



# Teacher's Professional Role in the Finnish Education System

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# This presentation

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- Background of Finnish education system
- Main ideologies behind the educational policy
- Main ideas behind the new National Core Curriculum (implemented in August 2016)
- Finnish teachers' professional role
- Finnish education in international perspective



# Michael Moore: Finnish School

**A clip of a documentary film Where to Invade Next**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVCTqgrFIPs>**



## 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





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## Underlying educational understanding is based on equity

Everyone has the right to basic education free of charge. The public authorities shall guarantee for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship.

(Constitution of Finland)





## Education developed in partnership

National  
authorities

Local  
authorities

Teachers'  
union

Social  
partners

Parents

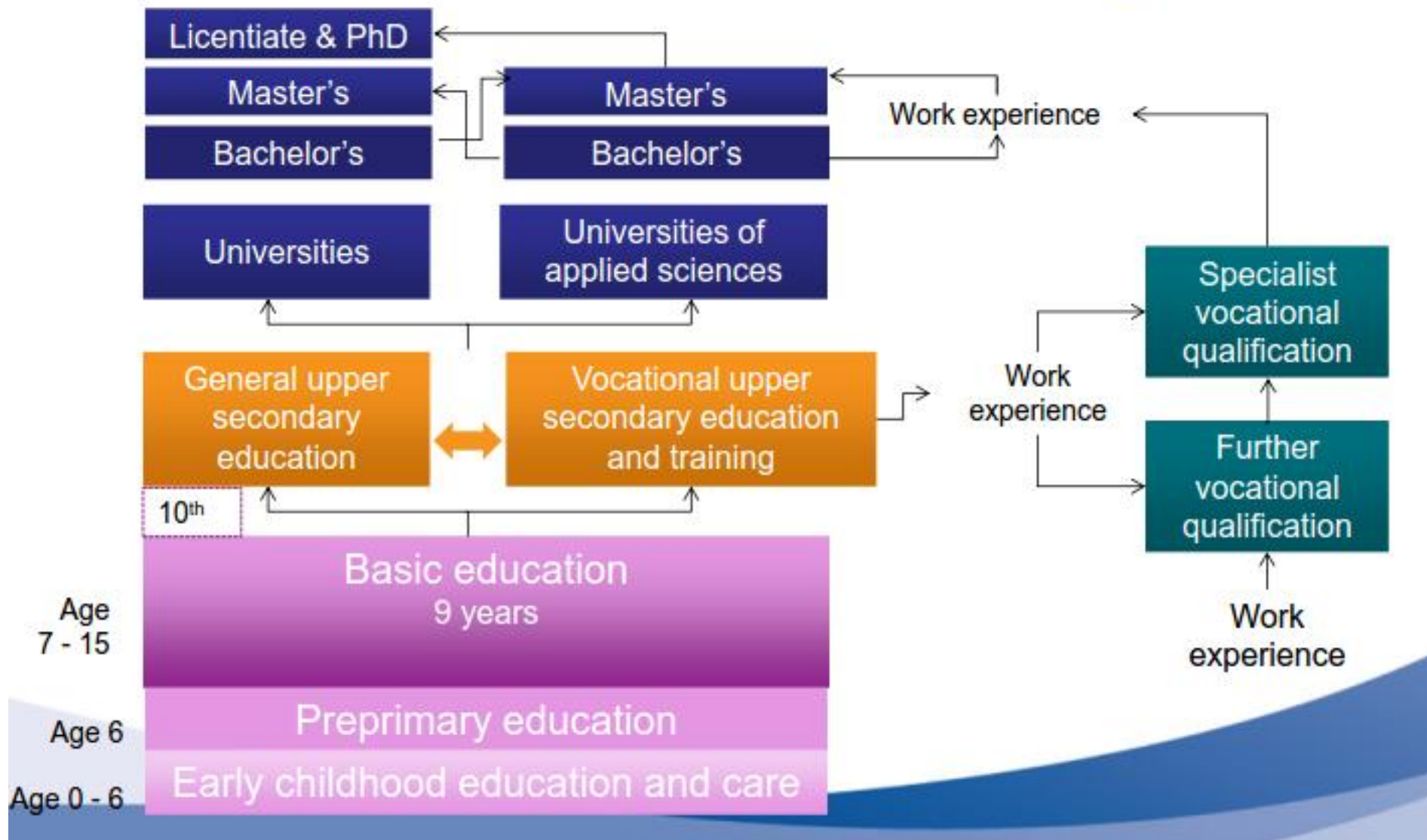
Pupils and  
students

Research  
institutions

Relevant  
stakeholders



## No dead-ends in the education system





# Specificities of the Finnish education system

Teachers highly trained

Teaching attractive profession

Annual instruction time low

Focus on learning rather than testing

Focus on support

Non-selective

Flexible grouping

Basic education starts at age 7

Evolution

Public funding

Free education

Central steering

Local decisions

Co-operation

Education a priority

Decentralised

Trust





# Culture of Trust on School Level...

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No school inspections

No superintendents

Hardly any national testing

No ranking systems





# Basic Education is Free

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- Books, pens, paper....
- Meals
- Transportation
- Health care (nurse, doctor)
- Social and psychological services
- Guidance and counselling



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**Focus on  
earliest  
possible  
support**





## Pre-primary education at the age of six

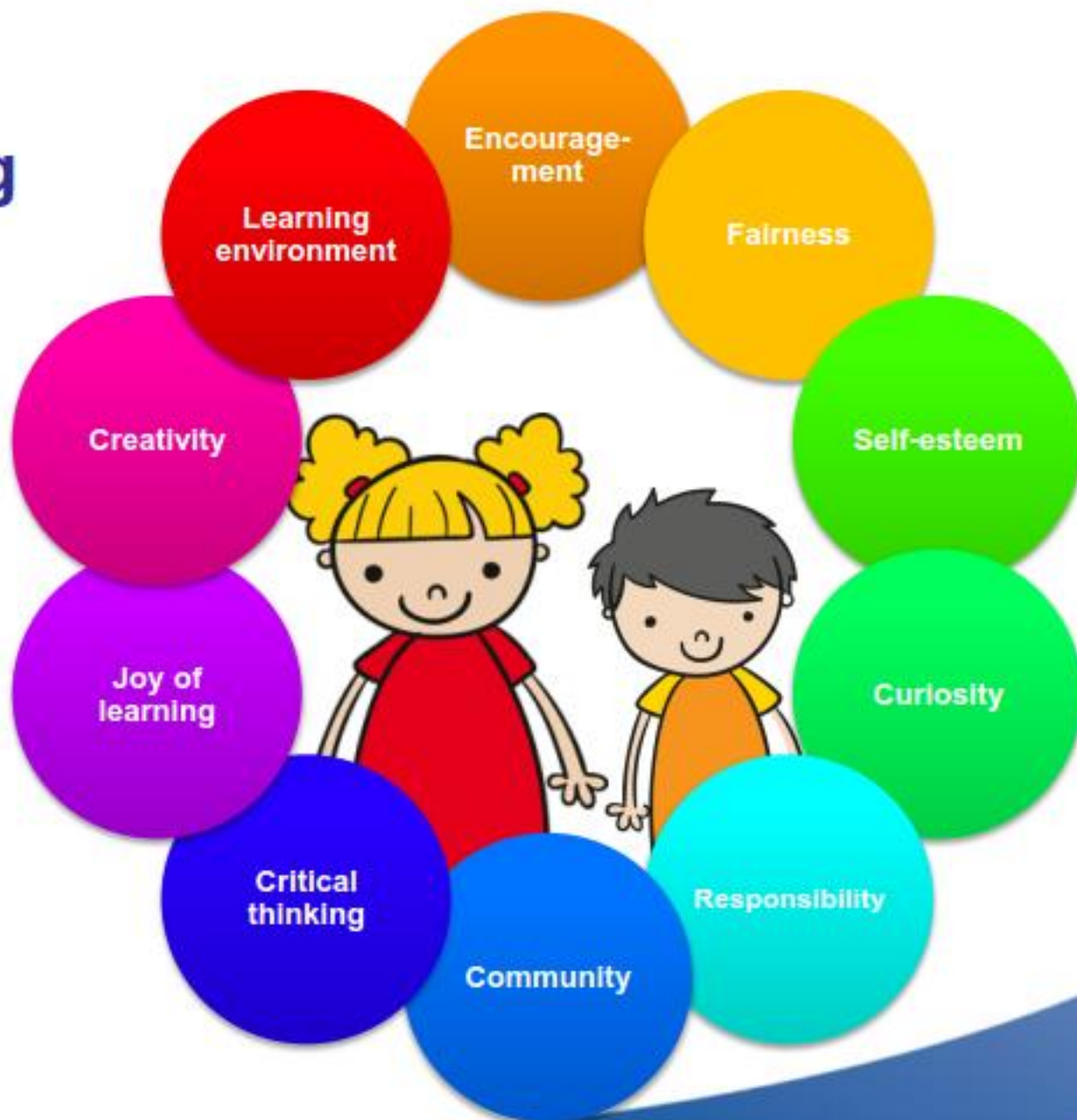
- ◆ free and compulsory
- ◆ provided in day care centres or schools
- ◆ minimum 700 hours per year
  
- ◆ promoting child's prerequisites for growth, development and learning
- ◆ a continuous learning path from ECEC to school
- ◆ integrative education
- ◆ learning through play, joy of learning





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# Maximising potential: every child is unique





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# Rethinking competences

National Goals for  
Basic Education  
and Transversal  
Competences

- ◆ knowledge
- ◆ skills
- ◆ values
- ◆ attitudes
- ◆ will





## National minimum time allocation 2016 -> sample of subjects (annual weekly lessons<sup>1</sup>)

Forms	1–2	3–6	7–9	Total
Mother tongue & literature	14	18	10	42
Mathematics	6	15	11	32
A language (1st foreign language)	–	9	7	16
B language (2nd national language)	–	2	4	6

Forms	1–6	7–9	Total
Environment and science	14	17	31
History & civics	5	7	12
Arts, crafts & sports			62
<sup>1</sup> Total annual no of lessons x 38	Total min		222



# Basic education curriculum reform

## Core ideas

Active learner

Sustainable way  
of living

Integrative  
teaching

School as a learning  
community

Comprehensive  
education





## Conception of learning

### Learner's active role

- Sets targets
- Reflects & analyses
- Solves problems

### Interaction

- Learns with others and in different environments
- Understands consequences

### Learning to learn

- Recognises own way of learning
- Applies this to promote learning

### Self-conception and confidence

- Helps setting targets
- Receives feedback



# Finnish schools and teachers

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntdYxqRce\\_s&t=99s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntdYxqRce_s&t=99s)



# Finnish teachers' professional role



# Finnish Teacher...

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- The profession is highly respected
    - Lots of applicants (especially for class teacher programs)
    - One of the most popular professions still
  - Has to follow the law & the curriculum & local guidelines
  - Has to be qualified
- but
- Has pedagogical autonomy
  - Is not inspected, monitored, etc.



## Student admission (2016), University of Helsinki

Degree programme	Applicants	Participated in Entrance Exam	Places	%
Class teacher education	1770	1075	120	11
Crafts teacher education	193	97	32	33
Home economics teacher education	307	157	33	21
Kindergarten teacher education	1014	595	120	20
Special teacher education	790	467	20	4
Subject teacher education	789	525	444	85



## Finnish teachers are supportive

**Finnish teachers believe in:**

- equity and encouragement**
- individual support**
- strengthening the pupils' thinking skills**
- developing the pupils' self-confidence and tolerance**

Source: From goals to interaction.  
Evaluation of pedagogy in Finnish basic education 2008  
(National Council for Evaluation in Education in Finland)





## Most teachers are required a master's degree

### Kindergarten teachers

180 ECTS  
(3 years)

### Class teachers

300 ECTS  
(5 years)

### Subject teachers

300 ECTS  
(5–6 years)

### Teachers of vocational studies:

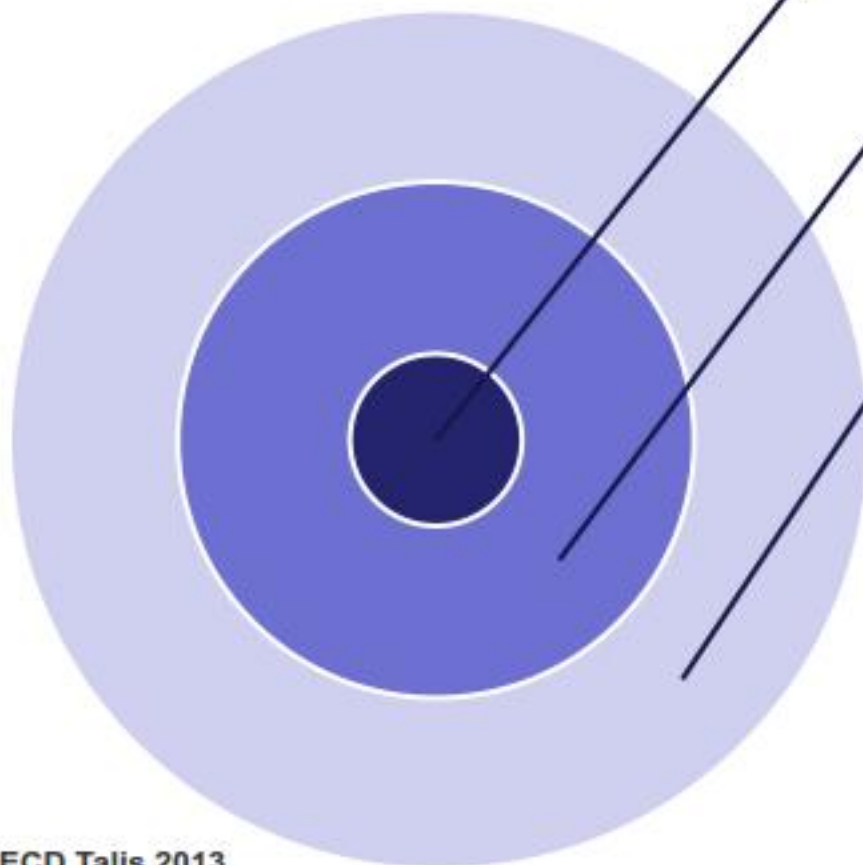
Master's , Bachelor's  
+ work experience+  
pedagogical studies  
of 60 ECTS)

### Principals:

teacher education  
+ e.g. certificate  
in educational  
administration



## Teachers feel valued



90 % satisfied with their job

70 % would choose teaching again

60 % think that their work is valued in society





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## Salary is not the reason to become a teacher Salaries in the municipal sector in 2014



<sup>1</sup> Lower secondary teachers Statistics Finland, Taloussanomat



# Finnish Teachers' Autonomy

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- Pedagogical decisions concerning
  - Methods
  - Weekly and yearly schedule
  - Books, materials, ICT
  - Differentiation & co-teaching
  - Projects
  - Field trips
  - Time used in different subjects (although there are national mandatory guidelines)
  - Home-school cooperation



# However....

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- Lots of paper work especially related to three-stage (special needs) support
- The framework of the school sets some boundaries:
  - PE classes, language classes, other classes taught by a subject teacher, special ed. classes....
  - The school building, how flexible the structure of the building or the rules among the community are
  - Assessment of learning outcomes
- School community:
  - Team work culture? Individual working culture?
  - "This is the way we have always done things...."
- Hidden rules:
  - Appearance
  - Behavior



## However...

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- Integration of special education students has caused lot's of new demands and challenges for teachers
- Increased immigration causes new, increased challenges
- Marginalization in the society has caused polarization, i.e. certain areas are poorer, (uneducated, unemployed, & immigrant background population)
- Tightening resources due to global financial recess has caused sever cut-backs also in the education sector.
- Differences have grown also in national achievement tests
- Differences between cities and the rural ares are growing



# Finnish Education in International Perspective



## Finnish education in international comparison

Instruction  
time low

Differences  
between  
school small

Girls  
outperform  
boys

Moderate  
costs

Socio-  
economic effect  
moderate

Teachers feel  
highly valued

**PISA:  
differences  
between  
schools  
smallest**



- **OECD average 37 %**
- **Finland 6 %**

Variance of performance between schools as a proportion of total performance across OECD countries



## What do the high-performing school systems have in common?

- 1 They get the right people to become teachers.
- 2 They develop these people into effective instructors.
- 3 They put in place systems and targeted support to ensure that every child is able to benefit from excellent instruction.

McKinsey&Company 2007:

How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top, p.13





# Finnish educational system and teaching in it

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORoh03xc534>



**Questions?  
Comments?**

**Thank you!**