

教育的

Challenges and  
Moves in Education

# 挑战与对策

JIAOYU DE TIAOZHAN YU DUICE

寿永明 主编

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# 面对机遇与挑战：芬兰教师能力研究

Irmeli Maunonen-Eskelinen, Ulla Mutka, Leena Kaikkonen

(芬兰于韦斯屈莱应用理工大学教师教育学院)

**摘要:**本文试图描述并讨论芬兰教育领域的主流变化与焦点问题。以于韦斯屈莱应用理工大学教师教育学院教师能力为研究素材,结合上述主流变化与挑战的实际情况,讨论了专业继续教育与教师进修问题,以及基础教育后的中等或高等职业或专业教育问题。

1. 职业和高等教育中的大改革。
2. 从学校为中心到开放式教育机制。
3. 芬兰的职业教师教育。
4. 职业教师的能力,四个能力范畴:
  - 简化学习(便利学习)是教师工作的中心
  - 适应教育环境的发展(新环境的挑战)
  - 合作与互动
  - 继续教育(终身学习)
5. 小结。

**附录:**芬兰教育体系

**Teachers' competences in the light of new demands and opportunities in Finland Maunonen-Eskelinen, Irmeli, Mutka, Ulla & Kaikkonen, Leena**

(Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Teacher Education College, Finland)

**Abstract:** In this paper we want to describe and discuss the main changes and emphasis areas in education in Finland. We connect the changes and

challenges with teachers' competencies that are promoted and supported in teacher education at Teacher Education College of Jyväskylä. In this paper the matters are discussed from professional further and higher education point of view and from the viewpoint of teacher education for this particular area. We mean by the concept of professional further and higher education the education that takes place after basic education and vocation and profession oriented on secondary as well as higher education level.

### Introduction

Finland is world-wide known of good educational results in international evaluations (Linnankylä & Välijärvi, 2005). The welfare of Finnish society is built on education, culture and knowledge. All children are guaranteed opportunities for study and self-development according to their abilities, irrespective of their place of residence, language or financial status. All pupils are entitled to competent and high-quality education and guidance and to a safe learning environment and well-being. The flexible education system and basic educational security make for equity and consistency in results. (Ministry of Education, 2004)

The value and principle of equity has a long tradition in Scandinavian Countries: in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Island (Linnankylä & Välijärvi, 2005). The key words of Finnish education policy are equity, quality, efficiency and internationalization. Education is a factor for competitiveness. The current priorities in educational development are to raise the level of education and upgrade competencies among the population and the work force, to improve the efficiency of education system, to prevent exclusion among children and young people and to enlarge adult education opportunities. Special attention is also paid to quality enhancement and impact in education, training and research and to internationalization. (Ministry of Education, 2004)

### 1. The Great Reforms in Vocational and Higher Education

The 1990s was a period of transition for Finnish society, during which working life and production structures were significantly reformed. The driving

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force for the reforms was the rapidly changing international structures, the globalization of economy, the great innovations of communication technology, and the remarkable growth in industrial productivity during the latter half of the decade. One can say that along with the transition the traditional Finnish industrial society was transformed into an information society, characterized by continuous change, an accelerating flow of information, automated processes and networked practices. These development paths have presented numerous challenges for learning and strongly influenced the renewal and development of vocational education and training.

Large-scale social reforms can seldom be implemented in a short period of time. Osmo Lampinen (2002), who has studied the changes of the Finnish educational system, shows that reforms have been preceded by a long preparatory period of several decades even. The basic ideas of reform take shape as the result of a long maturing and discussion process, and the implementation of an agreed reform also takes plenty of time in a sparsely populated country.

## 2. From School-Centeredness to Open Educational Structures

Throughout its history, Finnish vocational education and training has been school-like, state-directed and teacher-centred. For decades school was regarded as an apparently impartial arena of social mobility, which could not be suspected of commitment to the interests of employers. Liisa Tiilikkala (2004: 19) describes Finnish vocational education institutions, in spite of their state control, as relatively autonomous places providing vocational education and training-places where working life or students' parents had very little to say.

The deep economic depression at the beginning of the 1990s effectively accelerated the already initiated transition of educational policy. The independent role and function of educational policy in society had been emphasized in earlier decades, whereas during the years of depression development focused more clearly on merging educational and other social policy. The nature of the transition is analysed by Osmo Lampinen (1998:16-18) by referring to the three important turning points of the 1990s: the entanglement of education and economy, the increasingly important role of labour market goals and industrial

policy in the implementation of education, and the financing practices of educational and development programmes applied within the EU.

In the 1990s decisions regarding educational policy started to be considered more and more from the perspective of state economy. A regionally decentralized and disconnected school network proved to have become too heavy. Consequently, towards the end of the 1990s, the focus was on the reorganisation of the field of educational institutions, the large-scale merging of vocational education institutions, and the trimming of operations. Not only structures were evaluated from the viewpoint of profitability, but the new demands for efficiency and economy had an impact on management, pedagogic decisions and educational content as well.

At the same time, the idea of the significance of educational policy for the anticipation of international development and social change, as well as meeting the challenges brought up by them, became stronger in Finland. Along with this, the key objectives for the development of education were defined on a permanent basis: raising the level of education, improving educational quality and increasing the effectiveness of the educational system. Moreover, the improvement of educational opportunities, the individualization of educational content and the demolition of the structures preventing this development were emphasised. The provision of opportunities for life-long learning was also included among the most important goals.

Most Finnish regions are relatively small. This means that they are not in a position to develop into major networking centres in an expert economy merely by relying on their own know-how and resources. Their success requires the adoption of new methods of action: regional responsibility, networking, and participation in various innovation systems (Stähle, P. & Sotarauta, M. 2003:3). For this reason the mutual co-operation, networking, regenerative capacity and innovation of local operators are seen as a major challenge for the development of vocational and professional education, too.

These were the general outlines for the recent development of vocational upper secondary and tertiary level education in Finland. In Figure 1 the changes in the development of vocational education during the last decades have been

gathered considering the openness of educational structures and the sources of knowledge and learning.

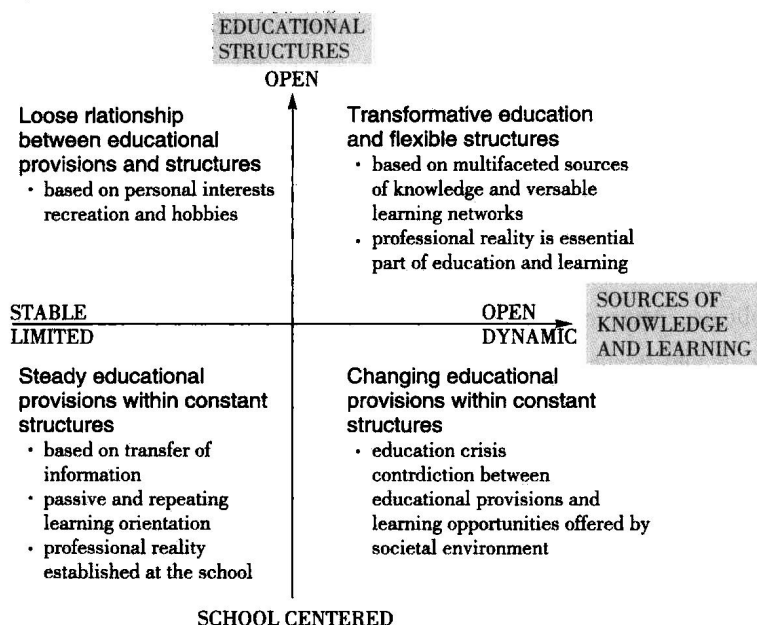


Figure 1: Changing educational structures in Finland since 1950

At present, increasing co-operation between working life and education has become a central development target. The relationships between education and training and working life are reorganised in many ways as well as the use of multifaceted sources of knowledge and versatile learning networks and opportunities. It is clear that these changes are still in their infancy and they will also play an increasingly important role in the future in terms of determining the competence and vocational skills required of teachers.

### 3. Vocational teacher education in Finland

Education for vocational teachers has been provided since 1951 through a number of temporary vocational schools. As the structure of vocational education developed, demands for vocational teacher education increased. For that reason the first two vocational teacher education institutes were founded in the turn of the 1960s. This marked the beginning of the permanent vocational teacher

education.

Vocational teacher education is offered at five teacher education colleges in the different parts of Finland. The annual student intake countrywide is 1 400. At present, vocational teacher education consists of 60 study points (former 35 credit units) and offers a general pedagogical qualification for teaching. Teacher education, in accordance with act 968/98 governing qualification of educational personnel, requires a Master's degree or the highest level of education offered in the vocational field and at least 3 years working experience in the same vocational field. Teacher trainees from all vocational branches are educated in these colleges. After a few years' working experience teachers can specialise either to special needs education teachers or study counsellors.

Currently the majority of the students are studying while they are working in educational institutes or other professional fields. For that reason different kinds of study opportunities are provided. It is possible to take the studies in one year in so-called full-time study model or study more flexible way in two years. For student teachers who already possessed a great deal of teaching experience, an opportunity to demonstrate ability through a competence-based degree has been developed. Internationally oriented teacher education in English is also offered.

After qualification the teachers position to vocational institutes, adult education centres and universities of applied sciences. In the appendix 1 the Finnish education system and its relation to vocational teacher education are illustrated.

#### **4. Vocational teachers' competences**

Teachers are the most significant factor underpinning educational results. The essential factors behind Finland's success in the international evaluations in educational outcomes are high-level teacher education and valuation of teacher profession as well as the idea of equity (Linnankylä & Välijärvi, 2005). In recent years, teachers' competence has been given a great deal of attention (Finnish National Board of Education, 2007). In compliance with the statute (357/2003) governing vocational teacher education, the aim of vocational teacher education is to provide its students: (i) the knowledge and skills to

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guide the learning of different students; (ii) a willingness to develop teaching taking into consideration the development aspects of different professions and working life in general.

Researchers, like Luukkainen (2000), Fullan (1994, 1999), Kohonen (1997), Niemi (1997, 1998) and Niemi & Tirri (1997), have highlighted that learning needs to be seen from a much broader perspective than only as a result of teachers' and school environment's action. New learning environments and partnerships, facing and involving in change processes and work communities are important parts of teaching and learning processes in order to meet the requirements and needs of working life.

Accordingly, these aims are realised in a curriculum of the Jyväskylä Teacher Education College by defining four competence areas that represent the core competences of a teacher's work:

- Facilitating learning
  - Development of the educational environment
  - Cooperation and interaction
  - Continuous learning

The following figure illustrates the four interconnected competence areas mentioned above.

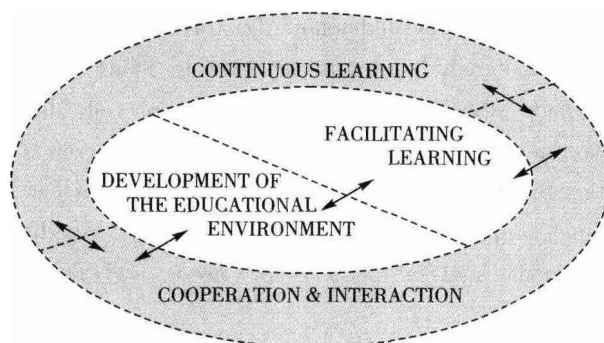


Figure 2. A teacher's competence areas

Every competence area includes a variety of skills, knowledge and attitudes which teachers should possess. The competence areas are interconnected which means that each area is "food" for other areas.

#### 4.1 Facilitating learning as a heart of teachers' work

Facilitating learning has traditionally always been, and still is, one of the main competences in a teacher's work (Aarnio, Enqvist & Koli, 2007). Over time, though, ever-increasing academic research on learning, as well as new learning environments, has changed and expanded the traditional understanding of a teacher's work and role. A teacher is expected to have competence in finding new ways in which learning can be facilitated.

Learning is the central phenomenon in any kind of teaching and tutoring. A teacher always has his/her own understanding of human nature and the concept of knowledge which affects a teacher's understanding of learning. This understanding can be a conscious, partially conscious or even completely unconscious process that concretises in facilitating learning process. Good quality teaching and facilitation of learning and their development are based on sufficient theoretical knowledge about learning, how the knowledge is constructed, how humans learn and develop their own competences. By its very nature, facilitating learning is a practical activity, taking place either at educational institutes, workplaces or virtually. The practical decisions that teachers make when facilitating learning should, therefore, be based on theoretical knowledge of learning and teaching.

As well as possessing a wide knowledge about the learning processes, teachers are also expected to understand the diversity of learners. Students' culturally diverse backgrounds require teachers to modify learning activities accordingly to meet the individual learning needs of different learners (Maunonen-Eskelinen, Kaikkonen & Clayton, 2005). Hirvonen & Raudasoja (2007) state that the number of students with special needs has increased and accordingly the needs of special support and individual tutoring have grown. This requires a continuous analysis of learners' needs and flexibility from the curriculum.

Previously teachers' main task was to impeccably implement "the ready-made" curriculum, nowadays though teachers are expected to have both the ability and desire to continuously develop and adapt the curriculum according to the needs of different learners. An interpretive approach to curriculum planning is therefore a part of a teacher's competences. When planning different teaching

situations and learning environments, concepts such as situational sensitivity, creativity and flexibility are needed to be able to formulate learning goals and make decisions on the content and methods to be used.

## 4.2 The challenge of new learning environments

In addition to facilitating learning, a teacher should endeavor to develop the educational environment s/he works in. A teacher should therefore possess the appropriate skills in order to develop his/her educational institution accordingly. For instance, a teacher must have skills to develop curricula, to take part in the institution's quality assurance work and to plan and implement various project works, all requiring skills for development and collaboration. Therefore, entrepreneurial skills are required with a firm understanding of institutional quality and economic realities.

Both educational establishments' and individual teachers' work environment consist of various cooperative relationships with local and regional professional fields. That research and development work together with these various professions is an essential part of the vocational education requiring extensive networking and cooperational skills. In the broadest sense, a teacher's work environment is composed of various national and international networks (Helakorpi, 2007) and therefore, understanding the developments in global trends as well as changes in society and the professional field is important part of a teacher's competences.

Teachers need to obtain a theoretical and practical command of the content to be taught. The required level of the subject knowledge differs depending on where learning activities take place and what the required learning goals are. While the involvement of different professional fields becomes an increasingly important part of the vocational education, new methodological solutions need to be continuously developed. One such method is project work where teaching and research and development can be combined.

By its very nature a teacher's work is ethical, consisting of various value choices that a teacher has to make when facilitating learning. Those choices are influenced by the socio-historic environment where teaching takes place and they are reflected by the future expectations and aims of a teacher. By participating in

societal discussion a teacher can affect the future development of both the professional and societal life.

### 4.3 Cooperation and interaction—together, not alone

The Cooperation and Interaction competence area is closely related to both the Facilitating Learning and Development of the Educational Environment competence areas. Cooperation and interaction is often connected, for instance, to the national or regional educational planning and realisation work or to different development project work.

Cooperation at the institutional level requires the ability to network and form different relationships at various levels. It also involves the ability to work within organisations that have cross-institutional cooperative relationships with other institutes and working life. Teachers in vocational education institutes encounter this daily through learning at work practices and various project works. In its broadest sense cooperation reaches into international and global arenas, which for many teachers and institutes have become an everyday reality through international projects (Kaikkonen, Maunonen-Eskelinen & Mutka, 2007).

Teaching has always been sociable work and it has been based on the interaction between people, i. e. teachers and learners. Even though, the nature of sociability has been defined in different ways at different times, the ability to interact positively with learners is still the cornerstone of facilitating learning.

Alongside traditional interactive models, teachers are nowadays expected to display a willingness to develop new interactive solutions to facilitate learning. Developments in Information Technology infrastructure enable the development and exploitation of different online pedagogical solutions to support learning processes. The development of these new working models requires not only Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills, but also a conscious view of the change in society and the nature of human learning processes. Nurmi (2006) highlights that web-interaction skills make possible to develop learning communities in a new manner which Finland has got good examples and models about. The Finnish information strategy requires a teacher to have basic skills in ICT and the skills to implement them in learning situations.

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#### 4.4 Lifelong learning as a competence

Lifelong learning became a key issue in debates pertaining to educational policy in the 1990s. Such changes in the Finnish society like the aging of the labour force, the growing number of people reaching retirement age, the growing differences in education between generations, and the increasing demand for higher occupational skills and competence have all posed new challenges for education. As a result, Finland is highly committed to making lifelong learning a reality and that has taken into account on all levels of education. (Finnish National Board of Education, 2007)

Since the ability for continuous learning is an essential part of the core competence of a teacher it can be seen as a metaqualification, metakognitive skills (Penttilä, Lähtikari & Vanhanen-Nuutinen, 2007). The concept of reflection is what joins various areas of competences together and in this way a teacher continuously develops his/her own work, as well as his/her own theory of practice. The ability for critical self-assessment and reflection represents a central part of a teacher's professional skills.

The ability to think and work independently and the ability to collaborate with others are essential qualities for a teacher to produce fresh ideas and to further develop the working environment/educational institute. Under the pressure of continuous change, the ability for personal reflection and the ability to make independent decisions are also vital for a teacher.

Continuous professional development, both at an individual and at the work community level, demands that a teacher should have an ability to self-assess and regulate his/her own actions. Critical self-reflection is not only essential at the individual level, but also at the organisation level. In this way, communication becomes an essential tool, which enables a common understanding to be formed among the work community.

Development of the educational environment also requires skills related to the use of knowledge. The issues related to the use of knowledge are connected to teachers' work ethics. In the same way that the planning of learning processes and learning environments is connected to the issues that mirror a teacher's idea of the future goals, the use of information and knowledge is also related to value

choices. These are apparent when a teacher chooses an area to research and develop and is committed to promoting the issues that s/he sees important.

## 5. Summary

The main change trends of Finnish society, their influence on education and accordingly teachers' competences have been summarized in Table 1. The table shows in a nutshell what kinds of competences are emphasized at the moment in Finland. The described teachers' competences are not only essential in Finnish society but similar demands and needs have been raised up in all parts of Europe.

**Table 1. The main changes in Finland and teachers' competences**

Changes in operational environment	Impacts on education	Teachers' competencies
<b>Social and cultural change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• migration</li> <li>• fragmentation of society</li> <li>• pluralistic communality based on social and cultural exchange</li> <li>• change of values</li> <li>• information society, use of new tech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• education system offers all members of society a solid general education or vocational training</li> <li>• the education system promotes and maintains values which favour communality and the acceptance of difference, as well as encourages active membership of civil society</li> <li>• inclusion in information society, all citizens have access to technical devices and skills in their use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learner centred approach skills</li> <li>• social and interaction skills</li> <li>• facilitation learning skills of the diverse students</li> <li>• ICT skills</li> </ul>
<b>Demographic and labour developments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• labour force decreases</li> <li>• immigration increases</li> <li>• jobs are not created or they are created abroad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all members of youth age groups receive post-compulsory and post-secondary vocational/professional education</li> <li>• the knowledge and skills of the adult labour force are upgraded</li> <li>• adult education and training services are increased and the recruitment of immigrants is intensified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developmental approach skills</li> <li>• teaching and facilitating learning skills</li> </ul>

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Changes in operational environment	Impacts on education	Teachers' competencies
<b>Developments in labour demand</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With the change in production structures, the content of work will change in all jobs</li> <li>Knowledge demands will grow</li> <li>All jobs will require proficiency in information and communications technology</li> <li>all occupations will increasingly require language and communication skills, co-operation skills and creativity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to further raise the level of education and knowledge</li> <li>responding to the labour demand both in knowledge-intensive occupations</li> <li>the right quantifications and a better matching of initial and adult education and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contextual skills</li> <li>skills to update professional knowledge of your own field</li> <li>developmental approach skills</li> </ul>
<b>Regional development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>trend towards regional concentration will continue</li> <li>regional disparities will grow, large differences between regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>welfare and competitiveness is based on the vitality and innovativeness of the regions, which is promoted by means of regionally comprehensive education and research activities</li> <li>securing basic resources in all parts of the country</li> <li>coordinating the development aims of national education and science policy and regional policy</li> <li>stepping up cooperation with local working life and other stakeholders</li> <li>linking education and research with regional industrial and welfare strategies</li> <li>intensifying regional foresight</li> <li>extending the international infrastructure in the regions, and enhancing links between immigration and education policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developmental approach skills</li> <li>contextual skills</li> <li>cooperation and networking skills</li> </ul>