

FINNISH LESSONS

What can the world learn from educational change in Finland

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Book Notes compiled by Jane Sigford

Introduction: Yes, we Can (Learn from One Another)

- Educational systems are facing double challenge: how to change schools so that students may learn new types of knowledge and skills required in an unpredictably changing knowledge world, and how to make the learning possible for all students regardless of their socioeconomic conditions.
- This is both a moral and social imperative for leaders
- Aftermath of recent global economic crisis is showing how unemployed young people are becoming hopeless to the extent that it is bringing governments down.
- This book is about Finland and how the Finns transformed their educational system from mediocre in the 1980s to one of the models of excellence today. [It took YEARS to change this culture. Note mine]
- At beginning of 1990s education in Finland was nothing special. They were average among nations except in reading where they were above average. The recession of the time period brought Finland to edge of financial breakdown. Nokia, main global industrial brand of Finland, became critical in boosting Finland out of recession.
- Another key brand *peruskoulu* or 9 year comprehensive basic school was the other key player in this turnaround.
- Other countries now find themselves where Finland was in the '90s—Ireland, Greece, England, and US, for example
- To turn education around steps must be grounded in research and implemented in collaboration by academics, policy makers, principals, and teachers. P. 3
- Main message of this book is that another way to improve schools is to improve the teaching force, limit student testing to a necessary minimum, place responsibility and trust before accountability, and hand over school- and district-level leadership to education professionals. P. 5
- There are 5 reasons why Finland is interesting and relevant source of ideas for other nations:

- One, Finland's system has progressed from mediocrity to being a model system where students learn well and equitable education has been distributed in different parts of the country at the same time.
- Two, has demonstrated that there is another way to improve schools other than the market-drive education policies. It is one of trust, professionalism, and shared responsibility. Finland is an example of a nation that lacks school inspection, standardized curriculum, high-stakes student assessments, test-based accountability, and a race-to-the-top mentality with regard to educational change.
- Three, because of success can offer alternative ways to think about solutions
- Four, Finland is an international high performer in commerce, technology, sustainable development, good governance, and prosperity and can raise interesting questions about interdependencies between education and other sectors in society. P. 5
- Five, we should listen because Finland offers hope.
- There are three things that Finland did differently. 1) developed an inspiring vision of what good public education should be in that they were committed to building a good publicly financed and locally governed basic school for every child; 2) they took external advice but did not adopt anything wholesale. They took good ideas and made them Finnish, adapting them to respect and embrace the Finnish culture; 3) they developed a system of respectful and interesting working conditions for teachers and leaders in Finnish schools.

Learning from One Another

Can Finland be a model for others? Finland is one of few nations among 34 OECD countries that have been able to improve educational performance as measured by int'l indicators and student achievement tests. P. 7

- Some say it is too small and homogeneous to be useful as a model.
- As to being homogeneous, so is Japan, Korea and Shanghai but we look to them to give information. Diversification in Finland since mid-1990s has been fastest in Europe. This argument is no longer valid.
- Is it too small? It's about the population as Minnesota. So not too small.
- Another argument is that PISA and TIMSS focus on areas too narrow and ignore social skills. P. 9

Although Finland has outperformed other nations, the results have been downplayed by some policy wonks, such as McKinsey and Company. In a recent McKinsey report, Finland

was not even listed as a "sustained improver" in terms of education.. Yet, Finnish experiment shows that some of the market strategies that have been employed in countries such as US and England, are not the only ways to effect change.

Chapter 1: The Finnish Dream: Equal Educational Opportunities

- The story of Finland is a story of survival. Geographically, Finland is relatively small and sandwiched between larger powers has taught the Finns to accept realities and use diplomacy, cooperation, problem-solving, building consensus which have played a role in developing an educational system that is enjoying global attention. P. 13
- The guiding principle to improving their system has been having a good education accessible to all Finnish children, from early childhood through the highest academic degree. P. 13 The concept of a unified comprehensive basic school is called *peruskoulu*.
- Finland was at war from December 1939 to spring 1945 which cost them dearly in loss of life and loss of land to the Soviets at the end of the war. The economic loss was severe. P. 14 Communism had to be accepted as the political party. But they survived.
- But it fought for its freedom and survived. The end of the war brought new ideas such as equal educational opportunity in its transition from agricultural to industrial nation, growing service and technological sector, and a new identity as high-tech knowledge-based economy
- In 1960s many old Finnish values were transformed—Had only required 4 years of primary school but now requirements increased to 6 Also teacher education was changed to include individual, holistic education of students instead of the previously teacher-centered concentration on moral development.
- After WWII Finland was in turmoil politically. There were 4 strong political parties which laid the groundwork for comprehensive basic schooling. P. 17 New objectives were formulated for education moving away from German tradition to the English one.
- Second, research played a huge part in formulating curriculum.
- Third, the education committee paved the way for modernized presentation and content and concentration on whole child p. 17
- In 1959—new requirements—first 4 grades common to all pupils, Grades 5 & 6 would be middle school to focus on either practical subjects or foreign languages, Grades 7-9 would have 3 streams: vocational and practical

orientation, an "average" track with 1 foreign language, or an advanced stream with 2 foreign languages. P. 19

- Overall, this committee initiated deep and significant debate about core values whether all children can be educated and attain similar learning goals.
- Changed their system from more of a tracking system into one that has 9-year basic school program governed by local education authorities. Afterward there is a general upper secondary school or a vocational upper secondary. Students may go to university or vocational college from the general upper school and may go to the vocational college from the vocational upper secondary system.
- Secondary career guidance and counseling became a compulsory part of the comprehensive school curricula.
- Another change was that all teachers in the same school had to begin to work with students with diverse abilities. Teachers had to employ alternative instructional methods and design learning environments that assist differentiated learning for different pupils. P. 23 This led to wide-scale teacher education reform emphasizing professional development and focusing on research-based teacher ed.
- Another consequence was the rapid expanse of upper-secondary education. Classes are not organized by 10th, 11th, 12th grade classes but by course. Students are assessed 5 or 6 times a year because courses are organized into 5-6 weeks courses of study. Therefore, students may take 18 compulsory subjects. They must complete at least 75 courses of 38 lessons each. 2/3 are compulsory and the rest are chosen. Most students take between 80-90 courses.
- At the end of all the compulsory course, students take a high-stakes external exam which has notable effect on curriculum and instruction.
- Vocational ed. has 120 credits—3 years of full time study. $\frac{1}{4}$ is allocated to general or optional courses. Vocational students can take matriculation exam but few do.
- In vocational ed. they balance need for more general knowledge and skills and specific professional competencies required in each vocational area.
- Methods of instruction and training in vocational schools—1/6 are on-the-job learning. Alternative workshops, apprenticeship training, and virtual learning are commonplace in upper secondary ed. Students transition to upper schools easier than some western counterparts because they are not pressured to pass standardized tests, and can concentrate on learning.

- Traditional school organization based on presentation, recitation, age-grouping, fixed teaching schedules have changed to be more flexible, open and interaction-rich.
- Upper secondary graduation has increased. Also vocational education has become true alternative because students can also attend higher ed after receiving a professional qualification from vocational ed.
- In 2009-2010 marked the first year when more students enrolled in vocational upper school than in the general upper school.
- All years beyond the compulsory 9 are noncompulsory. Finland has developed equal opportunities for all to participate rather than mandating it. Most upper schools are under municipal and in some cases regional administration. Yet overall pedagogical environments are fairly unified throughout the country.
- An indicator of the quality and effectiveness of upper education is completion rate. P. 28 Overall graduation rates are internationally high. Only .2% of the age cohort will not complete compulsory education successfully. Upper-secondary education graduation rate is 93% compared to 76% in Canada and 77% in US. Overall OECD average is 80%.
- Personalized learning plans are not tied to age groups or classes. Students will take more time to complete their studies than others.
- Dropout rates are declining. Has been identified as a need for change. P. 30

Matriculation Exam

- Those who have passed required courses in upper-secondary general school are eligible to take the Nat'l Matriculation Exam which is administered at same time in all schools. There is no nat'l exam for students graduating from upper-secondary vocational schools. They assess by content of certification exams. They can apply to polytechnics or universities.
- Purpose of exam is to discover whether students have assimilated the knowledge and skills required in the nat'l core curriculum and if they have a level of maturity in line with goals of upper-secondary general school. They take tests in at least 4 subjects which enables them to continue at higher ed institutions. P. 31 Cost of test is covered by students -about 10 million in nat'l cost
- Test held 2x a year. Must complete all exams within 18 months in 3 sessions or can do in one session. Must take test in Mother Tongue (Finnish, Swedish, and Sami) and choose 3 others from 4 domains: 2nd language (Finnish or

Swedish) Foreign Languages, Math, and General studies (social and natural sciences). May include exam in one or more optional subjects. They are all paper-pencil tests, essay and open-ended. It will be computer based in 2015 and onward. Some exams have 2 levels [like IB] Math and foreign language have 2 levels. Must pass advanced test in at least one elective subject. Students can improve their scores by taking exams not completed previously. Candidates receive a certificate

- Vocational students take school-level assessment to develop positive self-image and personal growth with different kinds of competencies. On-the-job supervisors also complete job evaluations.

Generation of Educational Change—there were 3 phases

- Phase 1: Rethinking theoretical and methodological foundations (1980s)

Increase in knowledge in cognitive science and expansion of technology led to rethinking best practice instruction away from teacher-led discussion p. 34 Unfortunately, in US and Britain at this time, they concentrated instead on controversial externally imposed learning standards and competition

At this time Finland changed to incorporate the research from ASCD on cooperative learning and a movement to diversity teaching methods in science teaching. Work by David Berliner, Linda Darling-Hammond, Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan has been studied and implemented in developing Finnish education since 1970s.

This phase challenged conventional beliefs, search for innovation, and increased trust in schools and their abilities to find the best ways to raise the quality of student learning. p. 35 Deeper understanding of knowledge and learning strengthened schools' moral foundations. P. 35

- Phase 2: Improvement through networking and self-regulated change (1990s)

Biggest reform era. More active role of municipalities and schools in curriculum design and implementation. Schools were encouraged to collaborate with other schools and also to network with parents, businesses and nongovernmental organizations. P. 36 Formed Aquariam Project—a nat'l school improvement network open to all educators. Makes use of technological networking. Has demonstrated that it is the school, not the system, that is the locus of control and capacity. P. 36 Because of the collaborative nature of the networking, competition is decreased among schools. P. 36

- Phase 3: Enhancing efficiency of structures and administration (2000-present)

Results on PISA in 2001 took everyone by surprise. In all 3 academic domains—mathematics, science, and reading literature, Finland was one of the highest performing nations of OECD countries. Earlier gaps with Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong were closed.

Multiculturalism, special education, and abolishing the administrative line between primary and lower-secondary schools are main areas of development since year 2000.

Finnish Education System in 2011

- Finnish system has not been infected by market-based competition and high-stakes testing policies. Finnish community is not convinced that competition and choice with more standardized testing would be good for schools or student learning.

The conclusion is that Finland seems particularly successful in implementing and maintaining the policies and practices that constitute *sustainable leadership and change*. Education is seen as public good and therefore has strong nation-building function. P. 39

Policies have put strong accent on teaching and learning by encouraging schools to craft optimal learning environments and establish instructional content that will best help students to reach the general goals of schooling. P. 29

Instruction is key element that makes a difference in what students learn in school, not standards, assessment, or alternative instructional programs. New flexibility allows schools to learn from one another. Encouraged teachers and schools to continue to expand their repertoires of teaching methods and to individualize teaching to meet needs of students. P. 39

Schools are encouraged to maintain strong support systems for teaching and learning—nutritious, free school meals for all pupils, health services, psychological counseling, and student guidance are normal practices in every school. p. 40

Chapter 2: The Finnish Paradox: Less is More

Finland has gone from average performer to a top system. Yet many of their reform policies appear to be paradoxes in that they depart so clearly from the global educational reform thinking. (GERM) P. 42 There are 4 domains to examine.

- One level of educational attainment: Prior to 1970s $\frac{3}{4}$ of adult Finns only completed basic school. Only 7% had university degree.
 - Now 99% complete peruskoulu—9 years and 95 continue to upper-secondary or 10th grade. 93% starting upper-secondary school eventually receive their school-leaving certification.
 - More than 50% of adults participate in adult ed. Education is publicly financed and available to all. Plus, there are 2 types of higher ed offering a place of study to about 2/3 of age cohort. Study in Finnish universities and polytechnics is free, higher ed is equal

opportunity for all who have successfully completed upper-secondary school. Current challenge is to get students to finish sooner and enter labor markets sooner.

- Two, Equity of Outcomes: Important feature of Nordic welfare states. It's about having socially fair and inclusive education system based on equality of educational opportunities. Expectations are same for all. Students study math and foreign languages in same classes, not the three levels pupils used to be assigned to. P. 45

Student variation and inequality is within schools, not between. Finnish reform has succeeded in building equitable system in relatively short time.

Attention to special ed is important. Basic premise is early recognition, support, and opportunities to complete school in accordance with their abilities and alongside their peers. Some have learning plan and assistance with special ed teacher and mainstreamed. 2nd alternative is permanent special education in special group or class. This decision is based on statement by professionals and mandatory parental hearing. Transfer decision made by school board of pupil's municipality and can be processed rather quickly.

Ironically, about 50% of those who graduate by 10th grade have been in special ed at some time—but not the whole time. In other words, it is not special anymore. They believe in early identification, a little extra help when needed, particularly in early childhood. Because everyone has to achieve the basic requirements students are identified early. Finland has voluntary free preschool. Child poverty at low level. The proportion of students in special ed in early childhood is higher in Finland than in most other countries. They exit out. Only 8% is in the permanent placements. In vocational ed approximately 10% were in special ed school year 2008-09

Grade-based assessments not used in grades 1-5 so that grade retention and over-reliance on academic performance has essentially vanished in Finnish schools.

Higher ed also one of most equitable. More than 60% of secondary school graduates enroll in higher ed. Plus, it's free of charge.

- Three, Student Learning—Although there is debate on what PISA and TiMMS measure, Finnish students continually score high on international tests on reading, math, and science. However, fewer

Finnish students read for pleasure now than they did 10 years ago. Half of Finnish boys don't read for pleasure. This is of concern to Finnish educators.

- The Finns think PISA is a narrow measure of what they do. They don't put as much weight on this as do some other countries.
- Four, cost of Education—Total public cost of expenditure is 5.6% of GDP—Lower than most other countries. US—7.6% and Canada—6.1%. Only 2.5% of expenditures on education come from private sources.
 - Good results have come at reasonable cost. There is no correlation on quality as measured by PISA and expenditure. Norway—highest expenditure and has low results. Efficiency, not expenditure, is more important.
 - Cost of grade repetition—Personalized learning and differentiated instruction took place of grade repetition. Minimizing grade repetition in special ed has also been possible because of early intervention. In upper schools students design their own personalized learning schedules so grade repetition is virtually nonexistent.
 - Finland has chosen automatic promotion combined with early intervention. This requires systemic counseling.

Finnish Paradoxes in Education

As a country, Finns are not talkative, but believe in action. Live in relatively harsh climate, but happy content people.

Paradox 1: Teach Less, Learn More:

There appears to no correlation between intended instructional hours and student performance. Students learn more when interacting with information, not with formal teachers.

Italian students actually attend almost 2 more years of school and do much worse than Finnish students. Plus, Finnish students don't start until age 7 and Italian students start at 5.

Finnish students also spend less time on homework—no more than 30 minutes per night in high school.

Finnish teachers—teach 4 lessons per day compared to 6 or more in US. Finnish teachers—600 hours annually; US—1080 and Canadian-- approx 900 hours. 63
Typical day—American teacher's day almost twice as long daily therefore less time left to enter into professional development. Finnish teachers teach but have many other

responsibilities—assessing student achievement and participate in other school initiatives. Definition of teacher work is not just classroom time and the other is “Extra”

2. Paradox 2—Test Less, Learn More

Testing trends in countries like US, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Japan where more testing is the norm, results have been on the decline between 2000 and 2006. Suggests frequent standardized testing does not necessarily improve educational results. P. 66

Student Assessment divided into 3 categories: 1: teachers do classroom diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. 2: comprehensive assessments at end of semesters with report cards and grades in academic and nonacademic subjects such as behavior and engagement. Individual schools decide how to grade with guidance from Dept of ed. 3: National assessments in 3 and 4 year cycles—in reading, mathematics, and science.

Assessment not bad unless it is used to punish. Evidence suggests teachers teach to test and redesign instruction accordingly. In Finland students don't take standardized test until matriculation exam so teachers are free to teach what students need. P. 67

[Less time spent on testing so more time for learning. Note mine]

Even other countries are going away from national testing now—England, Wales, and Canadian province of Alberta. [Why isn't the US considering this? Note mine]

Paradox 3: More Equity through Growing Diversity

Since 1990s Finland's diverse populations have grown faster than any other country in European Union. In Helsinki the non-Finnish population is around 10%. In some other schools the population is around 40%. Some municipalities have introduced limits to the percentage that can attend any one school so that there is not segregation. Others are doubtful of such a policy. Some predict that there would be a disparity in learning because of this but because of Finnish policies and procedures of ensuring education for all and extra assistance when necessary, this fear has not materialized.

The poverty rate of children in Finland is 3.4%--the lowest of any European country other than Denmark 2,9%. Partly because of Finland's social policies and support systems. Finland continues to be successful with all populations.

Chapter 3: The Finnish Advantage—The Teachers

All of the factors that have contributed to the Finnish evolution, e.g. 9 years of required basic schooling, modern learning, more autonomy for teachers, reliance on autonomy. But the biggest role is that of teachers and the changes in teacher education. Finnish experience shows that it is not enough to improve teacher education. What is most important is to ensure that teachers' work in schools is based on professional dignity and social respect so that they can fulfill their intention of selecting teaching as lifetime careers.

Culture of Teaching:

- Education has always been an integral part of Finnish culture and society. Finns realize that being literate and having a broad general knowledge is very important in fulfilling their lifetime goals.
- As early as the 17th century Finns had to be literate in order to marry in the church which really pushed students in the right direction.
- In the early 20th century because of their high social standing, teachers were and are perceived of with great respect even with lawyers, doctors.
- Until 1960s educational attainment was low—students often stopped after 9th grade. Few graduated from university. Elementary teachers were prepared in 2-3 year degree programs.
- Differences in teachers compared to US, Canada or UK
 - Finnish education diff than US, UK, and Canada. In Finland the teachers have more autonomy and the system does not rely on external standardized testing to inform the public.
 - All education in Finland is publicly financed and there are no fee-charging schools or universities. P. 71
 - Other differences:
 - Kindergarten teachers—work in kindergarten and also licensed in teaching pre-school
 - Primary school teachers teach in grades 1-6 in 9 year comprehensive schools. Normally assigned to one grade and teach several subjects
 - Subject teachers teach particular subjects in upper grades of basic school (typically grades 7-9) and in general upper-secondary school, including vocational schools. Subject teachers may teach one to three subjects e.g. mathematics, physics, and chemistry
 - Special ed teachers work with individuals and students groups with special needs in primary schools and upper grades of comprehensive schools
 - Vocational education teachers—teach in upper-secondary vocational schools. They must possess at least 3 years of classroom experience in their own teaching field before they can be admitted to a vocational teacher ed program.
 - Teachers in adult education are required to have similar pedagogical knowledge and skills.

- Teaching is a profession closely tied to sustaining Finnish nat'l culture and building an open and multicultural society. One purpose of formal school is transferring the cultural heritage, values and aspirations from one generation to another[We aren't as overt about this as a purpose.] p. 72
- Teachers are essential players in building the Finnish welfare society. Literacy is backbone of Finnish culture and has become an integral part of cultural DNA of all Finns
- Teaching rated as one of most admired professions. Regarded as an independent high profession particularly popular among young women. More that 80% of those accepted for primary teacher ed programs are female.

Becoming a teacher

- Every spring thousands of Finnish general upper-secondary school graduates apply to teacher ed in 8 Finnish universities. Only about 1 out of 10 will be accepted.
- Primary school teachers accepted in 2 phases: 1—based on matriculation exam scores, out-of-school accomplishments and nat'l entrance exam. Then they are interviewed to answer why they decided to become a teacher
- 2 trends apparent: Teaching in primary schools has become increasingly attractive, two: perhaps only nation that can select primary school teachers from top quintile of high school graduates.

Academic Teacher Education

- By 1970s all teacher education programs became part of academic higher ed and therefore can only be offered at the 8 universities. Plus, all programs must include effective research so that teachers continually improve their practice by staying current in research findings.
- For permanent teacher positions, the teacher must have at least a master's degree may take 5-7 years to earn
- More than 95% of teachers are in the union.
- In primary schoolteacher education programs main curriculum is pedagogy. P. 78 if you are a content area teacher, you must have content skills, and pedagogical schools. Programs include theory of education, pedagogical content knowledge, subject didactics and practice.
- Finnish research-based teacher ed programs culminate in a master's thesis

- Currently Finnish universities offer 2 tier program—3 year's bachelor program and 2 year master's including thesis which is minimum requirement for teaching. Aligned to European Credit and Accumulation System
- Subject area licenses and prep programs—2 ways to do this. Master's degree with academic program in one content area, like Finnish language Or they can apply to have a major in their subject area—2 years of training in subject then must study pedagogy 90 ECTS credits are required for a major. 60 ECTS units are required to teach in the 2nd area. Teacher ed for music, arts, and phy ed are taught in separate dept or institutes. Different from US—subject area grants the diploma not teacher ed

Teachers are Researchers

- Cooperative learning, problem based, reflective practice, and computer-based instructions are part of all university training.
- Research-based classes and expectations—they must conduct a research-based project and be aware of what role research plays in best-practice instruction.

What makes teaching a top job? 3 reasons

- Teachers' workplace allows them to fulfill moral missions—Have the same autonomy as a doctor. They are provided time to plan, teach, assess. They spend relatively less time teaching than their peers in many other countries. In Finland the school is regarded as a professional learning community.
- In interviews practically no one cites salary as a reason for leaving teaching. Losing the autonomy is one reason to quit. Finnish teachers skeptical of standardized testing
- 2nd—Even primary teachers have master's degree. Question is it necessary to teach at primary level? Yet Finland accomplishes so much in the early years.
- 3rd US teachers paid on years of experience and degrees, not on level that is being taught. American teachers can increase earnings from beginning of career to mid-point (25 years) by 21 to 26%. In Finland their salary increases by 1/3 especially depending on level they teach.
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Professional Development

- Induction for new teachers relatively low. Each school and municipality must arrange the induction
- All teachers have 3 professional development days in a year. Any more would be decided by the municipality. There is controversy because prof. dev. varies depending on what a municipality can prioritize and pay for.
- 2/3 of teachers took part in prof. dev. in 2007 which means that more 20,000 teachers did NOT take part. The state believes in the need for all teachers to have prof. dev. so they mandate certain topics in those 3 days.
- Teachers with their master's may start on their doctorate at state expense.

Time for Pedagogical Reflection

Curriculum planning is responsibility of teachers, schools, and municipalities. Teachers and principals have key roles in curriculum development and school planning. There are no strict national standards for or descriptions of as is true in US, Great Britain, or Canada. That's why curriculum varies from school to school. In teacher training program all teachers receive training in curriculum planning, assessment theory,

Professional development is provided in systemic school improvement and theoretical underpinnings of ethical, effective teaching. P. 89

4 primary reasons why Finland does not use standardized national tests

1. Policy in Finland gives high priority to personalized learning and creative teaching. Progress is gauged based on their respective characteristics and abilities
2. There is a belief that curriculum, teaching, and learning are priorities, not teaching to tests.

3. How a student thinks and learns is responsibility of schools, not result of standardized test scores. Teachers don't like nationalized testing because it narrows curriculum.
4. Finnish assessments based on diversified evidence, not just nationalized tests

Students take one standardized test—matriculation exit exam before going on to higher ed

Teachers have many duties outside of classroom -2 hours weekly of planning with colleagues.

Every school serves a warm, three course lunch that ranges from 20 to 75 minutes long.

Teachers in Finland spend less time teaching than most countries. But they are expected to work outside the classroom on continuous improvement, looking at student work, planning with peers

There are no formal teacher evaluation measures in Finland. Results of matriculation test and schools are ranked according to scores, but it is not big news. Parents and communities hardly pay attention.

Question of ineffective teachers is not relevant in Finland because teachers have to work together and reflect on teacher's own teaching and shared accountability among the teachers. Assumption is that they are all trained and act professionally,

Leaders are teachers

- Principals have to be qualified to teach in the school they serve.
Have to be instructional leaders

Good teachers, great schools --Differences

- Most able and talented individuals go into teaching. Master's degree required since 1970s. Teaching seen as career with a lot of autonomy and respect.
- Close collaboration between subject faculties and schools of education
- Teacher education is research oriented. All teachers have completed research-based master's theses. May have contributed to some radical education policies throughout the nation

Chapter 4; The Finnish Way: Competitive Welfare State

Finland has competitive nat'l economy, low levels of corruption, good quality of life, a strong sustainable-development lifestyle, and gender equity. These qualities make Finland one of the most prosperous nations in the world.

Power of Globalization

- Inter-nationalization has happened in Finland in last 2 decades. Although some Finnish people think globalization is causing a diminishing role for nation-states and loss of sovereignty. Others argue that standardization in economies, policies, and cultures has become new norm.
- Globalization has accelerated international collaboration and the exchange of ideas
- Globalization is cultural paradox—it unites and diversifies. Leads to comparisons among countries
- Countries such as Finland, Korea, and Japan who are high-performing have been ignored in educational research yet research is anchored in US, Australia, England, and Canada [white, western countries note mine]
- Many countries are loosening their grip on high stakes testing because they realize that it isn't working. Instead of focusing on test results, authorities around the world are considering more dynamic forms of curriculum, introducing smarter forms of accountability, and enhancing leadership in schools and communities.
- There is no reliable, recent comparative analysis about how education reforms in different countries have been designed and implemented. P. 98
- In the US we have billionaires (like Bill Gates) infusing money into schools with their own ideas and no accountability. In Finland there are only a small number of private foundations providing funds to public ed.
- Globalization has demanded that the focus switch from emphasis on teacher behavior to focusing on increased student learning.
- Since 1980s there are 5 globally common features of ed policies and reforms:
 1. Standardization—a belief that if one sets high uniform standards and merit pay, etc. that education will improve [not true]
 2. Increased focus on core subjects. Emphasis on literacy and numeracy .

3. Prescribed curriculum [Common Core Standards, NCLB,] This minimizes experimentation and alternative pedagogical approaches and limits risk taking
4. Transfer models from business world to schools. This paralyzes teachers' and schools' attempts to learn from past and each other.
5. Adoption of high-stakes accountability—passing tests closely tied to processes of accrediting, promoting, inspecting. RTT and example

Finland has not adopted any of these global reforms.

- This business model has gained popularity around the world because it emphasizes some fundamental orientations to learning and educational administration. It suggests strong guidelines to improve quality, equity, and effectiveness. Strengthens market-like logic and procedures and assumes by using external performance standards and describing what teachers should do and learn, this will lead to better learning for all.
- Global model also built on competition, as though that will inspire schools to improve
- However, in Finland teachers are encouraged to experiment, to take risks based on a culture of trust and respect.
- Finnish education follows the thoughts as described in *The Fourth Way* by Hargreaves.

Knowledge-Based Economy

- Finland recognized that mobile communication technologies will eventually foster the transformation to a knowledge economy and was the best way to out of economic difficulties
- They increased investment in innovation which resulted in a clearer focus. On math, science and technology contributed markedly by Nokia as a world leader in mobile communication and Stora Enso in paper manufacturing. Several Finnish universities were closely connected to research and development in these firms.
- Governmental innovation agencies actively facilitated innovation as a third element to the Finnish knowledge and innovation triangle. Education was seen as necessary and a potential investment—not just expenditure—in helping develop innovation and adopting more innovation throughout the economy.

- Highly educated people are certainly "irreplaceable for the implementation of new technologies from home and abroad" (Asplund & Maliranta, 2007, p. 282 in Finnish lessons.
- Businesses also promoted innovative school-industry partnerships, Business really pushed creativity and being open to new ideas in order to move Finland forward in their economy.
- Becoming part of the European Union also pushed them to keep up with the countries on the continent.
- History and personal mindset of Finns suggest that they are at their best when faced with these kinds of global challenges

How can Finnish success be understood from economic and political perspective:

1. Success based on institutions and structures established in the 1970s and 1980s, not just from 1990 on [It takes time to make change. Note mine]
2. Changes in primary and secondary ed after 1990 have been more about interests, ideas, and innovations than about new institutional structures. Institutional changes have been smaller, except in higher ed where a new polytechnic system was introduced.
3. Emphasis on nat'l competitiveness has not been converted to clear targets or operations in 1990s and 2000s like in other market-based countries. At same time, equity principles promulgated in the early 1970s have gradually lost influence in these policies. P. 109

Their success is a demonstration that context makes a difference. It demonstrates that individual well-being, equitable distribution of income, and social capital can explain student learning in international comparisons.

Welfare, equality and competitiveness.

Even in post-industrial age Finland has maintained its cultural values of law-abiding, trust in authority, and commitment to one's social group and a patriotic spirit

- Finland has disproved that poverty determines academic achievement because they provide so many social services. Income inequality is related to many social services and in more equal societies pupils seem to learn better in science. In more equitable countries the citizens are more literate, fewer drop out from high school, there is less obesity, better mental health and fewer teenage pregnancies than in societies that have a greater economic disparity.
- In Finland there are free school lunches, comprehensive welfare services, and early support to those who need it for preschool children.

- The gains in education in Finland are part of a broader context of economic and social development and renewal. As the education system grew, so did the economic growth and transformation.
- One of the reasons Finland has had an exceptionally rapid economic recovery is that Finland has continuous high levels of investment in research and development. They believe in knowledge generation and innovation.
- Education is only part of the wider context of health, environment, rule of law, etc.
- Strategic framework development and change have been built upon longer-term vision. P. 114 They have increased flexibility, coherence between various sectors, and development of local and regional responsiveness and creativity in institutions.
- Also there is low corruption and good governance
- Highly educated labor force and broad participation in education at all levels guarantees the stock of human capital that is necessary for both good education service delivery and economic growth.

Two Finnish Icons: Nokia and Peruskoulu

- Nokia—40% of mobile phones sold in 2010.
- Peruskoulu—required 9 year comprehensive school model. Both Nokia and education system believe that people must be the key. Hire the most innovative as well as the most collaborative people and give them the freedom to work together and take risks. P. 118
- Education's ideas have been imported from other countries, US, Great Britain, Canada, Germany and depends on open-source platform to build on collaboration and sharing of information. Yet those countries have not adopted them as Finland has.

Finnish Dream Challenged

Political conservatives criticized peruskoulu because they said it narrowed the curriculum. However, when the PISA results came out in 2001, the criticism stopped. P. 123

Chapter 5: Is the Future Finnish?

Finland has gone the opposite of what most other countries have done as described before. System-wide excellence in education is possible by doing things differently than others. P. 124

- Merit pay, tightening test-based accountability, standardization of teaching and learning is not the best way to improve learning in our schools and there is no evident that it would improve the quality or enhance equity of education systems.
- The word *accountability* cannot be found in Finnish educational policy discourse. Instead have relied on developing professional responsibility by educators. There is no inspection of teachers.
- Finland is land of nongovernmental organizations. Young Finns are actively involved in sports and youth association. It is commonly accepted in Finland that these associations give a positive added-value to formal education offered by schools.

Successful educational reform

- Policies have been grounded in equity and equitable distribution of resources rather than on competition and choice.

5 reasons:

1. Peuskoulu offers equal educational opportunities or all—Finnish students start school in August of the year they turn 7. Schools are typically small. Class size 15-30. Schools are small—
2. Teaching is an inspiring profession that attracts many young Finns—It' a high status position
3. Finland has smart policy for accountability—Hasn't followed global marketing accountability thinking. Instead, trust and belief is place in hands of teachers.
4. People trust schools—Have maintained the culture in spite of post WWII socialism. Still have a cultural value of honesty and trust.
5. Finnish education system has sustainable leadership and political stability. Reform hasn't come top-down. It's come from needs of individuals.

Transfer of change Knowledge

The reforms in Finland may not work in other countries. Finland still has relatively small schools and good leadership, also have reliance on social value of literacy and education, hard work, and trust in public institutions.

Many teachers in Finland are skeptical of international measurements and benchmarking tools.

There is not a best-performing educational system that rely heavily on choice, competition, and privatization.

Finland was willing to pay for the master's training for teachers. Not everyone is. Future of Finnish education.:

Finland has built competitive knowledge economy and have sustained beliefs in social justice. This is not true in many countries.

Some trends that are causing concern:

- National education has tightened grip of control over schools even with new national curriculum
- In some schools special ed and counseling have been reduced
- Finland weakening in its most competitive economy. They are dealing with increasing inequities, diversities,

Whatever reform comes—must honor country's core values and proven excellence of best practice. P. 139

to keep improving Finland must consider:

1. Development of personal road map of learning—Each student must be literate and have alternative ways to learn these things, if necessary.
2. Less classroom-based teaching—Reorganize and rethink what it is that students need to learn.
3. Development of interpersonal skills and problem solving—Provide basic knowledge yet use skills for social interaction.
4. Engagement and creativity as pointers of successes. -conventional knowledge will gradually give space to other forms of assessment in schools. P. 142.

Need continuous improvement and thinking about school guided by wise and sustained leadership.