

Welfare Development: The Finnish Experience



Education for All

Lay-out: Innocorp Oy
Fotographs: National Board of Antiquities, Reijo Pasanen
Printed by: Erweko Painotuote Oy 2002

Welfare Development:

The Finnish Experience Education for All

This brochure is the second in a series of publications issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The series aims to highlight some of the main features of Finland's social and economic development up to the present.

Development models and strategies are neither exportable nor importable – each country must find its own solutions. We believe, however, that Finland's experience is of value to others, because as late as the beginning of the 20th century Finland was a poor country, commonly held to be one of the backward corners of Europe. At the beginning of the 21st century Finland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

This particular publication tells about education as a cornerstone of the Finnish

development strategy. The most noteworthy message from Finland's own experience is that the provision of comprehensive and free basic education for everyone is an investment that pays off. We in Finland started to make these investments long before Finland became a wealthy, high income industrialised country. Looking back at this development, one can argue that investments in the education system have been a prerequisite for the economic development that we have achieved.



Satu Hassi

Minister for Development Cooperation



How education became the driver of well-being in Finland

In spite of the country's small population, Finland starts the third millennium as one of the world's most prosperous countries and a global leader in such fields as communications technology. Finns firmly believe that the nation's high level of education is one of the main reasons for its situation today.

The extension of education to the whole population began long ago, when Finland was still a poor country, thought of as just a wilderness on the fringes of Europe. The main principles of the Finnish education system that has developed over the years are as follows:

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- Basic comprehensive education is provided for everyone and is the same for all children, girls as well as boys, regardless of the financial status of their families.
- Secondary, technical and higher education is free, including university tuition.
- Teaching is conducted in the pupil's mother tongue.
- General basic education is organized and financed by local authorities, with assistance from the central government. The central government itself is responsible for university education. Vocational training is partly the responsibility of the local authorities and partly the responsibility of the central government.



Long journeys to school sometimes affected attendance, particularly in rural areas. In wintertime pupils traditionally skied to school.



Before proper schools were built, classes were often held in the living rooms of large houses. Picture from 1922.

In Finland today, about 59 percent of the population aged 15-74 are secondary school graduates, about 23 percent of whom have a higher education degree. 60% of Finnish males have graduated from high school and 22% of these school graduates have a higher education degree as well. The corresponding figures for women are 59% and 25% respectively. According to a recently published international study, the level of literacy of young Finns is the highest of all OECD countries and their knowledge of mathematics and natural sciences is excellent. The number of adult students is also continually increasing –nowadays people talk about lifelong education.

Finland spent 6,6% of its GDP on education in 1999, a higher proportion than most OECD countries. The central government covered about 57% of the education costs incurred by

the local authorities. The creation and upkeep of a universal and almost completely free educational framework requires considerable public expenditure. It is part of the country's national welfare strategy that also promotes the creation of social capital and considers that raising the level of general culture is a goal in its own right. It is, however, also a productive investment. Finnish culture as a whole is very pro-educational. Finnish people believe that educational equality is vital for success in a world of ever-increasing international competition.

In Finland today, it is expected that education will become more cost-efficient and of still better quality, and that education and research should at the same time promote innovation and consequent economical growth.

Public education in the national language since the 1860s

Building up the school system and raising the overall level of education has required perseverance and hard work, and often involved political contests as well. The system can never be completely finalized, of course, but will continue to take new forms and adapt to the rapidly changing needs of society

Public education in Finnish began in the 1860s. The original source of schooling in the native tongue in Finland had been the Church, as it had been in a number of other countries. Finland was part of the Kingdom of Sweden from the 12th century to the beginning of the 19th century. In the 16th century, the Swedish King Gustav Vasa established the Lutheran Church as the national church of Finland. Lutheran principles included the ideal that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language. Indeed, the Church itself began to teach people to read and literacy became one of requirements that a person had to fulfil in order to get married.

In 1809 Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire. The official language of Finland at this time was still Swedish. The most important means of education for ordinary Finnish speakers took the form of travelling schools organized by the Church, in which farmhouses and log cabins

were used as classrooms. University courses were conducted in Swedish, and this was also the language of the academies that prepared students for university-level education. Swedish was primarily the language of the upper class, whilst the great majority of the population spoke Finnish as their native tongue.

The nationalist movement in the 19th century strove to establish the Finnish language of the majority as an official language. The movement's other goals included national public education taught in Finnish.

The study of Finnish as a language became part of the curriculum in the secondary schools that led up to a university education in 1843. The first secondary school to actually teach in Finnish started lessons in 1858. A couple of decades later the number of Finnish-language schools increased greatly, thanks to the struggle that had been waged to establish them.

In the middle of the 19th century, people also fought hard for access to education to be extended to the whole population. A national school system, independent of the Church, was set up in 1866. Three years later, a Supervisory Board of Education was established under the Ministry of Education to inspect, monitor and govern the school system in Finland. Elementary schools were free of charge to

pupils, unlike secondary schools, which were virtually reserved for the elite. Elementary schools were also coeducational, teaching girls and boys together right from the beginning. Lessons were conducted in either Finnish or Swedish, depending on the native language of the students in the class. The contents of the curriculum were the same for both languages. The schools also taught practical skills that would be useful to rural households in everyday life. Through the national school system, the understanding of hygiene and life skills and good habits so important to people's health became firmly established throughout the whole population.

In the beginning, local communities were left to look after the building of schools themselves. Many village schools were built on the basis of voluntary work by the villagers in those days when education itself was a voluntary matter. The Church's travelling schools had more students than the local secular schools right up to the beginning of the 20th century.

By the 1890s, national public education had put down firm roots and was expanding. The system was also strengthened by the training of teachers, which started in 1863. Throughout the 20th century there was a distinct difference between basic primary education and higher secondary education, a difference which also separated the common masses from the elite. However, elementary schools started to take the form of the stepping-stones on the way to secondary and higher education. A basis was thus established for integrating the education of the common people with the more traditional



A handicraft class about 1950.

forms of upper class higher education, a development which was also a decisive factor in the promotion of social equality.

In 1898 local authorities were made more strictly responsible for providing schools in order to ensure that children living in sparsely populated rural areas would also be able to obtain an education. This responsibility was linked to the creation of school districts with a radius of five kilometres. The establishment of geographical equality was difficult, however. The schooling of many children suffered from their having a long way to go to reach the school.

The young Republic of Finland established compulsory education in 1921

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Finland declared independence in December 1917, after the October revolution in Russia. During its first few months of independence, the country endured all the suffering of a civil war. After the war was over, the newly constituted republic made the important reforms that created the basis for future social stability. One of these reforms was the compulsory education law of 1921. In the beginning it concerned children from the ages of 7 to 13 years old. Compulsory education does not mean forced attendance at school, but rather the responsibility to obtain an education according to the national school syllabus. The law also means that local authorities must provide all the children with the possibility to go to school. Many authorities were reluctant to set up schools, because they were a burden on the finances of the poor rural communities. In 1970,

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
(Education for all, EFA Goals)

compulsory education was extended to cover all 7-15 year olds.

After the Second World War, the rapid rise in the birth rate made education planning difficult. The 1945-50 post-war generation was particularly large. The number of people eligible for schooling increased right up to 1960, but has continually decreased since then. The number of rural elementary schools began to decline toward the end of the 1950s, as school-age groups grew smaller and movement from the countryside to the urban centres accelerated.

The progress of general basic education in Finland was assisted by the careful development of the national school system and the rapid increase in the numbers of secondary schools leading up to university-level education. This latter development was partly assisted by private funding,



A law passed in 1943 required local authorities to provide free school meals for elementary school pupils.

reflecting the positive attitude that Finnish people take to education.

In 1943 a law was passed requiring local authorities to provide school children with a free school meal. Some authorities had already been providing such meals, in some cases,

indeed, since the beginning of the century. The local authorities were given five years to comply. The meals offered were simple soups or porridges and students were expected to bring their own milk or bread if they wanted them to accompany the meal.

The education of women paves the way to welfare

The early women's movements called for equality for women in work, education and politics. Finnish women were granted the right to vote and to be elected to parliament in 1905. Then, in 1907, when Finland was still part of the Russian empire, the first single-chamber parliamentary elections were held and the first female members of parliament in the world were elected.

The women's movement in Finland paid particular attention to the improvement of access to higher education for women. Finnish elementary schools were coeducational from the start, but secondary schools in the beginning mainly taught boys. The women's movement pushed for the expansion of female education. A statute of 1885 decreed that all state secondary schools offering education for girls should provide teaching equivalent to the first five classes of the secondary schools from which people went to university. In other words, it became possible to advance from girls' schools to the higher levels of education that

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. (EFA Goals)

led to the university.

As the secondary school system developed, women's high school education became more and more common, spreading especially fast during the two decades before the First World War. At first there were separate secondary schools for boys and for girls. Later on, secondary schools started to be founded which took both boys and girls, which increased the attendance level of female students. The number of girls in secondary education surpassed the number of boys in 1911.

The national elementary school system was one of the first state organisations to employ large numbers of women. The "folk high school" movement for adult education, which became influential at the end of the 19th century, also strengthened the development of female education, with a significant portion of its student body being farmers daughters.

Women who studied at university at the end of the 19th century had to apply for special permission to take part in the lessons. The first

Finnish's woman to obtain a master's degree graduated in 1882. The last restrictions on women's university studies were removed at the beginning of the 20th century. Soon after Finland became independent, a fifth of all Finnish university students were women, and by the 1950s they constituted approximately half of the incoming university student body. Women came to form the majority of university students in the 1980s.

A high level of female education means above all that all citizens can make a full contribution to developing their society. In addition, educational equality between the sexes has considerably helped the creation of the modern welfare state. In rural areas women have always done their share of work on the

farms. In the towns, too, the proportion of women dedicated purely to their own household and childcare duties has always been very low. The services run by the government and local authorities have been important professions for female workers. Thus women have not been forced to be satisfied with just temporary jobs. The expansion of public services, such as children's day care, has also made it possible for women to take paid employment outside the home.

The continual improvement in women's education has helped women find places in the job market. Women now make up almost half of the Finnish labour force. Today, Finnish women under 55 years old are on average more highly educated than men of the same age.



A modern school cafeteria. The school day still includes a free school meal.

Establishment of unified quality basic education for everyone in the 1970s

Right up to the 1960s, the only education common to all children was the first four years of elementary school. After this stage, about half the pupils would transfer to secondary school, which they could attend from the 5th to the 8th year. Eight years of secondary schooling was a requirement for entrance to university and higher trade and technical schools. Secondary schools charged fees. In practice, however, there were various adjustment arrangements whereby the less wealthy could also obtain an education. Schools had, for example, some places for non-paying pupils, and some schools had lower fees. Those who did not transfer to a secondary school continued their schooling for a few more years in the elementary school, and from there they

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.
(EFA Goals)

had the possibility to continue to a lower-level vocational school.

In the 1970s the school system was reorganised and a basic school education lasting nine years became the norm for the whole country. This was preceded by a gradual process of bringing the educational levels of the elementary and secondary school teachers into line with each other.

Folk high schools for adult education, on the same model as in other Nordic countries, and many

other less formal institutions, such as rural home economics, skills and agricultural institutes, played a helpful part in the extension of basic education. Their national network has been later utilized by the Open University and in adult education work. Non-formal studies also offered special opportunities to women in rural areas.

Higher education – from exclusive privilege to universal availability

Secondary schooling was established as an eight-year process already a century and a half ago. The three highest years, the upper secondary grades, came to form the distinctive basis for a university education. Education began to evolve into a composite organisation in which the government determined the relations between the different parts. The government's role became that of a regulator, with other bodies carrying out the actual teaching. For example the responsibility for the high school student examinations, which students had to pass to be allowed to study at university, was gradually transferred to the secondary schools. During the early period of independence these student examinations became secondary school graduation examinations and success in them no longer meant one would be automatically accepted into the university.

The university has had an exceptionally great influence on the history of education in Finland. University students played an important part in the creation of the national state. Thus, for example, the status of Finland's oldest university, the University of Helsinki, was made particularly secure in the constitution of the independent republic that was drawn up in 1919.

Helsinki University was the only university in Finland for a long time. In 1908 a university-

level technical college was created, after which other colleges also started to teach commercial subjects at university level. From the early years of independence the university system expanded rapidly and the number of university students also increased. In the early 1960s there were 5,000 new university students every year. This led to a wave of creation of new universities and colleges for post-secondary education, which did not come to an end until 1979.

Finland was basically an agricultural country until the 1950s. From the 1960s onward, Finland has developed as an industrial and service economy. Universities and other post-secondary education institutes have been established throughout the country with the aim of promoting regional equality. The country currently has 21 universities and polytechnics and other tertiary education institutes, with a total enrolment of 152,000 students. There are also 31 vocational colleges with a further total of about 100,000 students. Finland's total population is approximately 5.2 million.

Throughout the nine years of basic schooling both teaching and learning materials are free of charge. In the senior high schools (equivalent to sixth-form colleges in Britain) and in higher education thereafter, however, students have to acquire their own books. Most university-level students simply use the free library facilities.

Teachers are a powerful resource for national development

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One of the reasons why elementary schooling spread so slowly in Finland was that people did not want to rush into a new form of education without being sure of having enough competent teachers. In 1863 teachers started to be trained in special colleges on four-year courses. Thanks to the teacher training colleges, the number of teachers without proper qualifications was reduced to a small proportion of the whole profession. This proportion increased only temporarily during periods when there was a rapid increase in the number of schools: at the turn of the century, when local authorities became responsible for establishing schools; after the civil war in 1918; and when the “baby boom” generation, born after the Second World War, reached school age.

To ensure a competent body of teaching staff, teacher training colleges were set up in different parts of the country. Particularly in rural areas, teachers were offered special benefits to top up their low wages - cheap housing, for example, and the wood to heat it.

Improving all aspects
of the quality of
education and
ensuring excellence
of all so that
recognized and
measurable learning
outcomes are
achieved by all,
especially in literacy,
numeracy and
essential life skills.
(EFA Goals)

Elementary school teachers were mainly women right from the start, and the majority of teachers worked in rural areas until the basic school reforms of the 1970s. Rural elementary schools developed strongly from the 1930s to the 1950s, but increasing urbanization thereafter reversed the trend and the number of schools and teachers in rural areas declined.

Elementary school teachers played an important part in Finland’s development as a nation in many respects. They were the driving force of progress in whom people trusted. They instilled religious and nationalistic values into the community, sometimes quite harshly, but simultaneously transformed the backward rural schools of ordinary people into the

first step on the path of education for everyone. Teachers engaged actively in local social and cultural affairs and were expected to set good examples of behaviour.

Elementary teachers were often left in the shadow of secondary school teachers who had been educated at university, so they fought for

better pay and status by demanding higher levels of training. The creation of a pedagogic college in 1934 was a significant breakthrough in terms of teacher training quality.

The high level of teacher training has been considered one of the main reasons for the high quality of education in Finland. During the

1970s, teacher training courses became broader-based and the training period gradually increased from two years to three. By the end of the 1970s all primary and comprehensive school teachers had master's degrees. Pre-school teachers, too, have been required to possess a bachelor's degree since the early 1990s.



School architecture has changed considerably over the years

Schools can teach in many languages

As long as Finland was part of the Kingdom of Sweden, the language of education was Swedish. When Finland became an autonomous part of the Russian Empire, teaching in Finnish started to develop alongside the traditional Swedish. Gradually Finnish and Swedish became established as teaching languages in both primary and secondary schools. In some educational sectors Russian was also added to the curriculum, but no efforts were made to introduce it into schools as a language of instruction.

Educational requirements were the same in all elementary schools no matter which language was spoken. The curriculum of secondary schools was dictated by the high school student examination, which was originally the university entrance examination organised by the University of Helsinki, but which later became established as the high-schools' own graduation examination.

Not until late in the 19th century did it become possible to study in Finnish in the senior high schools which led on to university. The use of Finnish as a language of instruction at university level became more widespread at the turn of the century during the period of the

nationalistic movement. The language of instruction at Helsinki University was Swedish throughout the 19th century, although some theses, and even lectures, gradually began to be presented in Finnish. The battle of languages in the academic world came to an end only during the 1930s. When Finnish finally won its place as the language of instruction in the University of Helsinki, a separate university for Swedish-speaking students was founded, Åbo Akademi University in Turku, as well as a number of Swedish-speaking specialist university-level institutions.

With the basic education reforms of 1970 there also came an improvement with regard to basic education in their own language for the Lapp-speaking members of the population. The Lapps are an indigenous people who live in Finnish Lapland, in the northernmost part of the country. Today only 0.03 percent of the Finnish population is Lapp-speaking, so the group is very small. On the other hand only about 6 percent of the population is Swedish-speaking, but this group's right to all-round education, including university education, in their native language is extremely well safeguarded.

From craftsmen's workshops to universities of business and technology

The main form of professional and technical training up until the 19th century was indentured apprenticeship, which meant that an experienced professional would train a young person into their chosen profession. This form of vocational training had its roots in class-based society and the guild system. The guild system was discontinued in 1869 and the organization of public vocational training surged ahead. Handicraft institutes were set up around the country, and at the same time attempts were made to modernize the indentured apprenticeship system. Vocational training schools and colleges in the modern sense did not appear until the 20th century. Their development was slowed by problems both in resolving the division of responsibilities between the public and private sectors, and in determining the relationship between academic education and vocational training.

The general education provided by the elementary schools included teaching the practical skills that were important for agriculture. The same emphasis was also to be

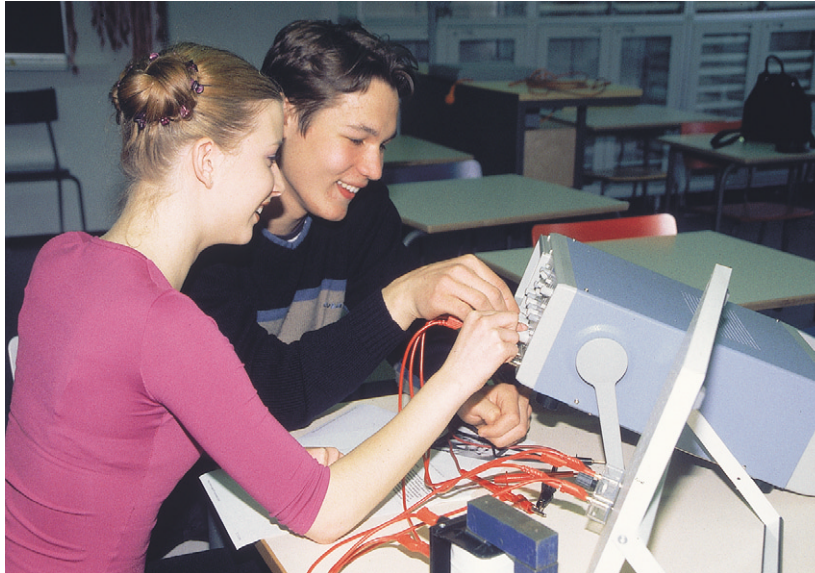
Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. (EFA Goals)

found in the schools with their own curricula that became more widespread at the end of the 19th century in the form of boarding schools. From the 1840s onward, vocational training developed at college level. Colleges and institutes of agriculture, forestry, technology and commerce were set up. They formed the basis for the university-level education in those fields that began in the first few decades of the 20th century.

National vocational training was overshadowed by elementary and secondary school education. It developed slowly and discriminated against women. Even in the 1920s, there were virtually no female students in the technical and industrial institutes. This situation changed in the following decade.

The most important training schools in rural areas in the 1920s and 1930s were those teaching handicrafts. They supported small-scale production and also took part in sales activities. There were more students in the handicraft schools and colleges than in the colleges of agriculture, forestry or commerce.

Local authority vocational institutes started



Teachers provide illustrations and demonstrations whenever possible. Pupils here are learning physics.

to be established during the Second World War. In 1939 a law was passed providing local authorities with governmental aid for, among other things, the cost of setting up workshops in vocational training institutes. Then, in 1942, the vocational education department of the Ministry of Trade and Industry was formed. Nevertheless a proper national vocational education system was created only after a law was passed in 1958, requiring towns and cities with populations of more than 20,000 to establish vocational institutes. The number of students enrolled in vocational institutes began to rise rapidly and they became the path of further education for elementary school pupils who did not go on to academic secondary schools.

Teacher training for vocational institutes was not systematised until the 1960s. In 1966 the National Board of Vocational Education was set up. The integration of vocational institutes into the overall education system also required reforms. Toward the end of the 1970s it was thought that everyone finishing his or her basic education should be offered the opportunity to continue studying, either in a higher secondary school or at a vocational institute. The aim was to diminish the unnecessarily sharp gap between academic and practical studies. This was achieved with the reforms made concerning university-level studies at vocational institutes in the 1990s. Today students can follow degree courses at vocational universities as well as at academic



Modern classrooms are adaptable and well equipped.

ones. After many reforms to the educational system, Finland has developed a flexible framework in which academic education can lead to vocational training, and vice versa.

Arranging a vocational training system that fits the needs of working life in terms of quantity, quality and content has been a challenging task for Finland. Professionalism is particularly emphasised. In addition to academic degree courses, there are extensive professional development programmes available, which are tightly linked to a student's own work and career.

The slow procedure of organizing vocational training created some problems in the 1960s, as the structure of Finland's national economy was changing and unemployment became a

problem. In 1966 a law was passed under which vocational training course activities could be used to help the employment situation. Finland also followed the OECD's recommendations very closely, and in the 1970s a national network of vocational training course centres was created. As well as that, vocational adult education has been used to raise the level of professional skills of the growing number of older workers.

The value of higher education – the driving force of development

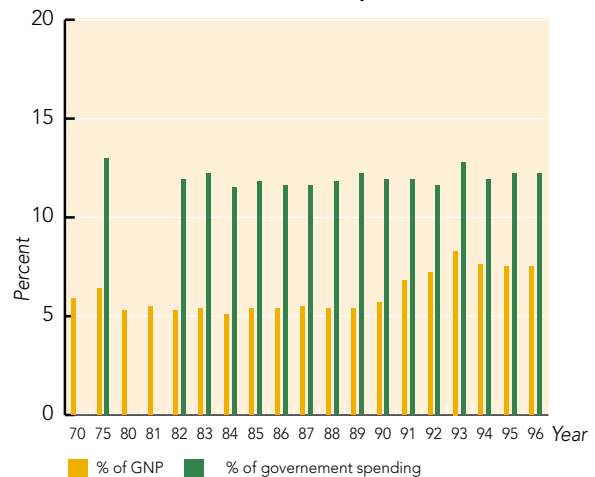
Finnish people both appreciate and respect a university education, as can be seen from the noticeably increasing growth in the number of students. The popularity of the Open University and of polytechnics provides the latest manifestation of this trend. Underlying Finland's exceptionally dense network of institutes of higher education is the pro-educational attitude of Finnish culture. Toward the end of the 1960s Finland also made a conscious effort to expand university level education and provided increased budgetary allocations to fund it.

This expansion of higher education did not mean a break the traditional principle that education is practically free for students. Only in the Open University and higher vocational education has the idea of students paying some part for their tuition been accepted for the time being. The framework of the Finnish welfare state has also included financial assistance for students while they are actively studying. The student financial aid program for its part has made it possible for higher education to become widely available. The education system has helped to diminish social inequalities. Schooling has enabled people to rise in society. Nevertheless there are, still today, educational differences between people of different social

groups, so equality in terms of education has not been completely achieved. The children of highly educated parents still apply to universities more than the children of less educated parents.

Education has benefited from the fact that industrialisation came to Finland later than to many other European nations. Finland thus gained a competitive advantage over countries equipped with older technologies. Alongside

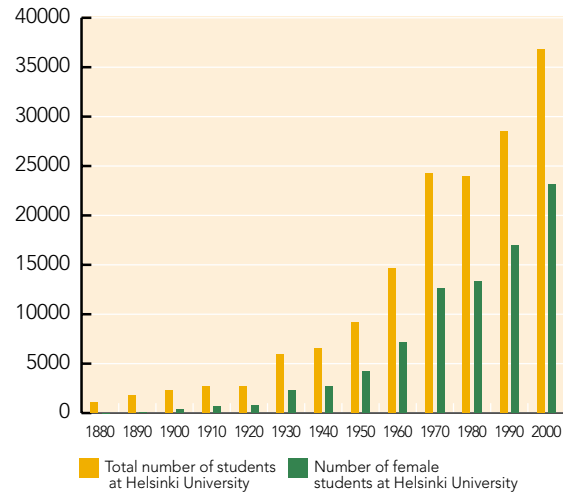
Spending on Education as a Percent of Total Expenditure



their traditionally strong industrial sectors, Finns have rapidly developed outstanding know-how in new information technology industries. This would hardly have been possible without long and sustained investments in education and research.

Finland's information technology weighted economic growth was also the base for developments in the sphere of industrial production structure. Starting from the 1960s, for example, electro-technical production grew faster than average rate of growth in manufacturing industry. Finns are now looking at economic development possibilities in the fields of cultural and entertainment industries and biotechnology. The birth of networks of innovation based on a high level of education has been central to change.

Students at the University of Helsinki



Vocational schools and colleges and students working for a vocational qualification in the 1990/91-1998/99 school years

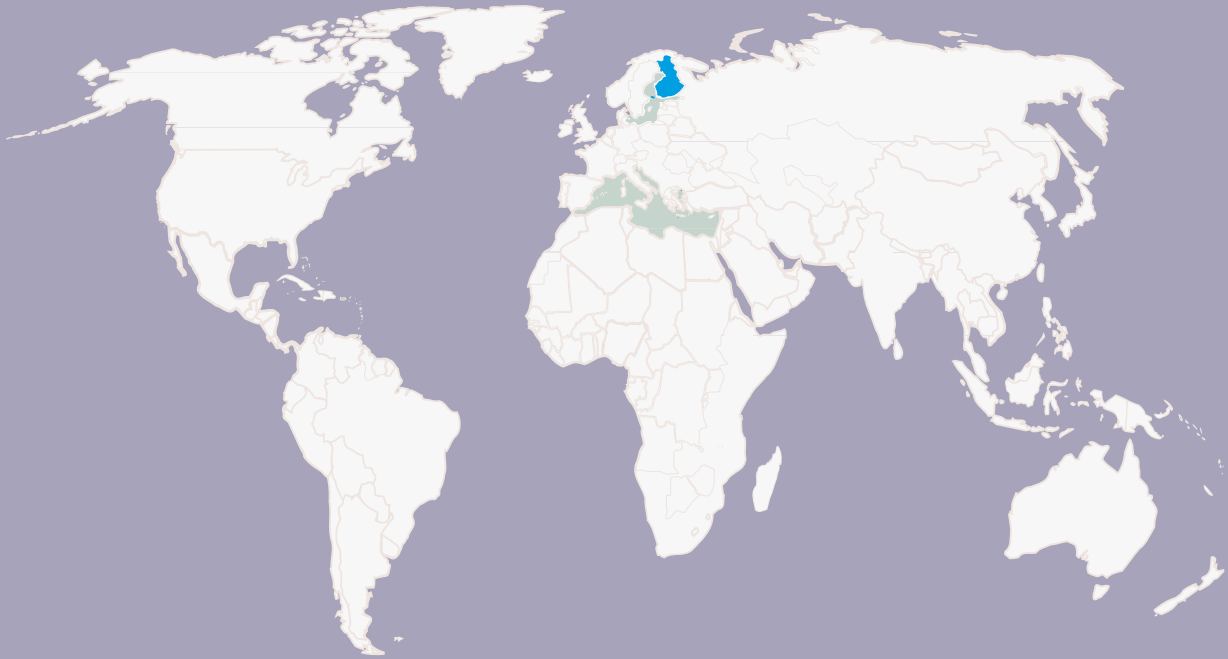
	Institutions	Students	Females %	Students in adult programmes %	Qualifications completed
1990/91	546	162 535	54,5	8,7	55 666
1995/96	458	171 577	52,6	15,4	66 851
1996/97	401	166 009	52,0	13,7	62 411
1997/98	350	153 656	50,5	11,9	59 806
1998/99	327	137 741	50	10,7	

Source: Statistics Finland

The Goals of Education for All

We hereby collectively commit ourselves to the attainment of the following goals:

- (I) expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- (II) ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- (III) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- (IV) achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- (V) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- (VI) improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.



FINLAND IN BRIEF

- A constitutional republic, independent since 1917
- 5.2 million inhabitants, a total area of 338,000 square kilometres and a population density of 16 persons per square kilometre
- Life expectancy at birth of 73.7 years for males and 81.0 years for females
- GNP per capita USD 24,280 (1998)
- Member of the European Union since 1995

Finland is an advanced industrial economy with a high standard of living and a functioning social welfare system. One of the priorities on the political agenda has been to ensure that women enjoy equal rights and opportunities. The majority of Finnish women (85%) work outside the home and are active in political life. Of the 200 members of the present Parliament, 74 are women. The

President of the Republic is Ms. Tarja Halonen, the first woman to hold the office in Finland.

All children receive compulsory basic education between the ages of 7 and 16. More than half of the population have completed post-primary education and 13% have a university degree or an equivalent qualification.

The financing and organisation of health care has been considered a public responsibility for a long time in Finland. The main responsibility for arranging health care services lies with the municipalities while the state defines the general policy lines and directs the health care system at the national level. The public health services are mainly financed out of tax revenues. Everyone in Finland has a right to health care regardless of financial situation, social status or place of residence.

This brochure is the second in a series of publications issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The series aims to highlight some of the main features of Finland's social and economic development up to the present.

This particular publication tells about education as a cornerstone of the Finnish development strategy. The most noteworthy message from Finland's own experience is that the provision of comprehensive and

free basic education for everyone is an investment that pays off.

Finland started to make these investments long before it became a wealthy, high income industrialised country. Looking back at this development, one can argue that investments in the education system have been a prerequisite for the economic development that Finland has achieved.

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