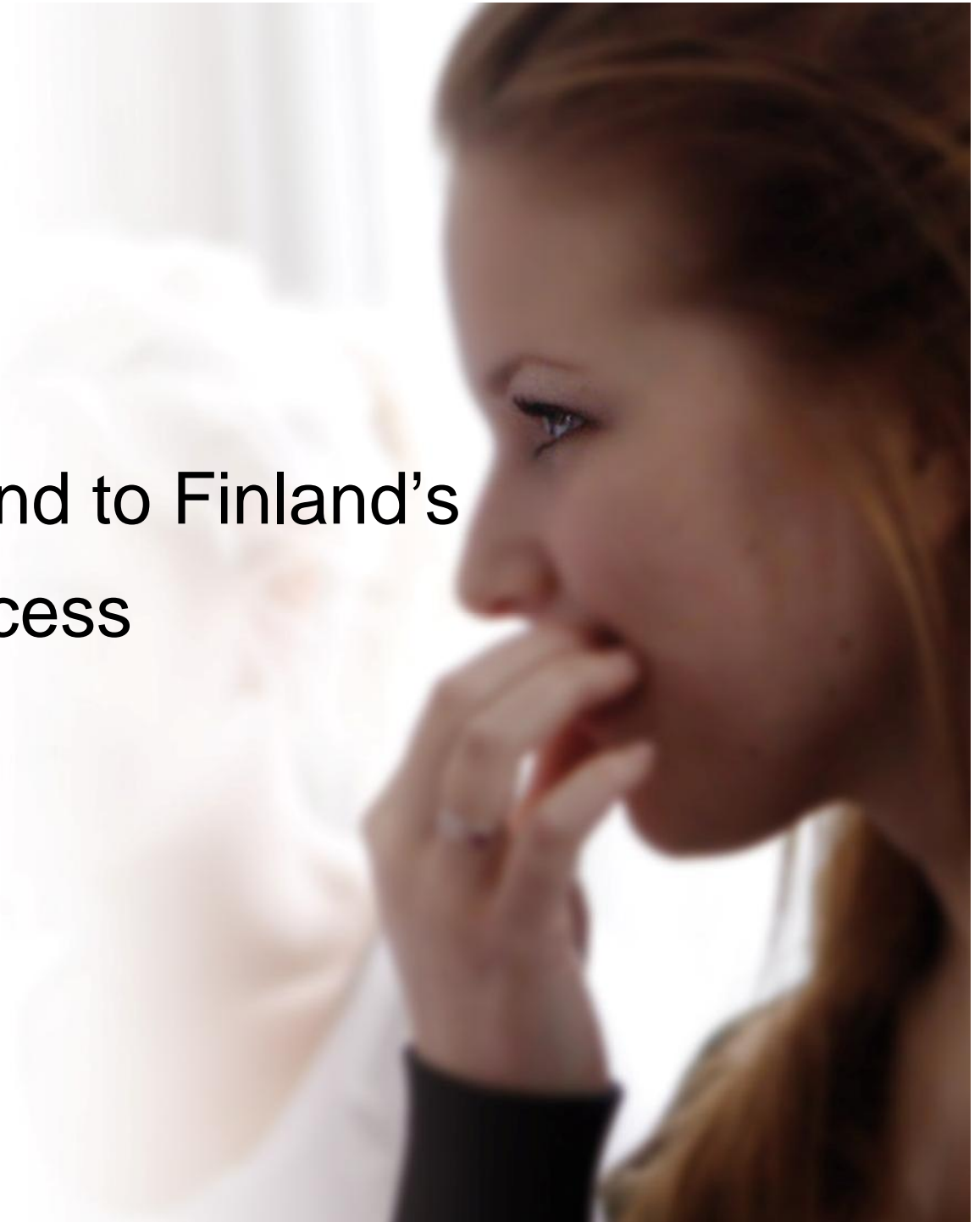


PISA09

Background to Finland's
PISA success



PISA 2009

- PISA gauges the learning outcome of students aged 15 in mathematical, scientific and reading literacy. PISA assesses to what extent students have acquired knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society and the variation in these skills over time.
- The foremost aim in PISA is not to assess the attainment of aims recorded in curricula and command of learning contents as such, but to assess students' knowledge and competencies in contexts as close to real-life situations as possible.
- The review is conducted every three years. In PISA 2009 there were 65 participating countries /economies.

Finnish results

- Main focus area (reading literacy): the mean performance of Finnish students was ranked 3rd, after Korea and the non-OECD participant Shanghai.
- In scientific literacy: Finland came 2nd after Shanghai
- In mathematical literacy: Finland was 2nd best among the OECD countries and sixth among all participating countries and economies.
- In Finland PISA 2009 comprised 203 schools, The sample was 6,415 students, of whom 91% completed the assignment. In Finland PISA 2009 was conducted by the Institute for Educational Research (University of Jyväskylä).

Equal opportunities

- Finnish education system offers everybody equal opportunities for education, irrespective of domicile, sex, economic situation or linguistic and cultural background.
- Basic education encompasses nine years and caters for all those between 7 and 16 years. Schools do not select their students but every student can go to the school of his or her own school district.
- The school network is regionally extensive, and there are no sex-specific school services.
- Basic education is completely free of charge (including instruction, school materials, school meals, health care, dental care, commuting, special needs education and remedial teaching).

Competent teachers

- On all school levels, teachers are highly qualified and committed.
- They require Master's degrees, and teacher education includes teaching practice.
- Teaching profession is very popular in Finland, and universities can select the most motivated and talented applicants.
- Teachers work independently and have strong autonomy towards their work.

Student counselling and intensified and special support in learning

- Individual support for the learning and welfare of pupils is well accommodated, and the national core curriculum contains guidelines for the purpose.
- Special needs education is integrated into regular education as far as possible.
- Guidance counsellors help upper grade students in their choice of further education and studying methods.
- Education is based on a conception of learning that focuses on students' activity and interaction with the teacher, other students and the learning environment.

Encouraging evaluation

- The evaluation of the learning outcomes of schools and students is encouraging and supportive by nature.
- The aim is to produce information that helps both schools and students develop.
- There are no national testing of learning outcomes, school ranking lists or inspection systems.

A flexible system based on empowerment

- The education system is flexible and the administration is strongly based on delegation and support.
- Centralised steering is conducted through the aims set by laws and decrees as well as by the national core curriculum.
- Municipalities are responsible for the organisation of education and the implementation of the aims.
- Schools and teachers have a lot of independent autonomy in the provision and contents of education.

Co-operation

- Interaction and building of partnerships is sought at all levels of activity.
- There is co-operation for the development of schools between various levels of administration, between schools and other social actors and schools.
- Education authorities work in co-operation with teachers' organisations, subject associations and school leadership organisations. This has provided strong support for development activities.

Significance of education in society

- Finnish society strongly favours education and the population is highly educated by international standards.
- Nearly 75 per cent of Finns aged 25-to-64 have at least secondary certificates (matriculation examination or a vocational qualification) and one third have higher education diplomas.
- Education is appreciated and there is a broad political consensus on education policy.