

FOR THE READER

The purpose of this publication is to present the main phases of Finland's Education System reform since early 1970's until today. Finland has become known as a small Nordic country with one of the world's best education systems. Awareness is based in particular on the high-level PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) -results. The large and far-reaching reform in education has begun in Finland already in the 1970's including reforms of all levels of education. The main stages of reforms are:

1. The implementation of the comprehensive school system in the 1970's
2. Reform of secondary level education in the 1980s
3. Reform of higher education since 1991
4. Reform of children day-care and kindergarten system to pre-school system in 2013 and transfer it under the auspices of Ministry of Education and Culture
5. Reforms in General upper secondary education up to 2020's
6. Reform of Second level vocational education in 2018
7. Extension of the compulsory education
8. Continuing education.

Common features are highlighting equality and accessibility of education, high level teacher education and all education paths without leading to higher education. The government's purpose is that Finland has the highest success in PISA. The competence assessment in PISA 2015 was designed to elicit students' capacities to critically examine global issues. The higher education system is seen as an essential element of Finland's national and regional innovation

systems, and there is a link between higher education and economic policies. The higher education reform has been one part to carry out Finland's purpose to be the most competitive country in the whole world in 2020. During last years in national level essential guidelines for the future of Finnish education have been decided. The most important of them are: Ministry of Education and Culture has confirmed in 2017 the new Vision 2030 for higher education, Government Program of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government 10.12.2019 and Governments Educational Policy Report to Parliament 8.4.2021. These documents show the path towards excellence in Finnish education system.

We hope that this book will spark the reader's interest in education, especially in Finnish education system. In addition to a deeper understanding of Finnish education, the book also provides the foreign reader and foreign education organization with tools for development and utilizing the elements of education reforms. In many international business and other collaboration relations the excellence of Finnish education is often mentioned. We hope that this book can serve as a business card of Finnish education.

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1.

Introduction

During the last few decades, the level of education among the Finnish population has increased rapidly. In the European Union's growth strategy (EU 2020, www.ec.europa.eu), Finland commits itself to developing key sectors of its society and economy in order to strengthen Finnish and European competitiveness, improve welfare and safeguard a sustainable public economy. Education and science policy play a key role in the strategy. In its draft national program Finland commits itself to raising young people's level of education and reducing the proportion of early school-leavers. All parts of reforms have been very successful. The higher education reform, which included the expansion of technology and engineering education, had the very big impact on Finland's economic success since 1980's.

After the first step of the reform, implementation of the comprehensive school system in the 1970's, Finland's education system is described in the following Figure number 1. The phases of the reform process are presented in the following sections.

According to Jaakko Numminen, who was the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education 1966 - 1994, the 60's and the 70's can be defined as the period of a social breakthrough of education. Then was planned and implemented the comprehensive school for the whole age class, vocational education was substantially expanded, the universities were widened over the whole country and the financial support for students began. He calls the period as the birth of Civilization-Finland. Really the foundations for that have been

created even in the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. E.g. compulsory general education began in 1921. (Numminen 2020, 5.)