

Teacher education in Finland



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Finland's high level of education and competence is based on high-quality teacher education. The profession of a teacher is regulated, and the qualifications required from teachers are defined in legislation.

The statutes in question list the studies, qualifications and work experience established as qualification requirements for different teaching posts. In Finland, the majority of teachers (some 88%) fulfil the requirements set for their position. The Finnish National Board of Education issues decisions concerning the recognition of foreign teaching qualifications in Finland.

PREDOMINANTLY FEMALE PROFESSION

Approximately 63,500 teachers work in basic education and the upper secondary level (general upper secondary school and vocational education and training) and in liberal adult education. The majority of teachers are women. Out of teachers working in basic education, more than 70% are women; the corresponding figure for vocational education and training is

slightly more than a half. The majority of teachers are employed by municipalities.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DECIDE ON STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND THE CONTENTS OF THE EDUCATION THEMSELVES

In Finland, teachers are required to have a master's degree with the exception of kindergarten teachers, whose qualification requirements include a bachelor's degree. In Finland, teacher education is a popular field of study, and higher education institutions are in a position to select the most well-suited and the most motivated

applicants for their programmes.

Higher education institutions decide on student admissions and admission criteria independently. Entrance tests of universities are used to assess aspects such as academic studying skills and aptitude for the profession. In the admissions process for professional teacher education, the areas assessed include competence and expertise in the specific field of teaching, to be demonstrated through work experience and qualifications.

In Finland, higher education institutions decide independently on the contents of teacher education. The link between teaching and research is emphasised in the education. The objective is to produce teachers with a research-orientation in their work who are capable of independent problem-solving and have the capacity to utilise the most recent research in the fields of education and

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the subjects taught. Using these skills, the teacher is able to independently develop both him or herself as a teacher and his or her work community in cooperation with the rest of the staff of the educational institution.

Teacher education offered at universities provides the student with capabilities for acting independently as a teacher, instructor and educator. The objective of professional teacher education is to provide the student with the skills and knowledge to guide the learning of different students and the capabilities to develop his or her field of teaching taking into account developments in the world of work and different professions.

All teacher education also involves pedagogical studies and guided teaching practice, which is implemented in the universities' own schools for teaching practice or other schools nominated for the purpose. Guided teaching practice involves the giving of lessons, guidance discussions and familiarisation with tasks and responsibilities related to various issues arising in the everyday life of schools. The aim is for students in teacher education to become independent and responsible teachers and learn self-development, become increasingly proficient in their own

subject and learn to develop the work community in cooperation with other members of teaching staff.

TEACHER EDUCATION IS DEVELOPED CONSTANTLY

The qualitative and quantitative development needs of teacher education are explored regularly through various evaluations, forecasts and data collection.

Focus points in developing the content of teacher education include the teaching and guidance of students requiring a greater level of support, the development of learning environments, the utilisation of information and communication technology, issues related to a multicultural society, cooperation between school and home and cooperation with the world of work.

THE WORK OF TEACHERS IS VERY INDEPENDENT

In Finland, teachers have many professional freedoms and opportunities to impact their work and the development of their work community. Teachers have the power to decide which teaching methods and learning materials they want to use. The Finnish system is based on trust in teachers and

teacher education. In Finland, no national evaluation or registration of teachers takes place.

REGULAR IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

The work performed by teachers is demanding and requires regular in-service education and the opportunity for further education. The parties responsible for the in-service education of teaching staff are the teachers themselves and their employers, most commonly municipalities. The employer is responsible for education based on the collective agreement for public servants; the minimum duration of this education is three working days outside of school days per academic year.

In addition to the employer, also the Ministry of Education and Culture supports the in-service education of teachers. The objective of state-financed in-service education is to provide principals and teachers with equal opportunities to develop their competence. ●