Finnish Lessons

What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?

Pasi Sahlberg

Foreword by Andy Hargreaves
Series Foreword by Ann Lieberman

Pasi SAHLBERG
Director General
CIMO/Ministry of Education
Helsinki FINLAND

pasisahlberg.com  Twitter: @pasi_sahlberg  17 January 2012
FINLAND: The Context

5.5 million people

Parliamentary democracy

EU member since 1995

Competitive market economy

Innovation and research

Prosperous Nordic welfare state

Low income inequality
Education indicators

3500 schools, 60,000 teachers

5.9% of national wealth (GDP) goes to education

A primary school student costs USD7100 per annum

99% of all education publicly funded

All teachers must hold a master’s degree

95% teachers and principals unionized
3 Things You Need to Know

Finland has not always been a high performer

Finland has never aimed to be the top performer

Finland is performing well in many other areas as well
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Finland has an education system in which young people learn well and differences among schools are small—and all that with reasonable cost and human effort.
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This has not always been so.
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Teaching is a prestigious profession and many students aspire to be teachers.
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Therefore, the Finns have probably the most competitive teacher-education system in the world.
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As a consequence, teachers in Finland have a great deal of professional autonomy and access to purposeful professional development throughout their careers.
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Those who are lucky enough to become teachers normally are teachers for life.
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Almost half of the 16-year-olds, when they leave comprehensive school, have been in engaged in some sort of special education, personalized help, or individual guidance.
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In Finland teachers teach less and students spend less time studying both in and out of school than their peers in other countries.
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Finnish schools lack the standardized testing, test-preparation, and private tutoring of the United States and much of the world.
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All of these factors that are behind the Finnish success seem to be the opposite of what is taking place in the United States and much of the rest of the world where competition, test-based accountability, standardization, and privatization seem to dominate.
How Finnish Lessons Can Help American Education Reform?
1. Excellence through equality of educational opportunity
Equitable funding of education
School lunch for all
Health care
Individualized support
Children must play...
Variation of students’ reading literacy in PISA 2009

Between school variation

Within school variation

USA

FINLAND
Percentage of variance of student reading performance due to socio-economic status

OECD 2010
2. Smart time management
Less teaching time
More time for collaboration
Less classroom hours
Less homework
More time to play
Less standardized testing
Cost, Time and Learning

K-12 education, OECD 2011
3. Professionalism
Only for the best

Applicants and accepted to primary teacher education in the University of Helsinki in 2011
Teaching is a desired way of life
Conclusion:

“Finnish Lessons reveals ‘wrong’ policies for education reform”

- Testing policy: Standardized testing
- Accountability policy: Individual rewarding
- Teacher policy: De-professionalization
Thank you!

Kills 99.9% of GERMs

pasisahlberg.com

Twitter: pasi_sahlberg