus in schools is on learning, not teaching or educating. As the principle for lifelong learning has gained momentum, the significance of education and training has increased.³

Focus on early childhood care

Early childhood- from birth to 8 years.

No schooling till the age of 7.

Maximum home environment or family-based daycare system.

Psychology-brains develop the most during the first 7 years of life. So, home environment is very important.

The effectiveness of early childhood education lies in its ability to promote children’s communication and cooperation skills.

Emphasis on reading books at home.

Teachers

Teachers were required to earn a fifth-year master’s degree in theory and practice at one of eight state universities—at state expense and they were effectively granted equal status with doctors and lawyers.⁴

Finland has vastly improved in reading, math and science literacy over the past decade in large part because its teachers are trusted to do whatever it takes to turn young lives around.⁵

Here are some of the salient features of today’s Finnish schooling:⁶

1. While all pre-schools (nursery and kindergarten) are fully funded and most children attend, academic education does not begin until children are 7 years old.

¹ Kari Louhivuori, “Why are Finland’s schools so successful”-Smithsonian–September 2011.

² Pasi Sahlberg

³ <http://journals.hioa.no/index.php/nbf/article/viewFile/238/252> “The Development of Early Childhood Education as an Academic Discipline in Finland” 2008.

⁴ : <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/Why-Are-Finlands-Schools-Successful.html?c=y&page=2>

⁵ “Why are Finland’s schools so successful”-Smithsonian–September 2011.

⁶ *How Finland’s education system succeeds-Zoe Weil*

2. There are *no* standardized tests in Finland until a single matriculation exam at 15 years old (to determine the higher education options available to students).
3. There are fewer school days in Finland than in the U.S., with shorter school days and more outdoor/recess time.
4. Education is not competitive. There are no valedictorians, rankings, or tracking. Most schools do not grade students until 6th grade.
5. Teachers' salaries are comparable in the U.S. and Finland, though because Finnish teachers work on average about half as many hours as U.S. teachers, they are actually paid twice as much for their time.
6. Less money is spent per pupil in Finland than in the U.S.
7. Students are required to complete very little homework, averaging 30 minutes/day.
8. There are no school sports teams. Instead there are community sports, and a couple of sports schools for Olympic-bound athletes.
9. All teachers receive a master's degree that is *content*-based (rather than theory-based) and the acceptance rate into teacher training programs is less than 10%. (In the U.S. only 23% of new teachers scored in the top third of SAT and ACT tests.)
10. Finnish teachers have high vocational status in their country; teaching in Finland is extremely prestigious.
11. The Finnish curriculum is "thinking-based," and the guiding principles include equity, creativity, and prosperity.
12. Finnish teachers work collaboratively as well as autonomously. They choose their own teaching methods and materials and assess their students accordingly. Schools are not compared to one another for achievement.
13. Teachers often stay with their class and teach the same students for several years.
14. The variation in Finnish schools' successes is minimal. Whether rural or urban, in wealthy or poor regions, Finnish children do well no matter what school they attend.

Early childhood education is not mandatory in Finland, but is used by almost everyone. "We see it as the right of the child to have daycare and pre-school," explained Eeva Penttilä, of Helsinki's Education Department. "It's not a place where you dump your child when you're working. It's a place for your child to play and learn and make friends. Good parents put their children in daycare. It's not related to socio-economic class".

According to Eeva Penttilä, Director of International Relations for the Finland Education Department (City of Helsinki), "When a child is born in Finland, every mother gets a box (maternity package) from the Mother Care Center which consists of the first bed the baby has...[and]... three books. There is a book for the mother, a book for the father, and a book for the baby. Of course the baby book has...mainly those faces that babies easily can see. This indicates to the parents that for this new member of the family, you have to read. Reading to the baby is so important. I was amazed when I read somewhere that when you consider our population, we produce more children's books than any other country does. One thing you can't do here is to buy good education for your child. Everything is free including universities. Every child is a self made person in this kind of a system because whatever your background is,

you can make it but if you don't make it, whatever your father is, you will drop down because we do not have this elite. The school meals are also free... Education isn't even free in China. If I count the taxation from my salary, it goes somewhere about 60 percent. I am a happy taxpayer because my grandchildren get everything they need for free." Eeva Penttilä, quoted in [Leo R. Sandy, "Education in Finland", *New Hampshire Journal of Learning* Vol 10 \(April 2007\)](#)

▣ ▲ Hujala continues, "Early education has also been shown to be economically and socially beneficial. The long term benefit of early education exceeds the economic costs. In addition, children's participation in early childhood education is a significant promoter of social equality (Kajonoja, 2005; Woodhead, 2004). The effectiveness of early childhood education on both on children's social and cognitive development has been demonstrated. For instance, the results of the PISA of 2003 demonstrated the long-term effects of early childhood education on school achievement, including the fact that children who had participated in early childhood education performed significantly better in mathematics in secondary school. French research, on the other hand, has demonstrated a connection between participation in early childhood education and experiences of success in the lower school (El Pan-European Structure Policy on ECE [2006]). The connection between early childhood education and school success was highly significant among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, early childhood education is a significant source for enhancing social equality. Longitudinal studies have demonstrated that the effectiveness of early childhood education lies in its ability to promote children's communication and cooperation skills. See Eeva Hujala, "The Development of Early Childhood as an Academic Discipline in Finland", *Nordic Early Childhood Education Research*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2008).

Source: Wikipedia