

***EDUCATION INTO THE FUTURE! project plan
- The Finnish participation in the OECD/CERI Schooling for Tomorrow
project***

1. Background

1.1. Finland joins the Schooling for Tomorrow

Schooling for Tomorrow (SfT) is an OECD/CERI project that aims to develop tools for educational futures thinking and anticipation. The project was launched in 1997. The first phase of the project focused on the analysis of trends in the society and methods of futures thinking, resulting in six scenarios for schooling systems. These scenarios were introduced in *Educational Policy Analysis*, a publication that served as background material for the Conference of Ministers of Education in 2001. Simultaneously, an analysis of innovations, networks and the significance of information and communication technology in education was being carried out. The second phase of the project was exploring the practical applications of futures thinking in a small group of countries (Ontario/Canada, England, the Netherlands, and New Zealand). Another strand of the phase two was the analysis of the issues relating to the demand for education and personalisation of learning.

The recently launched third phase of the project will include a significant number of OECD countries. The purpose of the third phase is to systematise the knowledge base concerning the school of tomorrow and continue and expand the practical implementations of futures thinking.

Participating in the project includes the following benefits:

- The project will increase resources for strategic decision-making at all levels of the education system;
- Already existing projects, networks and experiences can be utilised;
- Participants will receive tools developed and used during the project for the management of future educational matters;
- Participants will gain information, at an early stage, on the development and planning prospects in the field of education from the viewpoint of leading industrial countries;
- Participants will be able to compare their own national solutions and their relevance with the respective solutions of other countries;
- Participants will learn about other countries' trials and errors in future-oriented planning of education;
- The project will create new opportunities for co-operation with university futures research centres, polytechnics' futures projects and the futures researchers of leading technology companies.

Finland will participate in the third phase of the *SfT* project with its own project *Education into the Future!* The main elements of the project – context, aims, management, actions at various levels and evaluation – will be discussed below. The project schedule will also be introduced (Annex 1). The elements will be further specified and explored in an action plan to be drafted at a later stage through negotiations between the Ministry of Education and the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE).

1.2. Finnish context

Although considerable work has been done in Finland in the field of futures thinking, systematic futures thinking has so far been lacking in education. National scenarios have failed to translate into the language of education. This is why it is very beneficial for Finland to actively participate in the *SfT* project. There is a lot to learn from other countries' experiences and from identifying new situations where futures work can be applied. The project can be particularly useful in combining the perspectives of various stakeholders on the planning of teaching and education.

From the viewpoint of educational policy, a significant issue concerning the project is how the social, environmental, cultural, technological and economic changes appearing in society by 2020 can be accommodated in the development of education and the enhancement of its impact. As the world changes, schooling and education also must change to rise to the challenges of their time.

Future challenges will include demographic changes and a simultaneous effort to increase the employment rate, social and cultural changes, as well as internationalisation and globalisation. In the future of education, emphasis will be on economic thinking and efficiency on the one hand, and customer orientation from the viewpoint of both the learner and working life on the other hand. In the changing operational environment, a particular challenge will be how to maintain and further develop learning outcomes of a high international quality – the best learning in the world. Another challenge will be to learn to accumulate physical, mental, social, cultural and financial welfare without reducing biodiversity and exceeding environmental capacity. Besides good learning outcomes, education will have to promote well-being and development of pupils, students and citizens who are responsible and have faith in the future.

2. Aims

The purpose of the Finnish project is to strengthen future-oriented work at national level and more specifically at the FNBE, at regional and municipal levels and in schools and educational institutions. The project will create alternative scenarios for the future education and views about their impact on learning outcomes and the profitability and functionality of educational services in different population and age groups and in various parts of the country.

The aims of the project are to:

- produce background and research data to support the FNBE's activity planning and decision-making concerning the development of education;
- increase visionary and innovative capacity;
- establish key foresight methods in the development of education;
- pass on the above-mentioned methods to be used in educational projects;
- develop and strengthen futures education at different levels of the education system.

The project will produce the following nationally important results:

- views about future challenges and competence requirements in society, the globalising world and working life;
- suggestions for actions to achieve various aims and desired futures;

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- views about, and suggestions for, alternatives for the development of educational services/learning opportunities; and
- views about, and suggestions for, the challenges and models of futures education and participation in the making of the future taking into account the perspectives of various learning environments and study phases.

From the viewpoint of the development of the education system, the concrete benefits include:

- suggestions for measures to systematically anticipate the challenges and methods in tomorrow's education
- information and results serving the planning and anticipation of education; and
- best practices in futures education to be disseminated by the FNBE to schools and educational institutions.

3. Organisation of the project

The Finnish project will be launched as part of the international Schooling for Tomorrow project. The project will use both the high-quality futures work and research so far conducted in Finland and the experience gained by the countries participating in the OECD *SfT* project as well as the data and tools produced by it.

The FNBE will be in charge of the planning and implementation of the project. The NBE will appoint a project coordinator and a project team to support the coordinator. The project team will work in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, projects and networks.

The *Education into the Future!* project concerns general education, vocational education and training as well as adult education and training. It studies issues that are common to different forms and fields of education and that are specific to them. This supports a whole that operates flexibly from the viewpoint of the learner and society. Furthermore, this ensures that our schooling system will also in future offer the prerequisites for the best learning in the world.

The future-oriented work characteristic of the *Education into the Future!* project emphasises:

- the importance of conscious and analytical futures thinking;
- the utilisation of the analytical and planning tools developed by futures studies in both the planning of education and actual teaching;
- ethical responsibility for current decisions and plans with regard to a sustainable future; and
- the significance of concrete actions that build a sustainable future.

The project operates at three inter-linked levels: national, regional and school or educational institution levels (Figure 1). Co-operation with both national and international interest groups is the goal at all levels. These interest groups include NGOs, the media and international co-operation partners.

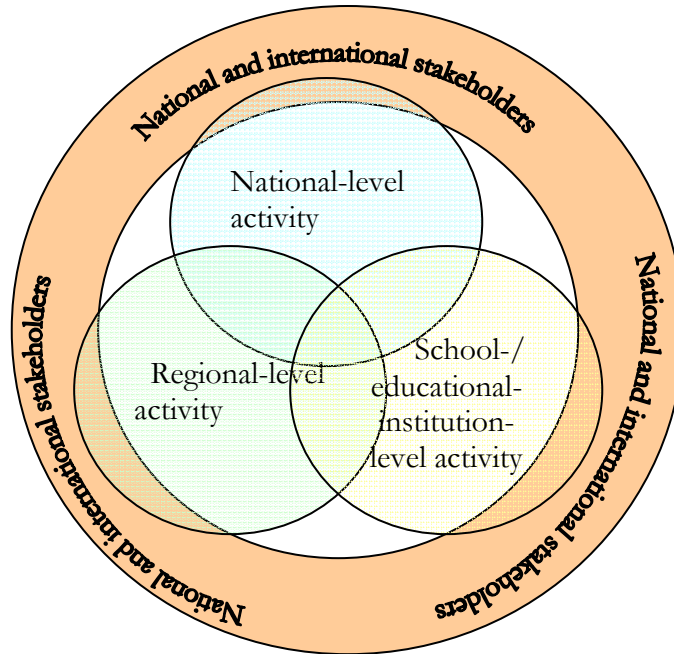


Figure 1. Operational levels of the *Education into the Future!* project

The project emphasises dialogue about the future and interaction between the different operational levels. Information produced at local level will benefit national level and, equally, results gained at national level will be passed on to regional and school levels. The project will also make good use of current projects and networks. Contacts and networks will be created between projects at different regional and school/educational institution levels.

The stakeholder groups to be involved in the dialogue include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Parliament (Education and Culture Committee, Committee for the Future), the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the State Provincial Offices and the Trade Union of Education, universities (education and teacher training departments), research centres in futures studies, labour market organisations, student organisations as well as the municipalities and schools participating in the project.

4. Actions at various levels of the project

4.1. Actions to develop future-oriented capacity at national level

The main aim of this stream is to support national decision-making and development work through identification of future challenges and possible futures for the Finnish education system and ways to respond to the challenges.

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FNBE will organise an educational futures workshop at a national invited seminar (5.-6.6.2006). Its purpose is to produce inspiration for the scenario work that will be started later. Representatives of pupils, students and other young people will be closely involved in the national level activities with the aid of the current student association and participation projects. New kinds of channels and forums will also be looked for to accommodate children's and young people's opinions about the future.

A related national-level action is educational scenario work coordinated by the FNBE that will also include expert interviews (the Delphi Panel). The aim of the scenario workshops is to build credible images about education in the future.

FNBE will organise a workshop of Future Pedagogic. This seminar/education serves for launching the school level actions for educating teacher to utilise material prepared for futures education. Material will be prepared in FNBE in co-operation with pilot schools' principals and teachers.

These actions will be established as part of the systematic, future-oriented system that supports the planning of education. The invited seminar will become a regular educational future forum arranged every three or four years to study medium-term changes in the field of education. An annual forum will also be organised to discuss short-term changes and needs in the field. These forums will support the development of the futures awareness and competence and the enhancement of the creativity and initiative of the school community/education providers as well as the development of the school community into a community that actively builds the future and supports participation.

Participation in the OECD project will make it possible to both participate and organise international expert and invited seminars. Finland is prepared to host an international forum for the *Schooling for Tomorrow* project in 2008 or 2009; by then concrete evidence and results will already have been achieved in the project. The Finnish project is linked as a joint project of the Nordic development agencies with the common goal of developing the future learning environment.

4.2. Actions to develop future-oriented capacity at regional and local level

The educational decision-making in Finland is decentralised to a great extent and municipalities as the education providers play a prominent role. A major reform of the municipal structure in Finland is currently being debated and this is also likely to affect the future organisation of education. The second stream of the project aims to develop the strategic capacity at regional and local level. It includes actions to outline regional future challenges as well as actions to find ways to meet these challenges.

In order to utilise the already existing capacity and good practices, the FNBE will map out the experiences of future-oriented projects at regional/local level educational administration and disseminate the main results. This will be done in co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior and the network of regional and local level actors lead by FNBE.

Between four and six regionally and demographically different subregions that wish to use futures tools in the planning of their own activities will be invited to participate in the project. As the first measure,

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representatives of municipal educational administration in charge of the project will participate in the national invited seminars. Representatives from subregions will be involved in the national scenario work, and the experience gained from this work can be used at regional level. Scenario workshops will also be arranged at regional level, and these will include expert interviews (the Delphi Panel). Results from regional-level work will correspondingly be used in the drafting of national-level scenarios. Besides education providers, regional-level co-operation partners include essential actors in the field of education, such as teachers, parents, pupils/students and local business life. It is important also to involve administrative bodies that are significant for children's and young people's learning and growth, such as social and health administration, youth and sports administration as well as cultural and library administration.

The second measure at regional level will be to start new local future-oriented projects to identify the means to meet future challenges. The aim is to gain information on how to achieve the desired scenario. The new projects will have to follow the existing strategies (*Information Society Strategy, Strategy for Promoting Sustainable Development in Education*), or generally acknowledged national principles (*Educational Equality, Regional Equality, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*) or strong signals about international and national change factors (*globalisation, diminishing generations, maintaining competitiveness, population changes*). Weak regional signals can also act as triggers for projects. These local projects will utilise the results of regional-level scenarios and the Delphi Panels.

The role of the FNBE is to support the projects in terms of methodological choices. It will subsidise the international circulation of the reports of the best projects and its role will further include the dissemination of best practices and the guidance of the education providers involved in the project in futures thinking and the use of futures tools. Existing local projects will receive project tools and perspectives. The local authorities can apply financial support from FNBE and the Ministry of the Internal.

4.3. Actions to promote futures competence in schools and educational institutions

As the third stream, the project will support the implementation of futures pedagogy in schools and educational institutions. In the futures education pedagogical project, pupils and teachers study together futures thinking, the use of futures tools and taking responsibility for building the future.

Education providers and educational institutions participating in the project will utilise the results and practices of the existing future-oriented projects that are related to the future learning environment. Cooperation with teacher education department(s) will be another cornerstone of the project. In the autumn 2006, the *Education into the Future!* project will organise a seminar concentrating on this theme.

5. Evaluation

The following can be regarded as indicators of a successful project:

- 1) Are permanent structures created in the field of education for the implementation of futures orientation?

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- 2) The usability of scenarios produced:
 - will they become tools for national planning?
 - how useful are they regionally?
 - how much will they generate discussion and interaction between various actors at local, regional and national levels (this will be evaluated both subjectively with enquiries and by observing the work in the Ministry of Education and the FNBE)?
- 3) How many feasible innovations related to future learning and the learning environment were created during the process (will be evaluated on the basis of sub-project final reports)?
- 4) How much will futures discussion have increased in the field of education (will be evaluated subjectively with enquiries and objectively on the basis of newspapers, magazines and articles in scientific publications)?
- 5) How many people participated in project seminars, workshops and expert panels?
- 6) How many bodies are involved in the network?
- 7) How much will strategic capacity have increased (subjective experience will be evaluated with a questionnaire)?

In addition to these single indicators, it is necessary from the start to prepare for an appropriate evaluation of the *Education into the Future!* project – its cost-effectiveness, success, efficiency, productivity and visibility.

6. Reporting

Education into the Future! will report to the international Schooling for Tomorrow project according to the common framework for recording and reporting.

Even the best social innovations are not always available to others, as desirable as this might be. In order to achieve as wide a circulation as possible for the results of local-level sub-projects, a basic reporting model related to productisation will be drafted for all the projects. The report must include at least the following items:

1. a general description of the operational environment of the sub-project (whom it concerned, the number of participants, which province and region, type of educational institution);
2. the initial level of those involved in the sub-project, if possible (initial measurement – attitudes, competence or other relevant indicator);
3. the actions of the sub-project in detail (what was done or changed and how);
4. the final level of those involved in the sub-project (final measurement – attitudes, competence/command of the topic or other relevant indicator, with the same indicators as the initial measurement);
5. the relevance and usability of the process or the results of the sub-project in the future learning environment.

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Annex 1. Tentative Schedule

A tentative schedule for the *Education into the Future!* project is as follows:

| Year | Quarter | Action |
|-------------|----------------|--|
| 2005 | I-III | Initial outlining of the project |
| | IV | Tentative project plan |
| 2006 | I-II | Completing the project plan Preliminary negotiations with the selected education providers – Preparations for the first national seminars |
| | II | – An national invited seminar with national and international keynote speakers on the future of education (5-6 June) – Preliminary negotiations with the pilot municipalities |
| | II-III | – Mapping out the good practices and experiences of futures projects in the field of education at local and regional level. – The launch of local projects – The tuning of local projects – The Delphi Panel and research as the basis for the scenario workshop – Supporting the local projects in terms of initial measurement |
| | III | – An expert seminar on the futures education pedagogy |
| | IV | – National scenario workshops (1st in October, 2 nd November and 3 rd in December) – Analysing and disseminating the experiences of local and regional level futures projects – Supporting the local projects/pilot municipalities in continuing the process |
| 2007 | I | The progress of local projects |
| | II | The progress of local projects |
| | III | The progress of local projects – Supporting the local projects in terms of final measurement |
| | IV | The progress of local projects Supporting the local projects in terms of productisation |
| 2008 | I | Conclusion of local projects |
| | II | Final report of the project A national closing seminar: results and lessons learned of the <i>Education into the Future!</i> project |
| | III | Final evaluation of the project An international invited seminar: exchanging experiences gained in the SfT projects |
| | IV | Final evaluation of the project |