Collaborating to create a relevant curriculum based on well-being for all - Finland

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September 2016

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Finland in brief

- population 5.4 million (18 inhabitants / sq. km)
- two official languages: Finnish and Swedish
- foreigners: 4.8 % of the population
- education level of the working age population:
  - 13 % basic education
  - 45 % upper secondary education
  - 42 % tertiary education

Statistics Finland 2015, Education at a Glance 2015,
City of Helsinki media bank
QUALITY FEATURES OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

• Policy guidelines and structures
• Ethos and culture
• Processes and content of teaching and learning

Form a basis for sustainability
EDUCATION IN FINLAND

SUSTAINABLE POLICY AND STRUCTURES: Access to education

Pre-primary education

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

BASIC EDUCATION

Doc. Lic.

5
4
Master's degrees
3
2
Bachelor's degrees
1
Universities

Polytechnic Master's degrees

4
3
Polytechnic Bachelor's degrees
2
Polytechnics
1

Work experience

Work experience

Matriculation examination

General upper secondary education

3
2
1

Vocational qualifications

Upper secondary vocational education and training

3
2
1

Specialist vocational qualification

Further vocational qualification

Work experience
High Quality Teachers

- Qualification requirements (eligibility) defined by law
- Master’s Degree in universities’ teacher education faculties
- Respect for the profession in society
- Popularity of the profession (especially class teacher education) among young people
- Pedagogical autonomy and creativity of teachers

Talented, motivated, committed teachers
Able to scientific thinking and problem solving
Ready to take responsibility
HIGH QUALITY LEARNING

TEACHING AND STUDYING

LOCAL CURRICULA

NATIONAL CORE CURRICULA

GOVERNMENT’S DECREES

EDUCATION ACTS AND DECREES

Steering system of education

ETHOS AND CULTURE PROMOTES QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Trust as the Cornerstone of the High Quality Education System

- **No**
  - high stakes testing or school inspections
  - league tables, comparison or competition between schools
  - dead ends in the system

- **Instead**
  - collaborative mindset (top-down-bottom-up)
  - strong national goals and support systems
  - local autonomy and responsibility
  - flexible legislation and structures
  - evaluation/assessment as a feedback for improvement
  - coherent development (small step policy)
The Guiding Principles of the System

- Equity and equality
- Inclusiveness
- Lifelong learning
- High quality teaching and teacher’s pedagogical autonomy
- Focus on learners and learning
- Sustainable well-being
What is High Quality Learning?

- Meaningful
- Enjoyable
- Sustainable
CURRICULUM REFORM 2016

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STARTING POINTS OF THE REFORM

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Local curricula are renewed on the basis of the national core curricula.

Teaching and learning based on the renewed curricula starts August 2016.
General Goals of Basic Education

According to Basic Education Act and Decree:

- The main task on basic education is to
  - promote the healthy growth and development of all pupils
  - to enhance their development as human beings and as citizens of a democratic society
  - create a solid bases for lifelong learning and sustainable well-being

- Education must be provided according to pupils’ age and capabilities, in cooperation with pupils’ parents.
Holistic and visionary curriculum approach

• Curriculum covers all areas of school work.
• It describes the main principles and guidelines for providing education and organising teaching and learning. It includes also subject syllabi.
• It is future-oriented and visionary.
Pupils, teachers and the curriculum

Basic Education Act 30 §
Every school day, every pupil is entitled to have instruction, and guidance and counseling according to the curriculum, as well as sufficient support for learning and school attendance directly as the need arises.
SUSTAINABILITY OF THE REFORM PROCESS

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SUSTAINABLE REFORM PROCESS: building the future together

- Written core curriculum
- Collaborative process
- Strong knowledge base
  - Shared ideas
  - Common direction
  - Commitment
How the story of the Finnish basic education continues? How to strengthen the best features of the system?

What kind of future we want to build?

How do we perceive learning?

What is a good learning process like?

How the surrounding world chances?

What is worth learning in that world?
Strong and extensive knowledge base

- Teachers’ experiences and dreams
- Results of
  - research
  - evaluations
  - development projects
- Analyses of societal development, changes in working life and futures research
- Experiences and innovations of other countries
Collaboration, involvement, transparency

- Multidisciplinary working groups supported by online consultation groups
- Advisory group with 16 main stakeholders represented
- Four times during the process
  - education providers were asked to provide feedback (surveys)
  - open consultations (FNBE websites)
- Key stakeholders were invited to provide their official opinions before final decisions (focused survey)
- The Board of Trustees of the FNBE was heard before final decisions
- Curriculum Road Maps
Teachers’ role in the reform process

- Discussions with teachers before and during the reform in teachers’ in-service days
- Teachers as members of curriculum groups
- Teachers’ Union as a member of the advisory group
- Teachers’ feedback via municipalities
- Teachers as active commentators on the websites
- Common seminars with teacher education faculties
- Yearly discussions with the deans of teacher education faculties (in the Ministry of Education and Culture)
Research Analysis of the Curriculum Reform Process

- Top-down approach: state-level capacity to provide framework, direction and resources, and to build networks and bring people together
- Bottom-up approach: local-level understanding and experiences, capacity to create, give feedback, learn and find best practical solutions
- Combining these approaches contributed overall coherence of the reform
Coherence was also promoted by transparent and participatory leadership:

- Developing structures to foster participation
- Using the expertize of those involved in and affected by the reform, appreciating also contradictory views
- Using multiple sources of information and feedback
- Using extensive knowledge-sharing and leadership for change

All this helped people to make sense of what will happen and how changes can be beneficial for their work.

Collective sense-making facilitated shared interpretation of the reform and provided a tool for building curriculum coherence and strengthening the sustainability of the reform.

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SOCIETAL CHALLENGE

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

1. BOUNDARY CROSSING, ORCHESTRATION
- finding appropriate partners and domains of knowledge
- bringing together actors

2. DEALING WITH PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
- learning from the past, remembering
- imagining and envisioning
- being resilient, solving conflicts

3. AGENCY AND VOLITION, TAKING RESPONSIBLE ACTION
- breaking away from given constrains and taking responsibility for the new; using new tools

Engeström, Y. 2015
FOCUS OF THE REFORM

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Four keys to curriculum reform

Changing role of pupils
- Learning together, involvement
- Exploratory and creative learning
- Joy of learning

Changing role of teachers and teaching
- Learning conception
- Working together and building learning entities

World of change
- Environment, globalisation of economy, world of work, digitalisation, diversity of society

Impact on children’s environment

Changing concepts of learning and competence
- Wide and transversal, ethical, sustainable
- Social and emotional skills
- Learning to learn, working with knowledge

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Impact on children’s environment

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Main goals in the curriculum reform 2016

- To enhance **joy and meaningfulness** of learning and the **active role** of pupils
- To create better opportunities for **deep learning**, development of **transversal competencies** and **high quality learning achievement**
- To support **personal growth** and **identity development** of every pupil
- To promote **dialogue** and **collaboration** in the school community and between the schools and its surroundings
- To enhance **sustainable way of living** and **sustainable well-being** of both individuals and the society
Tools for enhancing sustainable well-being and high quality learning?

◆ Sustainable well-being develops based on a sense of coherence which means
  • comprehensibility
  • manageability
  • meaningfulness

(Hämäläinen, T. 2013)

◆ Education/school has a central role in supporting the development and strengthening the sense of coherence of every pupil

◆ Vertical and horizontal integration in teaching and learning is vital
Dimensions of the integration

- Pupils’ experiences
  - Relevance
  - Participation/involvement
  - Active role in learning

- Coherent social and emotional approach
  - Value basis
  - School culture

- Coherent approach in teaching and learning
  - Learning conception
  - Transversal competences
  - Multidisciplinary learning modules

SUSTAINABLE WELL-BEING AND LEARNING

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Focus is in pupils’ experiences
Osaamisen ja sivistyksen parhaaksi
What are the most important factors to help me learn and enjoy myself in school?

The result of a discussion of 550 students in Helsinki 2013
Social and emotional coherence: Rethinking the value basis of education

Necessity of sustainable way of living

Uniqueness of every pupil, high quality education as a basic right

Cultural variety as richness

All dimensions of sustainability must be promoted

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Social and emotional coherence: School culture based on values

- Pupils
- Humanity
- Cultural diversity
- Sustainable lifestyle

School as a learning community
Rethinking the school culture

Schools promote learning and sustainable well-being by their own example

- Wellbeing and safety in daily life
- Interaction and versatile working approach
- Cultural diversity and language awareness
- Participation and democratic action
- Equity and equality
- Learning community
- Environmental responsibility and sustainable future orientation
Rethinking the learning conception

- Pupil as an active agent
- Interaction promotes learning
- Positive experiences and emotions promote learning
- Self-regulation and self-directedness is important
- Learning to learn is a central skill

KEY POINTS

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Main goals in integrative approach

- Enhance pupils’ ability to understand relationships and interconnectivity between various phenomena.
- Guide pupils to connect knowledge and skills of different subjects, and to organize their knowledge into larger entities.
- Encourage pupils to imply their knowledge and skills in examining various phenomena and topics.
- Produce experiences on how to build knowledge together.
- Support pupils in noticing connections between issues they study at school and issues of their own life, of their community, and the whole society and humanity.
Rethinking the Competencies in Basic Education

Transversal Competencies
- knowledge
- skills
- values
- attitudes
- will/volition

Thinking and learning to learn
Taking care of oneself, managing daily life
Participation involvement, building a sustainable future
Cultural competence, interaction and expression
Working life competence, entrepreneurship
ICT-competence
Multiliteracy

Development as a human being and as a citizen
Multidisciplinary learning modules as new tools in teaching and learning

Guidelines in the national core curriculum:
• Learning modules integrate skills and knowledge of various school subjects and connect them to real life phenomena
• Pupils are entitled to at least one integrative, multidisciplinary learning module every school year
• Teachers plan and work together
• Pupils participate in the planning and implementation of these modules
RETHINKING PUPIL ASSESSMENT

Assessment of learning

Assessment as learning

Assessment for learning

LEARNING
Key elements of the assessment culture

- Supportive and encouraging atmosphere
- Dialogical and interactive way of working
- Fair and ethical, versatile and realistic assessment, based on the multifaceted evidence
- Pupils are guided to understand and recognize their own learning and progress
- Information is used to improve teaching and learning practices.
CURRICULUM REFORM IN BRIEF
Essential in the curriculum reform 2016

Why? What? How?

How our schools could be better learning environments and supporting and encouraging communities for meaningful learning and for meaningful being?
CURRICULUM REFORM 2016
in a nutshell

Inclusive school
Multifaceted and deep learning
Transversal and subject competences
Sustainable way of living and well-being
Eco-socially conscious education

- Crystallizes the core ideas of sustainability in education and is based on four dimensions
  - Freedom and responsibility
  - Ecological integrity and diversity
  - Interdependence and equality of humans
  - Activities of an eco-social human community – democracy, non-violence and peace
- Based on systems thinking
- Learners are provided with the opportunity to reflect sufficiency and learn to act responsibly
Maximising potential: every child is unique
It is about this…

“Help kids know how to make meaning and sense of what they are learning so they can see who they are.”

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang Ed. D.
Thank you!

Irmeli Halinen
22.08.2016