



Erasmus+

METHODS, STRATEGIES, AND TECHNIQUES OF EVALUATING AND SELF-EVALUATING THE KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED BY STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS

GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



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INTRODUCTION

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one of the most popular international large-scale assessments available worldwide. In 2018, an impressive number of eighty countries, administrative entities, and territories have participated in this test, almost double the number of participants that entered the tests in 2000 when the first test was organized (Steiner-Khamsi, 2019, p. 233). This increase shows how attractive PISA tests have become.

The story of the PISA project started at the beginning of the 21st century, when The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) wanted to test how well the students are prepared for the challenges the future brings, if they can apply the knowledge they learn in school and if they have the lifelong learning competencies (OECD 1999, p.7 as cited in Sjøberg, 2016).

In 2018, the partner countries of this project had a wide range of average scores of math, science, and reading:

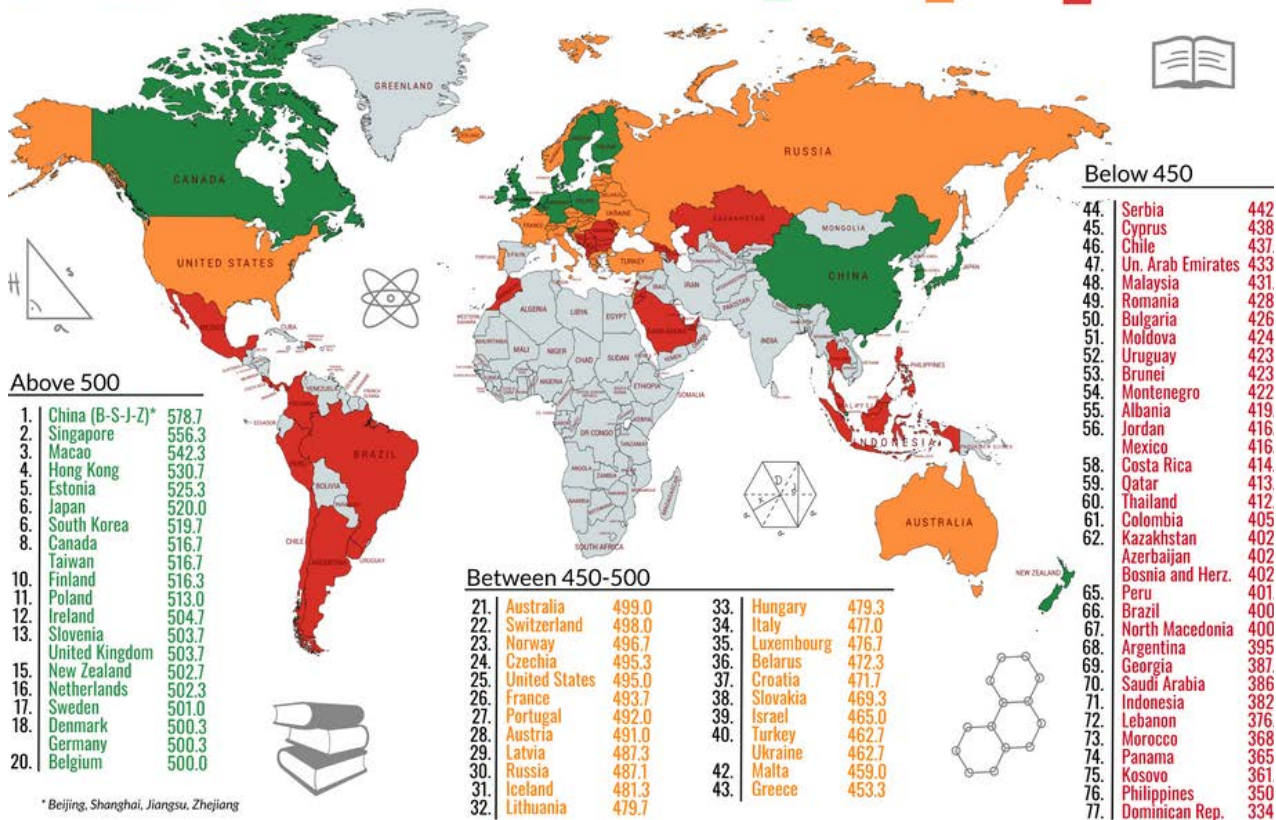
- Finland 516.3 (10th place)
- The Czech Republic 495.3 (24th place)
- Romania 428.0 (49th place)

PISA 2018 worldwide ranking average score of math, science and reading

factsmaps.com

Source: OECD, 2018-2019

above 500 450-500 below 450



Facts Maps,2022



In the wish to improve the students' proficiency in maths, science, and reading, the **Erasmus+ Q-Ed! Equalizing the chances of success in life of pre-university students through a quality digital education** project partners got together and collaborated in order to provide information to the teachers and students in their own countries, that they could use to improve practices and learning outcomes. Therefore, a series of materials was created to support this aim: a set of digital literacy tools for 4th and 6th grade, digital assessment tools for three disciplines for 2nd, 4th and 6th grade, and the present guide for teachers.

The goal of this document is to highlight the main features of the Finnish education and to provide tips and reflection points for teachers that could support their practice. In November 2021, during the training week that took place in Helsinki, the project partners got together and shared their valuable work experience and creative ideas, which were all included in this guide.

While the focus of the guide was the evaluation and self-evaluation methods in basic education,

due to the tight connection of the evaluation to the teaching stage of the pedagogical process and the importance of transversal competences in education provision, we decided to extend the content of the guide and include these aspects as well. In this way, the teachers using this guide can have a holistic learning experience regarding the way evaluation methods can be used in their practice.

Each section of the guide begins with a theoretical part, followed by a **Tips** segment, where teachers can find practical ideas on how to apply the theoretical part and a **Reflection** segment, where teachers are invited to analyze their practice in order to reach their professional vision. A series of links to videos and to different articles are included with the guide, in order to support the learning of best practices.

The references at the end of the document are also a valuable resource, for extending the knowledge of teachers and the aims of our projects.

1. FINNISH EDUCATION-SPECIAL FEATURES

Finland's high performance in the PISA tests is the result of a long-term good quality education provision. As the tests cannot measure the aspects that directly contribute to the results, it is only a matter of interpretation and analysis to understand what are the educational factors that contribute to the success of the Finnish pupils. In this chapter, the focus will be on the features of Finnish education that stand out in comparison to other countries. Teachers' autonomy and long-life learning are some of the aspects that help support a student-centered education and personalized learning provision at the highest standards. The school is a learning organization that works towards a common goal: the well-being of the students.



1.1 TEACHERS' AUTONOMY

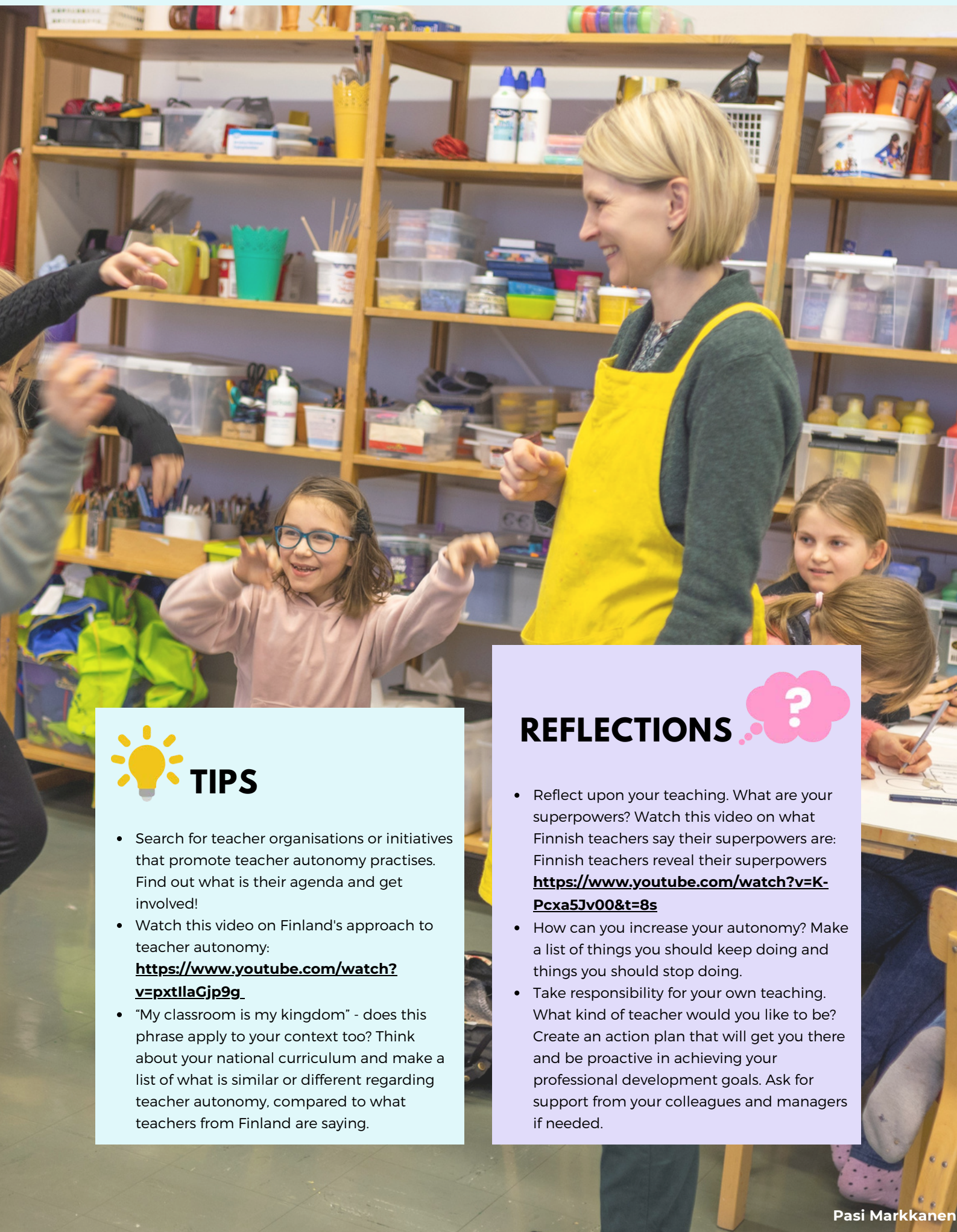
Those who are somewhat familiar with the Finnish educational system know that teacher autonomy is one of its basic characteristics. According to self-determination theorists, autonomy is a fundamental component that enhances intrinsic motivation, personnel commitment, high-quality work, and better mental health. (Ryan & Powelson, 1991).

The autonomy of Finnish teachers is possible due to the high standards of teacher education. In 2005, as part of the Bologna pact, Finland changed the teacher's education provision into a two-layer degree system with 3 years for bachelor's studies followed by 2 years of master's studies. Since then early childhood educators need to have a bachelor's degree in education and all the other teachers will need to reach a master's level (Niemi, 2016). The class teacher studies are very popular among the young generation, but only 10% of applicants can be admitted (Reinikka et. al 2018, p.19).

Teacher education studies are research-based and meant to provide students with knowledge regarding education provision and train them to apply research methods during work life.

But how does this autonomy manifest itself in practice? Teachers have to teach following the objectives laid down by the curriculum, but they can choose the methods, materials and evaluation methods. For example, in March 2020 at the onset of the Covid pandemic in Finland – teachers were given general guidelines on how to organize their teaching but each teacher was able to experiment with their own approach to distance teaching, by focusing on the best methods for the needs of their pupils.

The individual work of teachers in Finland is less supervised and checked than in other countries. However, this **pedagogical autonomy brings along the personal responsibility of the teacher for the results of education.** Every teacher in Finland is responsible for proactively searching for solutions for the challenges they face, through collaboration and professional development. **The teachers are expected to help develop education, engage in cooperation and communication with carers, colleagues, and other stakeholders** (Niemi, 2016).



TIPS

- Search for teacher organisations or initiatives that promote teacher autonomy practises. Find out what is their agenda and get involved!
- Watch this video on Finland's approach to teacher autonomy:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxtllaCjp9g>
- “My classroom is my kingdom” - does this phrase apply to your context too? Think about your national curriculum and make a list of what is similar or different regarding teacher autonomy, compared to what teachers from Finland are saying.

REFLECTIONS



- Reflect upon your teaching. What are your superpowers? Watch this video on what Finnish teachers say their superpowers are: Finnish teachers reveal their superpowers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-Pcxa5Jv00&t=8s>
- How can you increase your autonomy? Make a list of things you should keep doing and things you should stop doing.
- Take responsibility for your own teaching. What kind of teacher would you like to be? Create an action plan that will get you there and be proactive in achieving your professional development goals. Ask for support from your colleagues and managers if needed.

Pasi Markkanen

1.2 LIFELONG LEARNING

In Finland, the teachers' professional development does not culminate with graduation from university. Teacher education continues throughout working life and takes the form of induction training and in-service training.

Induction time is the beginning period of work for newly qualified teachers. This period is essential for professional development and teachers need support to adjust to their new roles (Harju & Niemi, 2018). Finland does not have a national induction system and the induction training is being done locally, in each school, where a series of mentoring activities are being organised. Therefore, there can be a big difference between the services offered in each school.

Continuous professional development of teachers in Finland is no longer an obligation, but a right. The in-service training in Finland consists of three mandatory days per year that can be used in different ways, which is less than other countries are offering. The responsibility for the quality of in-service training, among other development programmes belongs to the municipalities. Finnish teachers get a lot more training than these three days and that is due to the holistic learning offered by different programmes the schools are involved in (Niemi, 2015, p. 284). Different universities are also offering a wide selection of in-service training for teachers as part of several programmes. For example, the University of Helsinki offers a series of online courses, science cafes, and other partners like teachers' organisations.

Finland is moving towards a more holistic and integrated approach regarding the provision of in-service training. This increases the role of teachers in the schools' communities to become developers of learning. They are encouraged to design school-based projects and their professional development concerning school development (Niemi, 2020). And as Harju (2020, p.13) underlines, the expectations of teachers' roles are continuously changing due to unavoidable shifts in society dynamics, technology development, and the appearance of new learning concepts.

Teachers are responsible for their own professional development so, being up to date with the latest research regarding learning and teaching is very important.

„Teachers are responsible for their expertise and they are expected to solve their problems rather than pass them along and this can be achieved with research competences.”

(Sahlberg, 2009, p.25)



TIPS

- Find different training sources (online and contact teaching) and attend them. Tell your colleagues about them. It is more fun to discuss with someone about the content after the course.
- Join a teacher's forum or a social media group to receive fresh ideas about teaching methods.
- Subscribe to educational magazines, blogs, or podcasts. Share them with others too.
- Organise a teachers' club in your school where you can discuss with your peers how you can implement the latest trends in education as a team.

REFLECTIONS



- What is the most recent in-service training you have done for your professional development? How did it help your practice?
- What other training would you benefit from? Make a list and discuss it with the school principal or your team and find a way to attend them.

1.3 STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION

In Finland, the central role of the student in the educational system is highlighted by law and can be seen in all aspects of education. Student-centred education means that everything is done for the benefit of the students, by taking into account their individual skills, needs, and interests. Thus, all decisions related to the organisation of lessons, the setting of the schedule, the learning objectives, the assessment methods, etc. are made in order to contribute to the benefit and development of the students. From a pedagogical point of view, the teacher's role is to:

- **facilitate learning and learning how to learn**
- **create a partnership with the student based on respect, gentleness and support**
- **enable the student to become a co-creator of knowledge by involving the students in pedagogical decisions.**



TIPS

- Create on daily-basis opportunities for collaboration and discussion in the classroom. These are essential for promoting a student-centred pedagogy. For some practical ideas, check out this easy-to-use tool from Finland, with 150+ activating activity ideas for the classroom:
<https://lessonapp.fi/>

REFLECTIONS



- Reflect on how well you know your students. How much do you know about their interests and goals and how can you integrate these into your teaching, to increase motivation and engagement for learning?



Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland

1.4 INDIVIDUALIZATION OF LEARNING

Individualization of learning is a very special feature of Finnish pedagogy. It starts from the principle that each child has their own unique path of development.

How is this achieved in Finnish schools? First of all, teachers give students a lot of time to be active and they create an environment where the student becomes a partner in the teaching-learning process. Secondly, each child, together with the parent and the teacher, sets their own learning and developmental goals, followed by a strategy of methods that will help the child achieve the goals in a set period of time.

Thirdly, the content, the teaching-learning process, and the learning environments are adjusted to meet each individual students' needs. Evaluation is also taken into account when it comes to the individualization of learning. Students are encouraged to develop self-assessment skills from an early age, and their special needs and level of development impact the diverse methods in which their knowledge is assessed.

Finnish education policies promote the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Some students participate in “part-time special education” or temporary education support. If a student struggles in a specific area, they will receive support regardless of developmental disabilities or a lack of diagnosis. All students in Finland receive support on one of the three levels:

- **general support**
- **intensified support (pedagogical assessment and learning plans)**
- **special support (extensive assessment and individual plan)**

The levels of support in Finland and the overall individualization of learning have been shown to improve educational outcomes and reduce inequalities.



- In order to individualise learning, first assess what are the key learning concepts for the unit you are teaching. Assess what students already know and based on this information vary the paths of learnings for the students. You can prepare extra activities for students who have already mastered the key learning concepts. You can also change the pace that students move through the curriculum, by offering each learner an individualised learning path. Start with a unit and take it step by step, day by day!

REFLECTIONS



- Find out more about the “part-time special education system” in Finland by watching the following video: Introduction to special education and support in Finnish schools: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zm3iFOO7liA>
- Reflect on the similarities and differences between the Finnish system and your own educational system?



1.5 SCHOOL AS A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Another feature of the Finnish education system that could be identified as a contributor to students' academic success and well-being is the way the schools operate. While in many other countries, schools are very hierarchical, where top to bottom approach is being implemented, in Finland schools are learning organisations. In a school as a learning organisation, the whole community, including the principal, teachers, administrative staff, carers and pupils are working together towards a common goal which is the pupils' development and well-being. The way a school operates can have a great impact on the way students perform academically.

The reason why schools in Finland operate as a learning organisation is the necessity to adjust to the 21st century challenges that can have an impact on the school. Among these we can mention global warming, globalization, immigration, the internet, changes in social status of people, political changes on a general level, and local realities which are specific to a country, city, or even neighbourhood, on a more narrow level. In order to deal to these phenomena in an efficient way, the school principal or the board cannot work alone. Therefore an emphasis on the whole school community and teamwork is necessary.



Elina Manninen/Agency Keksi



TIPS

Here are a few tips you can do to work towards creating a school as a learning organization.

Shared Vision (In a Finnish school the shared vision is about the central role of the student in the learning process and therefore everyone works towards that)

Building a shared vision for a school requires:

- Including everyone's voices in the process (personnel, carers, pupils)
- Learning and teaching are focused on realizing the vision. It is also a way of making sure everyone works towards the same goal
- Fostering open communication between personnel, parents, and pupils
- Continuously developing it (OECD, 2016, p. 2).

Continuous professional learning (involves all personnel and is supported by the principal)

Supporting the continuous professional learning of the personnel requires:

- Fostering feedback and assessment opportunities for the personnel from the principal (e.g. yearly appraisal meetings, daily feedback)
- Linking training to the upcoming changes in the school culture (implementing a new curriculum, personnel changes, new operational structure).
- Fostering time and resources to make it happen (OECD, 2016, p. 3).

Team Learning and Collaboration

This feature can be supported by:

- Building a team spirit, supported by trust and respect among personnel
- When building a new team, the principal is required to help with establishing collaboration and learning opportunities
- Creating time for personnel in the daily routine to reflect on their practice, on their week or day (OECD, 2016, p. 4).

Space to inquire, explore and innovate

- Creating a space where teachers can inquire, explore and innovate is a prerequisite of 21st-century quality teaching. Implementing this feature may require to:
- Encourage the teachers to express themselves freely to increase productivity
- Encourage the teachers to experiment, explore and take risks
- Support teachers' outside the box type of thinking as they will inspire pupils to do the same
- Support teachers to foster a culture of exploration and innovation in their classrooms
- Encourage teachers to choose interesting working methods that suit the needs and interests of their pupils rather than to do the same as everyone else.
- Promote creativity and innovation in the school (OECD, 2016, p. 5-6)

Exchange of knowledge and learning

This feature requires:

- Establishing a series of processes and structures that can help facilitate it
- Supporting teachers to access the latest research-based information in the field of education
- Providing the ICT tools to communicate and improve their practice
- Fostering dialogues and knowledge exchange opportunities for teachers
- Both leaders and personnel get the chance to learn from positive and negative examples in practice (OECD, 2016, p. 7-8)



Riku Isohella/Velhot Photography Oy

Learning from the external environment and larger system

- The school is part of a macrosystem that includes other institutions, stakeholders, and communities. Being able to use this system and support the learning with the school can be done by:
- Continuously collaborating with other stakeholders (businesses, institutions, non-profit associations, etc.)
- Partnering with higher education institutions and non-governmental organizations in order to promote mutual learning
- Foster an atmosphere where the school community is willing to learn from others and is open to adjusting their practice as a way of coping with upcoming challenges
- Partnering with the carers and working with them on a daily basis as a solution to support the pupils' development and well-being (OECD, 2016, p. 8-9).

The principal - a role model

The school's operations are heavily connected to the role of the principal who acts as a facilitator of learning, as a role model. In order to enhance this feature, the principal would need to:

- lead the school towards a “we” community, where everyone learns from each other and works together to reach common goals.
- Use their power in implementing structures and policies that work towards supporting the shared vision
- Show a proactive attitude in improving practises with the school
- Support the personnel to grow professionally, encourage their spirit of leadership and initiatives (OECD, 2016, p. 10).

REFLECTIONS



- Find out more about the “part-time special education system” in Finland by watching the following video: Introduction to special education and support in Finnish schools: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zm3iFOO7IiA>
- Reflect on the similarities and differences between the Finnish system and your own educational system?



Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland

2. TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES



Pasi Markkanen

Finland's was one of the early adopters of 21st-century skills in education. The latest national core curriculum was adopted in 2014 and has been implemented in Finnish schools since 2016. Ever since, the term used for the 21st-century skills in Finland has been 'transversal competencies', alluding to the fact that they penetrate across the curriculum and are to be taught by each teacher in their respective subject(s). Transversal competence refers to an "entity consisting of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and will" (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, 2016, p. 20). There are seven core categories of competencies for primary education in the new National Curriculum Framework:

- 1 **THINKING AND LEARNING TO LEARN**
- 2 **CULTURAL LITERACY, COMMUNICATION AND EXPRESSION**
- 3 **MANAGING DAILY LIFE, TAKING CARE OF ONESELF AND OTHERS**
- 4 **MULTILITERACY**
- 5 **ICT SKILLS**
- 6 **ENTREPRENEURIAL AND WORK-LIFE SKILLS**
- 7 **PARTICIPATION AND BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014).

These core competences represent the skills future employees will need in a wide selection of industries and in society overall in the future. Therefore, their aim is to:

"support growth as a human being and to impart competencies required for membership in a democratic society and a sustainable way of living. It is particularly vital to encourage the pupils to recognize their uniqueness and their personal strengths and development potential, and to appreciate themselves."

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 20)

"Values, the conception of learning, and the school culture lay the foundation for the development of competence. Each subject builds the pupil's competence through the contents and methods typical of its field of knowledge. (...) Feedback is given to the pupils as well as guidance and support for learning influences attitudes, motivation and willingness to act."

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 20)

As it can be noticed in this quote, there are several aspects, here marked in bold, that contribute to the successful development of these competences for students at school. When planning, implementing and evaluating knowledge, teachers need to keep in mind these aspects and include them in their practice.

There is no standard model of best practice for teaching and learning transversal competencies because each local curriculum determines the best ways of meeting them. Local curriculums include the objectives to focus on a particular year by a certain school. These are established by the teachers and managers according to the needs and interests of that school's students. However, there are certain general aspects used in Finnish schools for acquiring subject-based knowledge and skills and the acquisition of competencies at the same time. These are:

Student-centered pedagogy:

- **connecting learning to the personal experiences of learners and their prior knowledge, using phenomenal and project-based methods**
- **connecting learning to the current realities of the world and its history**
- **adapting teaching to the group and the personal needs of the group and the learners.**

Extending learning outside the classroom:

- **learning and solving problems in authentic contexts,**
- **collaboration with experts in specific fields and the surrounding community.**

Use of new technologies in teaching and learning:

- **using different devices, programs, apps and social media**

Cooperative ways of working of teachers

- **use of pedagogical teams**
- **peer coaching**
- **mentoring**
- **teacher-training.**



- Get out of your comfort zone and include all competences in your subject teaching. The key to that is to activate your students and you can even learn new skills together with them. Create a skills map on the classroom wall and tell the students what skills you will focus on in each activity. This way they can be aware of their own learning.
- Supporting the development of competences is done through teaching methods, so use the manual as a support, but try to activate the students to create the content with you. For example, you can ask them to make a short PowerPoint presentation or a poster, video, or podcast about the content you are about to teach next week. They can work in pairs or small groups. When the class starts, the students can present the content they searched for in books, manuals, and the internet. During the class, all you can do is answer their questions and give feedback.



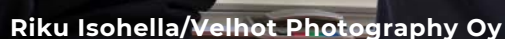
Have a look at this practical assessment framework to assist schools in developing their 21st-century competencies developed by education professionals in Finland and Microsoft! This is a self-evaluation tool for teachers to find out how well they are implementing 21st-century skills

https://www.ele.fi/assets/evaluation_framework_microsoft_final.pdf

P.S. Share the link with your colleagues too.

- Trust themselves
- Feel like active contributors in the process of learning
- Ask questions, look actively for answers, consider things from different viewpoints
- Present their ideas, find innovative answers, and think outside the box
- Listen to the views of others

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 10-34)



- ## REFLECTIONS

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2.2 CULTURAL COMPETENCE, INTERACTION, AND SELF-EXPRESSION

This competence forms the basis for living and valuing today's diverse world. Learners develop this competence when they are given opportunities to:

- **Develop empathy and communication skills (for example through constant constructive feedback and peer feedback)**
- **Learn self-expression and presentation skills in different situations (by making a speech or a presentation)**
- **Get acquainted with their cultural background, develop their cultural identity**
- **Participate and contribute to cultural activities in school (through different art forms or drama activities) and outside school (by taking part in cultural events and exploring other cultures).**

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 36-51)



TIPS

- Consider role-play activities to develop empathy skills. The students can practice viewing a situation from other people's perspectives.
- Consider organizing project-based activities or simply connect with the content you teach topics like cultural diversity, global warming, human rights, religious diversity, ethics.
- Some of the most important skills that help students develop this competence are dialogue skills. Organize opportunities for students to practice dialogical and debate skills. Imagine how fun a regular class could become if you organize such an event.



Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland

REFLECTIONS



- The teacher's attitude is paramount when it comes to teaching and discussing different topics. Ask yourself what are your biases related to the topic you teach. Are you offering an objective or a subjective perspective to your students?



2.3 SELF-CARE AND MANAGING EVERYDAY LIFE

This competence forms the basis for an independent and sustainable future lifestyle. In addition to one's well-being, the learners are guided by the school community to

“understand that everyone influences both their own and other people's well-being, health and safety”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 23)

Learners develop this competence when they are given opportunities to:

- **Manage their everyday life by learning to be organized and practising time management (setting timed goals for school activities)**
- **Develop their consumer skills (critically evaluate their consumer behaviour, understand how advertising influences it)**
- **Practice self-regulation in using technology**
- **Are involved in the planning and execution of health and well-being measures in the school**
- **Are taught about safety in everyday life (traffic rules, fire safety, online safety) and participate in preventive measures**
- **Are guided and contribute to the prevention of bullying and the increase of personal safety**

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 53-70)



TIPS

- Consider working closely with the school psychologist and talk about emotions, self-regulation, and well-being with the students on a regular basis. Try to create an atmosphere based on trust, support, and openness where students can express themselves without judgment. Ask them what would they need to build this type of safe space in their community.

REFLECTIONS



- Teachers are often role models for their students. Taking care of your own well-being will not only benefit you personally but will also have a great impact on your practice and your students. What do you do to take care of yourself? What else would you need to improve your well-being?



Sakari Piippo/Finland Promotion Board

2.4 MULTILITERACY

“Multiliteracy is literacy for now and the future. Defined broadly, multiliteracy is the skill of being human and living in an increasingly diverse world. It is the skill of understanding and being understood. Multiliteracy is the skill of approaching the world with an open and a healthily critical mindset.”

(Kumpulainen et al. 2018, p. 4)

This competence is related to the changes in today's society, where technology and digital environments are part of the economy, society, and everyday life.

The goal of this competence is to help students understand, communicate, produce and present data through a multitude of mediums and platforms. Students develop this competence when they are given opportunities to:

- **Recognize and understand different modes of communication (academic vs. colloquial vocabulary)**
- **Create multimodal content for a specific target audience (using messages, videos, images, different platforms, and applications)**
- **Practice critical thinking and source credibility assessment in interpreting information**
- **Practice ethical conduct in creating multimodal content**

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 73-85)



- Bring into the classroom different information found online (pictures, articles, headlines, graphs). Show the students one piece of information at a time, and ask them to write or draw about the topic. See what they come up with and discuss together the results and the different interpretations.
- Make homework fun by encouraging the students to present their content in different formats (video, podcast, blog article, essay, poster, etc.). Remember to give them information on how to produce these types of formats beforehand. You can use the internet to find valuable information about that.

REFLECTIONS

- Take a moment and think about the content you are teaching. In what format can you present it to the students, so that it is within the multiliteracy competence framework? You are not confident enough to try new formats? Give yourself a goal to learn something new each week or month depending on your timetable. Once you have done that, think about how it feels to do something different?

2.5 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This competence forms the basis for future active digital participation. ICT is

“an important civic skill both in itself and as part of multiliteracy. (...) ICT is methodically exploited in all grades of basic education, in different subjects and multidisciplinary learning modules, and other school work.”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 24)

Students develop this competency when they can:

- **Practice how to search and collect reliable information**
- **Learn how to evaluate and apply data in collaborative ways**
- **Work with different types of devices and applications are given opportunities to practice messaging applications and social media platforms**
- **Act as experts: students can bring into the classroom their knowledge (how can Snapchat, Minecraft be used for certain learning tasks?). In Finnish schools, there are programs through which students are acting as tutors for the teachers and other students in matters of IT-technology skills and use.**
- **Learn about copyright licenses and how to use correct referencing styles**
- **Are guided on how to safely interact online, how to take care of their device and data security, and about ICT well-being (breaks from the monitor)** (Lonka et al., 2017, p. 88-113)



Elina Manninen/Agency Keksi



- Create a social media account for your classroom, and let students use it, for example by role-playing (students can assume the identity of a historical personality or a fictional character in a book).
- Remember to discuss with parents the privacy and the use of ICT and ask permission from them. Can the work of the students be published online, and can they appear in photos or videos that are made public? Be specific when mentioning the public media channels the school uses (school's website, blog, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram).

REFLECTIONS



- How are your ICT skills? Are they up to date or do they need a bit of brushing up? Think of different ways you can learn more about digital learning and how you can implement that in your teaching. You may consider taking an online course or learning on your own through online tutorials. And remember, the key to learning is asking questions, so don't be shy and ask around. Someone you know might be able to give you a hand.

2.6 WORKING SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This competence provides students with the skills they will need in their future work.

„Basic education must impart general capabilities that promote interest in and a positive attitude towards work and working life”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 24)

Students develop this competency when they can:

- **Work and collaborate with actors outside school**
- **Practice their collaborative and interaction skills in different situations**
- **Learn teamwork, project work, and networking**
- **Plan activities, try out different options and reflect on their work**
- **Learn how to face difficulties in doing tasks and how to finish their work despite difficulties**
- **Learn how to appreciate the work that has been done**
- **Identify their vocational strengths and interest, take initiatives**

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 116-137)

Pia Inberg/Agency Keksi



- Encourage your students to invent professions for the future. How will work-life look 100 years from now, what skills will be needed?
- Read about Yrityskylä (Entrepreneurs village) learning environment for sixth-graders in Finland. It is a school children's society, a miniature city where students work in a profession and earn money for their work. In addition, the students act as consumers and citizens, as part of Finnish society: <https://yrityskylä.fi/en/>
- Consider collaborating with different agents in the area where your school is located to support the content you are teaching or to learn about their work. Some examples of these types of agents would be a local shop, an elderly care house, a dental clinic, a hairdresser, and so on. Ask the students what they are interested in learning more about. They have the best ideas!

REFLECTIONS



- Think about the content you are teaching. Which parts offer you the chance to create a connection with the working life, professions and entrepreneurship? How can you use the framework of this competence to diversify the teaching methods you are using?

2.7. PARTICIPATING, INFLUENCING AND BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

This competence provides students with the skills they will need to become responsible citizens of a future democratic society.

„Basic education creates the bases for the pupil’s interest in the school community and society.”

Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 24)

Students develop this competency when they:

- **Are given opportunities to develop their school environment (physical, social and digital)**
- **Are involved in setting up the rules for their classroom and school**
- **Learn about the concrete ways to participate in their communities (through opportunities for volunteering, elections, collaborations with NGOs)**
- **Learn about student’s rights and responsibilities, how to take responsibility for their actions**
- **Practice decision making and conflict resolution**
- **Take an active role in promoting environmental responsibility in the classroom and the school**

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 139-158)



TIPS

- The students’ council can organise a competition on how to improve the school environment. The management of the school defines a specific budget for the activity. The council representatives and the winners of the competition, with the help of the teacher, will then use the amount to bring the idea to life.
- Students follow the rules better when they are involved in making them. Sit together and agree what rules should go on your class or school’s list. Sign it and let that be the guidelines for the rest of the year. Come back to it from time to time and see what rules need to be added or taken away.

REFLECTIONS



- How is the operational culture in your school? Is it teacher-driven? Are the students involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating their work or the school environment? How exactly? What else could be done to include the students’ voices in the operational culture?



3. TEACHING METHODS



Living in a continuously changing world means that education provision needs to adjust to the needs of society and more specifically to the needs of the students. Teachers have to try to be up to date with the newest teaching methods and find creative ways to help students learn more efficiently. This means seeking new research findings and trying to implement them in practice. What once used to be seen as the right way of learning or teaching might not be the case anymore. Therefore continuous professional development of teachers needs to be focused in finding creative ways to support the students' learning.

A GOOD TEACHING METHOD

- Supports the organization of knowledge structures (knowledge transmission where the previous knowledge structures of students, level of development are taken into consideration) and the formation of skills
- Activates the student, does not keep him passive
- Makes knowledge meaningful for the students (applicability of the content you teach. How can I link this piece of information to the world outside the school?)

(Finnish Curriculum, 2014, p.24-27)



HOW TO SELECT THE RIGHT TEACHING METHOD

Take into consideration:

- ✓ **Goals of learning, the content of the subject matter, transversal competences**
- ✓ **Skills you want to help the students develop (finding, analyzing, processing, presenting, applying, combining, evaluating, creating information)- activation of students**
- ✓ **Differentiation of instruction (students' individual needs)**
- ✓ **Learning environment (outdoor, indoor, trips, digital)**
- ✓ **Resources (material, human)**
- ✓ **Select the methods in interaction with the students. Remember to guide them through the working method when you introduce something new!**
- ✓ **Be creative! Think outside the box!**



Riku Isohella/Velhot Photography Oy

3.1 TEACHER’S ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE CHILDREN

The Finnish teachers play an active role in the school's decision-making as well at the system level. Their expertise is valuable and taken into consideration. They are encouraged to influence their work and have a lot of freedom in pedagogical decisions (Toom & Husu, 2016 in Miracle of Education). Their autonomy is also reflected in their role of supporting their students' development. As the aim of education states:

„ A teacher’s main professional task is to promote the full potentiality found in every child”

(Toom & Husu, 2016 in Miracle of Education)

Therefore, every pedagogical decision the teachers make is with this aim in mind.

In order to be able to promote the full potential of every student, the teachers need to invest time in establishing strong relationships with them. Therefore their role is to build trust in these relationships, as it is a prerequisite of learning. The teachers are also promoters of hope for a better life and future (Toom & Husu, 2016 in Miracle of Education). They help the students believe in a bright future so their learning becomes meaningful.

The teachers and students are working together when it comes to learning. That is because students are the experts of their own learning and can give valuable information to the teachers about the way they learn best. This can be taken into consideration by the teachers when planning, implementing and assessing knowledge.



REFLECTIONS



- Watch the following video and take a moment to reflect on your relationship with your students. How is that being reflected in your teaching? What can be done better?

How can you achieve that?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrU6YJle6Q4)

[v=vrU6YJle6Q4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrU6YJle6Q4)



Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland

3.2 DIVERSE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND TEACHING METHODS

Teaching only in the classroom is not a current and efficient option anymore. In order to apply holistic learning methods and support the development of 21st-century competencies, teachers need to make the most of diverse learning environments.

“Learning environments refer to the facilities, locations, communities and operating practices where learning and studying takes place”

(Finnish National Agency of Education, 2014, p. 30)

Therefore, any physical or visual space where learning or studying can happen is considered a learning environment. These can be the classroom, online space, outdoor facilities, local institutions like museums, libraries, sports halls, and cultural centers.



Andreas Meichsner

CLASSROOM LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

When designing classroom learning environments, there are certain aspects that need to be taken into consideration. First, there are the students' needs for support. Each classroom needs to meet the individual needs of the students (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 30). For example, the way the furniture is arranged, the way furniture is designed, having a carpet area and a small library could be key elements in working with children that need help with maintaining attention or for group work.

A second aspect that needs to be considered when creating an indoor learning environment is the physical features like air quality, lightning, heat, noise levels, and access to water supplies. All these aspects have a great impact on the quality of teaching and overall on the students' and teachers' well-being (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 30).

Lastly, classrooms need to offer access to information and communication technology (ICT) which offers smooth access to digital support for learning. In Finland, students are encouraged to use their own phones for learning purposes if it has been agreed on beforehand with the parents (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 30).

As mentioned above, teaching only in the classroom premises is not efficient when the focus is to support the students' development of 21st-century competences. For a holistic approach to teaching, it is advisable to use the whole school's spaces for learning e.g. corridors, library, laboratories, cafeteria, gym, or any other facility that the school provides.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AS A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In the quest for supporting the students' 21st-century competences, public institutions can be used to provide an enhanced experience of teaching and learning. When the content from the manuals is expanded through experiences in museums, public libraries, art institutions, theatres, science institutions, or music halls, the teaching methods are more diverse and it also creates the right set for phenomenon-based learning (Salminen et al, 2016, p.260). This experience is possible due to the fact that the theoretical content in the manuals taught in the classroom, becomes concrete in public institution settings (Salminen et al, 2016, p.261). And this is one example of making theory applicable for an enhanced learning experience.

In public institutions, the teachers have the possibility to collaborate with experts in different fields and the students learn how to learn different skills from these diverse experiences (Salminen et al, 2016, p.260).

REFLECTIONS



- Make a list of all the public institutions available in your school's district or city and think how you could collaborate with them to make your students' learning more interesting.



OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The outdoor facilities of the school and the nature around can be valuable sources of learning for students. In a literature review regarding outdoor learning, Sue Waite (2020) highlights the benefits connected to this type of learning: academic attainment, improved mental and physical health, well-being, emotional and learning self-regulation, environmental awareness, empathy for others and the world, resilience, and creativity. These benefits can be taken into consideration when trying to include an outdoor environment in the teaching process.



Jussi Hellsten



- Plan your lessons so that you can include outdoor learning environments as part of the teaching and learning process.
- Try to include in the content you teach aspects of sustainability. This connection could motivate the students to care for the nature around them and make better life choices.
- Use material already existing to teach you content outdoors. A quick search on the internet can reveal many sources of valuable materials for nature treasure hunts, city treasure hunts, outdoor experiments, or simply physical education outdoor games.

REFLECTIONS



- Write down all the outdoor spaces within walking distance from your school and think of their learning potential. How could you use these spaces to enhance the teaching you provide in the classroom? How could you integrate outdoor learning into the students' homework? Making the most of what we have can be a good attitude to bring out the potential of what is around us.



THE DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In Finland, the “digital leap” in education started in 1990. Since then, the focus of education has been on preparing competitive citizens that will meet the demands of the future. The current Finnish National Curriculum stipulates that each subject must include a digital pedagogy component in the teaching-learning process:

“Basic education ensures that all pupils have possibilities for developing their ICT skills in all grades of basic education, in different subjects and multidisciplinary learning modules, and in other school work”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 24)

Each school subject, starting with preschool, uses digital products as a way of learning and teaching. The content of the Finnish digital educational environment is diverse, up-to-date, and of high quality. Digital learning environments support active learning, taking responsibility for one's own learning, and the joy of learning:

“Diverse and appropriate use of information and communication technology expands the pupils’ possibilities for developing their working approaches and networking skills. This builds their capabilities for independent, interactive, and critical acquisition and processing of information. The possibilities offered by games and gameful learning are exploited in the selection of working methods.”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 32)

Thus, the digital learning environment in Finnish education is a key part of the versatile learning environments and also a natural and motivating way of learning, in the context of today's world.



TIPS

In order to support learning in diverse spaces, think about what are the possible spaces for learning in your classroom and outside the classroom (corridor, outdoor, digital). Could students choose where they feel comfortable learning? You can introduce for example **Workingspace passes** - an orange card means learning at your desk, a blue card means you can move around the classroom, a green pass means you can work on the corridor or in other spaces. Think about the criteria and learning situations, where you can try out this method.

REFLECTIONS



Look at this video of a Finnish school and reflect on how is the space used for learning:

A School Designed For All

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceWelKLfgv8)

[v=ceWelKLfgv8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceWelKLfgv8)

Think of the environment of your own school and reflect on the spaces you can use to make your teaching more interesting.



3.3 KNOWLEDGE APPLICABILITY METHODS

Working methods in the Finnish schools are quite diversified and aim at supporting each student to reach their highest potential.

“Versatile working methods bring the pupils joy of learning and experiences of success (...) promoting both the formation of organised knowledge structures and the adoption of skills”

(Finnish National Agency of Education, 2014, p. 31 - 32)

Knowledge applicability methods are referring to how the content taught in the classroom can be connected with real-life experiences. So for example, if percentages are being taught in maths class, then students can identify this concept on different product packages (chocolate bars can be fun to use :)). They can then understand how much sugar is in a chocolate bar, how much carbs, and so on. Additionally, the maths lesson can then be connected with the science lesson and talk about the need for each type of ingredient for a healthy diet.

Special attention is given to the flexible grouping of students, school routine, structuring of the school work, modeling, and task differentiation. Visualizing, concretizing, splitting assignments into small parts, taking little breaks during lessons, doing physical exercises during a lesson and the school day, awarding systems are also important elements in Finnish pedagogy (Kyrö-Ämmälä, O., Lakkala, S., 2017, p. 211 - 216).

In Finnish schools, classroom time is rarely used only for teacher-directed activities or lecturing. Instead, many teachers use activating learning methods, such as the flipped classroom method. In this method, students get acquainted with the key concepts of the lesson before the class (for example, by watching a short 5-minutes video prepared by the teacher). So what happens during the class? During the shared time in the classroom, the key concepts are discussed and students get to apply them through practical hands-on activities (including digital ones) and they also receive feedback and personal support. After the class, students continue to extend their learning through new assignments.

Teacher collaboration, co-teaching, part-time special education, and multi-professional work are also often used in Finnish schools. (Kyrö-Ämmälä, O., Lakkala, S., 2017, p. 211 - 216). Co-teaching (parallel teaching, station teaching) is used especially by class teachers, and it can take the form of shared planning sessions, followed by lessons in which teachers take turns facilitating activities. In station teaching, students rotate between different activity points, facilitated by different teachers.



Elina Manninen/Agency Keksi

3.4 TRANSDISCIPLINARY TEACHING METHODS

The Finnish National Curriculum for basic education defines integrative approach as :

“an important component of a school culture that promotes the integrity of basic education. The aim of the integrative approach is to make understanding the relations and interactions between the studied topics possible. It helps students to combine knowledge and skills from different fields and to organise them into meaningful entities in interaction with each other”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 31)

In this way, students can perceive the meaning of the studied topics for their own lives and communities, and for society and humankind. At the same time, they are gaining new substance to widen and analyze their own worldview.

The integrative approach in education requires such a pedagogical approach that acknowledges both the content and practices of teaching so that in the teaching of each subject, and especially across subject boundaries, phenomena or themes of the real world are examined as entities. The method and duration of the integrative approach can vary depending on the students' needs and the aims of the teaching.

This classification can help us choose the right teaching approach that suits the content that needs to be taught, the aims of the teaching experience and the individual needs of the students. Here are the main integrative curriculum approaches:

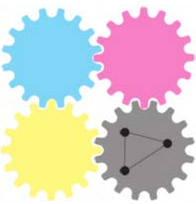

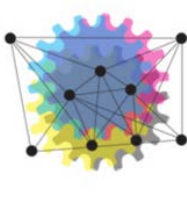
|  |  |  |
|---|---|--|
| Multidisciplinary | Interdisciplinary | Transdisciplinary |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate many subject matters around a common theme • A chosen theme is fused into different subject matters • Service-learning in the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find common learning (themes, competences) across the subject matters and then organize the curriculum according to that. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The starting point is not the curriculum, but the students' inquiry and interests (project-based) • Students are content creators • The teacher helps the students formulate the questions and organize the content- facilitator, and mentor, not a knowledge transmitter • Good for STEM subject matters • Most efficient strategy |

Table 1. Integrative curriculum approaches. Eronen et al. (2019, p. 4-7)

3.5 PHENOMENON BASED LEARNING

Science of learning has shown us over and over again that children learn best when the content and the context are connected, and meaningful. Studies also show that children learn more effectively when content is presented within a theme as opposed to independently. This means curricular subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Art are not taught as standalone units. Instead they are first integrated into activities that also promote broader skills such as collaboration and problem solving. Following which, these activities are all embedded within a unique and exciting theme (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016)

PHENOMENON BASED LEARNING (PHBL)

PhBL is a holistic working method where students work together to develop problem solving skills for real-life phenomena. Analysing a phenomena from different perspectives makes the learning meaningful and long lasting. (Lonka et al., 2017, p. 173)

CHARACTERISTICS OF PHBL

- **The topic is chosen by the students**
- **Is student centred**
- **The teachers are facilitators**
- **Students and teachers are co-creators of content**
- **It has an end product**
- **It involves teamwork**
- **It requires scaffolding information**
- **The assessment is focused on the process as well as on the product**

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 173-182)



A PhBL project lasts for about 4 weeks. There are several teachers involved and the whole class. There needs to be coordinating teachers. Students are divided into groups of 5 approximately. It is a process of creativity and the stages are just suggestions. The group can decide on the way of working according to their needs and resources. The work takes place at school during the classes of different subject matters.

WORKING STAGES OF PHBL

- **Defining the phenomena (Intro - short video)**
- **Mind-mapping the phenomena**
- **Setting the goals and assessment criteria**
- **Take into account the content of the curricula and the 21st-century skills**
- **Divide into groups**
- **Decide on the end product**
- **Talk about working methods and methods of assessment**
- **Present the product**

(Lonka et al., 2017, p. 182- 191:



Elina Manninen/Agency Keksi

3.6 PROJECT-BASED TEACHING

Project-based teaching is a form of teaching that focuses on the student and is built on inquiry and problem-solving.

“PBL is the act of learning through identifying a real-world problem and developing its solution. Kids show what they learn as they journey through the unit, not just at the end.”

(Wolpert-Gawron 2015)

Project-based teaching is typically done in groups and cooperation is a key component. The goal is to take advantage of all of the expertise that each group member possesses, while also gaining teamwork skills and content understanding. The creation of an end product is a requirement of project-based learning. The learning process, rather than the finished product, is more significant. The teacher's role in project-based teaching is to support, encourage, and mentor pupils. Teachers can help students stay on track during the project by asking them steering questions. These guiding questions are designed to enable students to think for themselves. Furthermore, the teacher functions as a catalyst for learning by providing vital scaffolding. (Wolpert-Gawron (2015).

If the project is interdisciplinary and involves several teachers, it is a good idea to think about how tasks can be shared between teachers in a meaningful way. Can every teacher be in charge of their own subject's mentoring?



Here are some tips on how to make learning exciting for every student from Maarit Rossi, a mathematics teacher from Finland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9OaP04MrUI>

REFLECTIONS



Watch this video to discover how teachers in Finland address the diverse learning needs of children in a classroom, by using versatile teaching methods:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RJ-Y3xmyFo&list=PLxorPxlTbZX-OzPRiMWH3Rw9uxamLf1&index=7>

What are some ideas you could promote this type of learning in your own school?



4. EVALUATION

The Finnish National Core Curriculum (2016), which establishes the guidelines of education provision in Finland, emphasises three main characteristics of evaluation in basic education. First is the establishment of an evaluation culture within the school, which includes a safe space where the pupils are supported to do their best, versatile evaluation methods, and fair assessment. Secondly, the assessment needs to be formative, having the goal to improve learning. Lastly, self assessment and peer assessment need to be included as well. While the assessment is done for the benefit of the pupils, the teacher is also using it to improve their practice. In the assessment process, the students are not compared with each other at any point.

One interesting fact about the Finnish education system is the lack of national testing (Ämmälä & Kyrö-Ämmälä, 2018), which is different to the way the project partners' (Romania and Czech Republic) education systems operate. The Finnish system relies mainly on formative assessment, as can be seen further on.



Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland

4.1 EVALUATION METHODS



Finnish teachers use versatile methods of assessment, with a focus on developing critical thinking, self-reflection and self-motivation for learning.

The assessment process includes the **continuous assessment of learning** during school and a **final assessment at the end of the school year**.

According to Ouakrim-Soivio (2018), **the continuous assessment of learning** consists of a combination of:

- **diagnostic assessment - the students' starting level compared to the objectives of learning: What do I know? Where do I start? What objectives do I set for myself?**
- **formative assessment - focuses on the learning process: How do I progress in my learning? What should I do next?**
- **summative assessment - focuses on the learning result: Where am I in relation to the learning objectives?**

In the continuous assessment process, the formative assessment does not need to be documented by the teacher. Summative assessment instead is documented and the purpose is to make the learning process visible to the student and the teacher. Types of documentation for the summative assessment include, for example:

- **tests (written, electronic, oral)**
- **presentations with feedback**
- **group work with feedback**
- **video narrations with feedback**
- **drawings and craft creations**
- **learning diaries (written, electronic)**

These materials, as well as self-evaluations, peer reviews, and teacher feedback documents, are gathered in a portfolio that is used to support assessment.

The continuous assessment of learning is put into practice through teacher-student-parent meetings that are organised twice during the school year (autumn, spring). During this formative assessment dialogue, the teacher makes the learning process visible and supports the student to understand:

- what are the objectives of learning
- where is the student in relation to the objectives of learning
- what is the best way for the student to achieve the objectives of learning

“The teachers ensure that the pupils are aware of the objectives and assessment criteria. Reflecting on the objectives and examining their personal learning in proportion to the objectives is an important part of developing the pupil’s self-assessment skills.”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 50)

In addition to the teacher-student-parent meetings, the **continuous assessment of learning** is also put into practice through feedback and updates on the learning progress, that are communicated to the student and its guardians on a daily basis, by means of an online school communication system (for example through the Wilma application, in the Helsinki area). Dialogue, regular reflections on school and teacher practices and the collaboration between school and home promote learning:

“A learning community develops in dialogue. (...) Reflecting on the goals, regular evaluation of one’s work and a peaceful atmosphere promote the learning of a community. It is supported by feedback from homes and other partners.”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 28)

The final assessment of learning takes place at the end of the school year. Each student receives an annual report, based on national assessment criteria. The Finnish national curriculum contains assessment guidelines for all important subjects.

1. **Grades 1 - 3 use verbal assessment. The focus of the assessment is on the pupil’s progress and general studying and working skills.**
2. **In grades 4–7 the assessments are numerical or written.**
3. **In grades 8–9, assessments are always numerical.**

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2016)

Understanding and being able to apply (as opposed to memorising) the key concepts of the subject-specific curriculum for each study year are important in the assessment process. The effort during classes (being active, being responsible, taking initiative, helping others and giving constructive feedback, proper school equipment) are taken into consideration in the final assessment

“The assessment focuses on the pupil’s learning, working skills and behaviour.”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 50)

This approach ensures the development of 21st-century skills.

In addition to the continuous assessment approach, digital technology is used to ensure assessment sustainability. The subject-specific teaching material series provided by the educational publishers in Finland include digital activities and tests, in addition to paper-based testing resources. Students can benefit greatly from digital solutions because in the assessment mediated by technology they can see their progress and receive quick feedback.

The continuous assessment approach in Finland supports students to become life-long learners and become aware that they are learning for life, not for the school.

4.2 HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Holistics assessment is about using versatile methods of assessing the progress of the students in terms of knowledge, working skills and behaviour (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). Looking at evaluation from a holistic perspective is very much needed especially when working with phenomenon based learning and project-based learning. When the methods of teaching involve complex connections between disciplines and focus on 21st-century competences, the evaluation process needs to match that. Here are some points to remember when evaluating holistically:

What to keep in mind:

- **The process of work is as important as the final result**
- **Combining different assessment methods to ensure that you have a clear view of the student's development (observations, videos, audio files, self assessment, peer assessment, tests)**
- **Take into account the students' age and special needs**
- **The assessment's goal is to improve learning (formative assessment)**

Focus feedback on the strengths of the student and motivating them (Lonka et al., 2017, p. 186-188)



Riku Isohella/Velhot Photography Oy



If you decide to introduce a holistic approach in assessment and use different methods, make sure you introduce each new assessment method to the students gradually. **The students need to be always aware of the assessment criteria you use and how to deliver their end product.** For example, if you decide to introduce podcasting as a method of evaluation, introduce first the concept, what it is, how it is done, what type of content to introduce and what resources they need. Then you can use it together and then separately. Emphasise the fact that you are there to help them if they need anything.

REFLECTIONS



Look at the examples of assessment documentation methods mentioned above and think which ones could best fit in with the needs of your students and the content that you teach. How do you think your students would feel if instead of a test at the end of the chapter you ask them to make a video or a podcast related to the content you taught?

Or if you want to really spice it up, you could give them several assessment choices and they can pick the one that is most suitable for them. Share your experience with other colleagues and learn from each other.

4.3 DIFFERENTIATION AND INDIVIDUALIZATION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

The Finnish curriculum emphasises the diversity of assessment methods and also the importance of assessments as a promoter of learning.

As part of the continuous assessment process, general support for learning is offered to everyone. The need for support is assessed as early as possible, in order to prevent future learning challenges. If needed, a careful pedagogical assessment is done and a plan for intensified or special support is drawn up, usually in multi-professional expert teams.

“The achievements of pupils who study according to an individualised syllabus in one or several subjects are assessed in proportion to the personal objectives set for them in an individual education plan, rather than applying the general syllabus criteria to defining their achievement level.”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 50)

In terms of differentiation and individualization of assessment methods, the educational support material available in Finland in the form of manuals, workbooks, teacher guides and digital activities include various activities and tests for assessment, self-assessment and peer-assessment. These resources are developed on the basis of the objectives written in the curriculum and are readily differentiated on several levels.

Teachers decide what materials and tests they use for the assessment, and they can also create their own tests and assessments activities.



Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland

4.4 SELF - EVALUATION

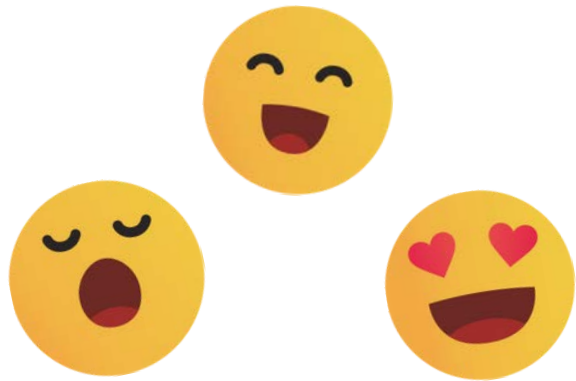
Self evaluation is a skill students learn guided by the teacher, starting from the lower grades. The focus at the beginning is on highlighting the strengths, the progress of learning as well as how well the goals have been reached. In the higher grades, the self-assessment becomes more analytical (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 50). In time, the students learn to assess their learning process, their practises and their improvements. Self-evaluation has been found to have an impact on the students' awareness of the way they think as well as on their lifelong learning (Kumpulainen & Lankinen, 2016, p.77).

How to foster self-assessment opportunities:

- **through discussions (teacher, parent, student)**
- **use a visual support**
- **guided by self set goals**
- **focus on positive feedback and on the ways the student can reach the goals**

REFLECTIONS

Here you can find a model of self evaluation form used in Finland for the 2nd grade. Have a look at it and see how you could use it as an inspiration to create self-evaluation assessment forms that are suitable for your students and the content you teach).



Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland



2ND GRADE SELF-EVALUATION

Name: _____

Me and the others at school. Fill-in by coloring or placing an X

★ = Still practicing ★★ = Pretty well ★★★ = Well ★★★★ = Very well

| | | | | |
|---|---|----|-----|------|
| Working skills and being responsible | ★ | ★★ | ★★★ | ★★★★ |
| I take care of my tasks and things | | | | |
| I follow the given instructions | | | | |
| I follow the given instructions | | | | |
| I know how to behave and work with colleagues | | | | |
| I am fair to others | | | | |
| Self-confidence | ★ | ★★ | ★★★ | ★★★★ |
| I can learn the things taught in school | | | | |
| I think of myself as important | | | | |

Important learning skills

When I read I am... (circle the words that define you):

excited, talented, fast, empathetic, full of energy, hurried, silent, loud

The one thing I would like to improve as a **reader**: _____

When I write I am... (circle the words that define you):

excited, talented, inventive, careful, fast, careless, unsure

The one thing I would like to improve as a **writer**: _____

In Mathematics I am... (circle the words that define you):

excited, talented, inventive, careful, fast, careless, fast to learn, unsure

The one thing I would like to improve in **Mathematics**: _____

Source: Self-assessment forms for basic education in the city of Jyväskylä, Finland:

<https://peda.net/jyvaskyla/poske/oppilasarviointi/arviointiohjeita> (translated from Finnish)

4.5 NEXT STEPS- HOW TO USE ASSESSMENT TO DEVELOP TEACHING

The role of assessment is to continuously support the planning of the teaching-learning process by understanding the progress of the student and to support the development of a lifelong learner identity for each student:

“Assessment is the most powerful single factor that directs the focus of learning”

(Virtanen, Postareff & Hailikari, 2015)

In order to ensure an education for the future, summative assessment (assessment of learning) needs to be complemented by diagnostic (assessment for learning) and formative assessment (assessment as learning).

Continuous assessment allows the student to receive constant feedback and be an active participant in the process. Continuous assessment also makes it possible for the teacher to identify students who need help in specific areas and ensure timely intervention

The assessment of students is also a tool for the reflection and development of our own work as teachers and of the school:

“Information obtained through assessment helps teachers to adapt their instruction to the pupil’s needs.”

(Finnish National Board of Education, 2014, p. 49)

So in the end, the benefits of the continuous assessment process come back to the student - education is all about the life-long learning process of the student.



TIPS

Discover more about formative assessment and the current trends in students assessments in Finland in the book *Flipped Assessment: A Leap towards Assessment for Learning* by Marika Toivola, teacher and researcher in Finland: <https://www.ellibs.com/fi/book/9789513778057/flipped-assessment-a-leap-towards-assessment-for-learning>

REFLECTIONS



- Watch this video to discover the versatile assessment methods used by Finnish teachers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RJ-Y3xmyFo&list=PLxorPxlTbZX-0zPRiMWH3Rw9uxamLf1&index=7> What are some ideas you could promote in your own school?
- Reflect on your own assessment practices: Does assessment create the joy of learning or does it prevent it? Does assessment create the joy of teaching or does it prevent it?

CONCLUSION

As can be seen, the evaluation process is deeply connected to the content that is being taught, the pedagogical methods that are being used as well as the students' individual needs. These aspects need to be considered when choosing the evaluation tools and the decision needs to be made based on the principle that the student is the centre of the education provision. Their wellbeing and best interest guides the teachers' choice of working methods.

In the Finnish education model, each student has an opportunity to receive positive, fair, and encouraging feedback. In the Pisa results of 2018, Finland was the only country that scored high in both life satisfaction and reading performance. The success of Finnish education in international testing is the result of embedding equity and student-centred pedagogy principles in all the aspects of education and working constantly on keeping high-quality standards of education.

These results reflect decades of smart decisions in education policy and education reforms based on research. Using research as a tool to improve education has been one of Finland's "secrets" in reaching the education quality level that it is at nowadays.

We hope that the information, tips and resources presented in this guide will support the teachers in the partner countries of the project Erasmus+ Q-Ed! Equalizing the chances of success in life of pre-university students through a quality digital education to reflect on their own practice and to drive new pedagogy and assessment approaches, adapted to their own context.

You can read more about our project here:
<https://www.q-ed.eu/>



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