The education system and lifelong learning in Finland

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Ministry of Education and Culture
Ministère de l’Éducation et de la culture
FINLAND

- Population: year 2012: 5,421,827 density: 16/km²
- Area: total 338,424 km² water 10 %
- GDP (nominal) 2011 estimate: total $254 billion per capita $47.262
• **The Ministry of Education and Culture** is responsible for developing education, science, cultural, sport and youth policies, and international cooperation in these fields. The Ministry *prepares legislation and strategic policy lines* for the Government and Parliament and contributes to the preparation of statutes and resolutions concerning its sector in the European Union. The Ministry *steers and develops activities in its sector, allocates funds* to state agencies and institutions and grants statutory and discretionary state aid to local authorities and private organisations.

• **The Finnish National Board of Education** is the national development agency subordinate to the Ministry, responsible for primary and secondary education as well as for adult education and training. The activities of FNBE include *implementing national education policies, preparing the national core curricula and requirements for qualifications, developing education and teaching staff* as well as providing services for the education sector and administrative services.
The prerequisite of lifelong learning is that the individual has the knowledge, skills and financial possibilities required for learning through the whole course of life, and that the educational system offers suitable ways to develop their competences for all groups of learners. In order for the principle of lifelong learning to become reality the educational system has to take into account learners in different phases of their lives. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010).

Government proposal 7/2009 for the Universities act 558/2009: Promoting lifelong learning is not an additional task, but a principle according to which planning and arranging of studies and teaching should be made. The universities shall, in their teaching arrangements and contents of qualifications, take into account students with different kinds of backgrounds and life situations, and their needs. Promoting lifelong learning means an operational culture of teaching and guidance, covering university teaching in all of its forms.
Evaluation of education is primarily a development tool at all levels. In Finland there are no school inspections, achievement tests for everyone of the same age, no ranking lists of schools, and no system of quality assessment to check up on people. This is possible because of a strong culture of trust.

**Evaluation of Education**
- Education and training providers have a statutory duty to evaluate their own activities and participate in external evaluations.
- Evaluation is used to collect data in support of education policy decisions and as a background for information- and performance-based steering.
- Education is evaluated locally, regionally and nationally.
- Finland also takes part in international reviews.

**The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre**
An independent government agency responsible for the national evaluation of education. The aim of FINEEC is to implement evaluations related to education, education providers and higher education institutions. In addition, FINEEC implements assessment of learning outcomes for basic and upper secondary educations. Moreover, FINEEC’s duties include supporting education providers and HEIs in issues related to evaluation and quality assurance, as well as to develop education evaluation.
Adult education within the official education system in Finland

GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION
- possibility to study individual subjects or to aim for the matriculation examination

VOCATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION
- vocational institutions and vocational adult training centres, national and private vocational institutions, also as apprenticeship training
- Competence Based Qualifications
- financed mostly by the state, reasonable fees for students

ADULT EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (”In carrying out their mission, the universities/polytechnics must promote lifelong learning”)
- open university and polytechnic education, max fee 15 € / credit
- professional specialisation studies, minimum 30 credits, max fee 120 € / credit
- further and continuing education courses
LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION
- offers courses in subjects relating to citizenship skills and society and in different crafts and subjects on a recreational basis
- adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities, study centres, sports institutes
- financed by the state, the maintaining organisations (municipalities, foundations, associations …) and students

LABOUR MARKET TRAINING
- primarily intended for adults who are unemployed or at risk of losing their jobs, financed by the labour administration
- provided at the same institutions as other adult education and training
- independent study supported by unemployment benefit also possible on some conditions

Adult education also includes staff-development and other training provided or purchased by employers.
Financial support for students

• Study grant and study loan

• The adult education allowance
  - the employee, whose full-time employment with the same employer has lasted at least one year, is entitled to no more than a total of two years of study leave during a five-year period of employment with the same employer
  - the applicant must have been employed by a Finnish employer or have worked as a self-employed person in Finland for at least eight years
  - The amount of the allowance is equal to the amount of the earnings-related unemployment allowance

• Independent study supported by unemployment benefit
  - for registered jobseekers 25 years or over
  - the TE Office's assessment indicates that education or training is needed, and the studies will improve vocational skills and chances in the job market.
Lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25 to 64 who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey, 2012. Source: Eurostat
**Adult Education Survey (AES): participation during the last 12 months, persons aged 25-64**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Union (28 countries)</td>
<td>40.3(e)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euro area (17 countries)</td>
<td>44.8(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>37.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>26.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>58.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>49.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>24.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>37.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>50.5(b)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>35.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
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<td>Malta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td><strong>Finland</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>16.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>:</td>
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Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC

Percentage of adults scoring at each proficiency level in literacy

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of adults at levels 3, 4 and 5.
COMPETENCE BASED QUALIFICATIONS

• Independence of the qualifications from the manner in which the vocational skills were acquired

• 374 vocational qualifications on three levels
  - 52 vocational qualifications
  - 188 further vocational qualifications
  - 132 specialist vocational qualifications

• 147 Qualification Committees (2014); Tripartite composition (employers, employees and teachers), 1050 members, secretaries and specialists

• 120 000 students and 34 000 qualification certificates annually
PREPARATORY TRAINING FOR COMPETENCE BASED QUALIFICATIONS

• The education provider decides on the contents and provision of preparatory training for a competence-based qualification, in accordance with the Qualification Requirements.

• Those participating in preparatory training for a competence-based qualification must be provided with the opportunity to complete a competence test as part of the training.

• **Personalisation:** The education provider shall attend to personalisation in applying for a competence-based qualification and the related preparatory training, completing the qualification and acquisition of the required vocational skills.
TRIPARTITE COOPERATION: close cooperation between employers, employees and teachers in

- deciding on the qualification structure
- preparing the Qualification Requirements,
- National Education and Training Committees
- Qualification Committees
- planning, arranging and assessing competence-based qualifications
- preparatory training (on-the-job learning)
The Young Adult’s Skills Programme

• Part of National Youth Guarantee Initiative
• The skills programme is for young people aged 20–29 who lack a post-basic education qualification. Through the skills programme, they have an extra opportunity to complete a vocational qualification or a part of it. It is possible to complete an initial, vocational or specialist vocational qualification. Training can be provided at an educational institute or in the form of apprenticeship training.
• Guidance and counselling that supports young adults to apply for education and complete their education is an important part of the programme.
• The programme is implemented during years 2013 – 2016; the total budget is 183 million €
• The goal is, that annually 4 000 young adults could start in the programme with the extra funding, (16 000 during the whole programme) also some other measures
Young Adult´s skills programme and EU Agenda for Adult Learning

- The special NAO- ("Nuorten aikuisten osaamisohjelma” / "Young adult´s skills programme") courses are offered by about 60 different VET providers nationwide.
- Project aims to support the VET providers implementing the skills programme and to develop adult education practices from reach out to teaching and learning in general. **We have been able to establish a network of VET providers and their local networks implementing the young adult´s skills program and to develop and share practices that support their efforts.**
- The project has build a system (based on statistical data and continuing national workshops) that gathers information, shares experiences, problems, ideas and innovations between local and national level, stakeholders and VET providers; the main idea from the very first national workshop has been **"what can we learn from this skills programme?"**
- Internet-portal [www.oph.fi/nao](http://www.oph.fi/nao) has also been created to support the VET providers.
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

- Statistical data about the target group

Working seminars, www.oph.fi/nao, discussions ...

Analysis, summaries

Feedback, review

STAKEHOLDERS
- support, ideas, dissemination ...

Questions, suggestions ...

New ideas, encouragement ...

VET PROVIDERS

DATA
- quantitative; students by background, drop-out ...
- qualitative; about reach out, guidance and counselling, teaching and learning methods...

Contributes to reaching the targets

YOUNG ADULT’S SKILLS PROGRAMME

BENEFITS FOR OTHER AND FUTURE ADULT LEARNING

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Open University and polytechnic education

- Is arranged in cooperation with university/polytechnic departments
- Open to all regardless of age, educational background etc., students have different motives and orientations: professional, recreational, route to degree studies …
- The objectives and requirements correspond to those of regular degree studies, but not possible to complete a degree
- In 2013, 74 800 students in open university education, 10 100 in open polytechnic education

Polytechnic Master’s degree

- The requirement for Master's studies in polytechnics is a Bachelors' level polytechnic degree and at least three years of work experience
- Polytechnics may offer degrees determined in their authorisation
- 60 - 90 study points, 1 – 1.5 years
- Is equivalent to a university Master's degree in the labour market
- In 2013, 8 600 students, 1 900 degrees
New professional specialisation studies in universities and polytechnics

- From the beginning of 2015, new type of education alongside degree studies and continuing education, regulated by universities act and polytechnic act
- The reform aims at providing flexible opportunities for adults to upgrade their competencies and expertise at the higher education level, also to reduce multiple degree studies
- For those with HE qualification and some work experience
- To be based on the needs of working life and the R&D competence of universities and polytechnics
- Decisions on professional specialisation studies are made by universities and polytechnics, in concordance with their educational responsibilities – majority decision
- In decision making cooperation with the representatives of working life is required
… professional specialisation studies

• The decision has to include a title for the studies, the extent of study credits, the aims of the studies, target group and a description of how the required expertise is demonstrated
• Minimum 30 study credits
• The Finnish National Board of Education maintains a list of the specialisation studies
• Maximum tuition fee 120 euros/study credit
• From the year 2017 on to be included in the funding models of universities polytechnics, till that funded with government grants; estimation is 1000-2000 students/year during the first years
Knowledge and education, government-term objectives:
— Learning environments have been modernised and the opportunities offered by digitalisation and new pedagogical approaches are grasped in learning.
— The number of young people who have dropped out of education or working life has fallen. The drop-out rate in education has declined.
— Dialogue between educational institutions and working life is more active.
— The quality and effectiveness of research and innovation have begun to improve.
— Education and research have become more international and obstacles to education exports have been removed.

Reform of vocational upper secondary education
The status of vocational education in society will be improved. The funding system and structure of upper secondary education will be revamped by keeping the various educational paths open. A regionally comprehensive education network will be preserved and interaction will be enhanced between educational institutions and working life.