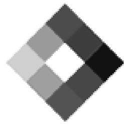

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SCHOOLING FOR TOMORROW

Analysing and Understanding the "Demand for Schooling"

Country Report

Finland

Dr. Kari Nyyssölä (ed.)
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(Updated version)

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Preface

The Finnish education system experienced major changes during the 1990's. Within basic education, the most significant change was related to decentralisation of the centralised administration system, which was based on steering through legislation. Subsequently, decision-making powers and responsibilities were transferred from central government to local level. Education providers – mostly local (municipal) authorities in basic education – have been granted significant decision-making powers in terms of the provision of education. For example, they draw up their own curricula on the basis of the National Core Curricula.

At the same time, the division into school districts was abolished, which increased the choice of available schools. In addition, the significance of evaluation has increased as a factor to steer education policy. On the other hand, Finland has strictly adhered to the policy of not allowing any 'school league tables' to develop. This is based on the fact that Finland wants to guarantee equal educational opportunities for everyone.

Another key characteristic of the Finnish education system is that education in Finland is mostly organised through public funding. The Finnish comprehensive school is also a uniform school, which means that all children follow the same nine-year education.

The above-mentioned points create the frame of reference used in this Country Report to examine Finland's education system. On the whole, it is fair to say that there are clear indications in Finland that the focus of education policy thinking has shifted from supply to demand. On the other hand, the country has purposefully aimed to preserve and safeguard an education system based on equality and on the philosophy of lifelong learning.

This Country Report has been prepared on the basis of research reports, statistics, education system descriptions and legislation. The report aims to provide information that is as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible. It mainly concentrates on basic education (compulsory primary and lower secondary education at comprehensive school), but upper secondary education will also be examined as appropriate. The structure of the report follows the framework of the questionnaire.

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1. Demand for and Views on Schooling in Society

1.1 School debates from the 1960's through to the 1990's

The 1960's and the 1970's were a period of profound change in Finland's social structures, as the country was developing from an agricultural society into a Nordic welfare state. The education system responded strongly to this change. Compulsory education, which dated back to a society based on estates of the realm and upheld social inequality, was reformed to create the nine-year comprehensive school system in accordance with the principles of uniform schooling. This comprehensive school reform can be justifiably called the most significant education policy reform to have been implemented in Finland over the last few decades.

In the mid-1990's, the National Board of Education evaluated the accessibility and equality of comprehensive school education from regional, gender and social class perspectives. This evaluation project involved a research project carried out at the University of Turku (Rinne & Vuorio-Lehti 1996), which studied social debates related to comprehensive school reform. The period under investigation covered the mid-1960's to the mid-1990's and the analysis mostly focused on debates conducted in Parliament, in various committees and in the press. Consequently, the research material comprised committee reports on education, parliamentary debates on comprehensive school education and discourse material collected from seven newspapers, covering a period of thirty years.

The perspective of the research was restricted to examining debates about the significance of the comprehensive school to increasing equality. This selection of the equality perspective was justified, because educational equality has been very significant in Finnish education debates.

Within the general pursuit of 'equal opportunities for education', different areas of opinion have made different requests: regional, social, economic or gender equality. The emphases have varied considerably in the different decades. Achievement of regional equality in education has been a particular concern for the political centre over the whole period covering the establishment and existence of the comprehensive school system. This concern was greatest in all quarters during the 1960's and the 1970's. In the 1980's, debates about regional equality all but faded away, but were revived again towards the end of the 1990's.

Elimination of social and economic inequality, stemming from pupils' home backgrounds, has been the pet project of the political left. These requirements were also most pronounced during the comprehensive school's establishment phase. As early as the 1970's, the economic aspect was gradually dropped, but the persistence of broader social inequality in education continued to stimulate debates, especially when people started to perceive social inequality as being intertwined with the cultural and motivational orientation of families. When streaming – which was alleged to be the most severe obstacle to social equality within comprehensive schools – was abolished in the 1980's, debates on the subject gradually subsided. Nevertheless, people have still not been completely satisfied with the progress made in the elimination of social inequality from the education system as a whole.

Inequality between genders within education did not become a common topic of discussion until the late 1970's. In particular, this topic emerged in connection with the debate on streaming at comprehensive schools. The debate on treatment of different genders was especially lively in the 1980's. No particular 'debating society' – with the possible exception of women – adopted this

debate exclusively as their own. People simply woke up to the fact that schools treated boys and girls differently. As school procedures appeared to favour conscientious girls, there were fears that boys would be marginalised in further and higher education. In the 1990's, concerns about gender equality at school were quite regularly voiced in official statements, but the theme did not really make it into the public arena. It appears that gender equality in comprehensive school education became just as self-evident during the 1990's as regional equality had done in the 1980's. Obviously, this does not tell us anything about the hidden reality of education.

In summary of the comprehensive school debates carried out in the 1990's (with the period of investigation covering the first half of the 1990's), the researchers suggested that debates had been much scarcer than in previous decades. The focus of Finnish education policy was on development of post-compulsory education. Debates on the comprehensive school system had been desultory and it was difficult to find any feature to connect different themes. People entertained various visions for education and ideas about internal school reforms, curricular development and evaluation of education. There had also been attempts to push through new types of teaching, learning and operational culture at schools. The school administration, schools, teachers and pupils had worked in the maelstrom of financial cutbacks (resulting from the economic depression of the early 1990's), whilst various reforms were being introduced in the field of education. The school debates of the 1990's involved active participation from teachers, education authorities and, more and more, from education researchers. Although decisions on cutbacks in school appropriations were even debated as high up as in Parliament, political colours were not very clearly visible to the general public. It appears that consensus gained ground and that participants in these debates either represented private opinions or those of small interest groups.

1.2 School debates at the turn of the 21st century

Little research has been carried out on general school debates in the late 1990's and the early 21st century. One such survey covers 2002 (Hellström & Hellström 2004). It is based on a sample of 119 stories published in the media during that year. These were classified by content. The most important categories were the school, the framework for teaching and running of schools, and pupils.

The most prominent themes in the 'school' category included the following, in order of frequency: order and discipline and pupils' rights to security, differences between schools in learning outcomes, atmosphere at school, provision of special education, and the 'all-day school' project. Maintenance of order and security at school are among the perennial topics of public discussion. During the period under investigation, debates were being intensified as a result of reform of school laws and certain isolated incidents of violence in some schools.

The category 'differences between schools in learning outcomes' is related to the theme of equality, which has been a topic of discussion ever since comprehensive schools were established. Research showed that there were differences between results at different schools. The social factors prevailing in a municipality or an area were reflected in both pupils' attitudes and learning outcomes. This development was considered to be disquieting, to say the least, and people wondered why it had emerged.

The topics within the category 'the framework for teaching and running of schools' were classified into the following themes, by order of frequency: curricular reform, cutbacks in appropriations, school appropriations in different municipalities, school closures, group sizes, and reform of the

upper secondary school matriculation examination. All these themes keep re-emerging as topics of discussion. The curriculum was being debated in 2002 in particular because the Government issued a new lesson allocation that year and the number of lessons allocated to different subjects always leads to quite heated debates. This time, the status of arts subjects in particular gave rise to lively debate.

The media themes within the 'pupils' category can be condensed under the following three headlines: 'Children's ill-being becoming critical'; 'Causes of children's ill-being are lack of parenthood, biological reasons, recession, unhealthy lifestyles, violence in entertainment, deprivation and perhaps school too'; 'Children must not be left alone'.

The above analysis dealt with debates related to reform and development of the comprehensive school system. It excluded themes and arguments concerning upper secondary level, higher education and adult education and training. These have obviously been discussed as well, but perhaps not quite as frequently and intensely as comprehensive schools. Nevertheless, no research results are available on these debates.

In general terms, it is possible to conclude that school issues have been and are still being discussed all the time, but there have not been any major disagreements or policy debates. As a 'rule of thumb', it is fair to say that debates have at least appeared to continue in the spirit of consensus.

Nevertheless, a theme that can be singled out from recent debates is gender: there have been discussions about whether instruction should focus more on the differences between girls and boys as learners. The underlying reason for this is that boys appear to perform worse at school and to enjoy it less than girls. While this has been a topic of lively public discussions, no analysed information is available as yet.

1.3 Appreciation of the objectives assigned to education

The 1997 Education Barometer survey (Koulutusbarometri 1997 [Education Barometer 1997]; see also Section 2.1) asked the population about the importance that they attached to the school's different educational tasks (defined in a broader sense than teaching tasks related to school subjects). In this context, respondents were invited to assess the importance of the school system's efforts to develop different qualities in pupils. These qualities can be placed in order of importance by comparing the proportions of respondents who selected 'very important' for each quality.

The quality considered to be the most important in this comparison was **self-confidence**, with 81% of respondents stating that it was very important to see pupils develop in this respect. Three quarters found it very important for the school system to **disseminate skills and knowledge that improve job opportunities** and develop pupils' **ability to get along with people from different backgrounds** (75% for both). Almost as many, 73% to be precise, emphasised the importance of **good manners**. These were followed by **developing into a good citizen** (64%), **health-promoting lifestyles** (62%), **dissemination of knowledge to facilitate transition to further studies** (60%), **encouragement for further studies** (50%) and **the ability to understand other countries** (50%).

Perceptions among the agricultural population were very different from those of other segments of the population. The number of those considering development of self-confidence, encouragement for further studies and health-promoting lifestyles to be very important was clearly below average

within this group. Conversely, the number of well-educated and white-collar population segments emphasising the importance of these qualities was above average.

The Education Barometer also asked how well the school system had promoted development of different qualities in pupils. Results showed that the school system had succeeded best in disseminating skills and knowledge to facilitate transition to further studies. Approximately four out of five respondents (82%) stated that schools had succeeded very well or relatively well in this respect. This was followed by willingness to continue studies (72%), developing into a good citizen (67%), health-promoting lifestyles (64%), the ability to understand other countries (63%) and learning good manners (58%).

Those qualities considered to be important in the first comparison were left way behind in this comparison. Just over half of Finns thought that schools succeeded very well or relatively well in promoting skills and knowledge that improve job opportunities (55%) and the ability to get along with people from different backgrounds (54%). Respondents were least satisfied with development of self-confidence (49%).

2. The Attitudes and Expectations of Parents

When measuring citizens' confidence in public services, educational institutions are usually ranked towards the top. This can be partially attributed to the provision of education during baby boomers' childhood and adolescence. At the time, Finland was not able to provide everyone with formal education, with the exception of compulsory schooling. Pupils were subject to selection for the first time as early as at the age of 11 for the two different forms of general lower secondary education. In particular, there was a shortage of student places in vocational upper secondary education and in higher education. This contributed to citizens' attitudes towards education, strengthening their belief that education promoted upward social mobility. It became important for those parents who had not been admitted to certificate-oriented education due to the lack of student places to guarantee the highest possible education for their own children.

The philosophy behind the Finnish welfare society embraces the view that education is a civil right, which is why the formal education system is publicly funded and mostly maintained by public authorities. Even according to international comparisons, differences between Finnish schools are exceptionally small. In primary education, it is very rare for parents to choose a school for their children other than the local school, which has also prevented the emergence of comprehensive schools exclusively for gifted pupils, for example.

This chapter describes four different projects, which investigated the attitudes of parents of pupils and students or the adult population in general towards the Finnish school system and education.

2.1 The Education Barometer surveys, 1995–1997

The National Board of Education commissioned three national attitude surveys between 1995 and 1997 (Koulutusbarometri 1995, 1996, 1997 [Education Barometer 1995, 1996, 1997]). The target group comprised the whole population aged 15 or over, represented by a sample of about 1,000 people. Consequently, only about half of this group had a family member in education at the time

of the interviews. Thus the material does not directly describe the attitudes and expectations of parents.

These attitude surveys were known as 'Education Barometers', because the aim was to use the trend data to investigate the direction in which citizens' attitudes towards education were changing or whether there had been any change at all. Similarly, the barometers described the views of people living in different areas and from different social and age groups on education and also on its development. Respondents could choose an option from a five-point scale to rate the statements of the survey. In addition, they were asked a few questions where they could choose the option that was the closest match to their own opinion. The effectiveness of the education system was evaluated on a six-point scale: very good – fairly good – neither good nor bad – don't know – fairly poor – very poor.

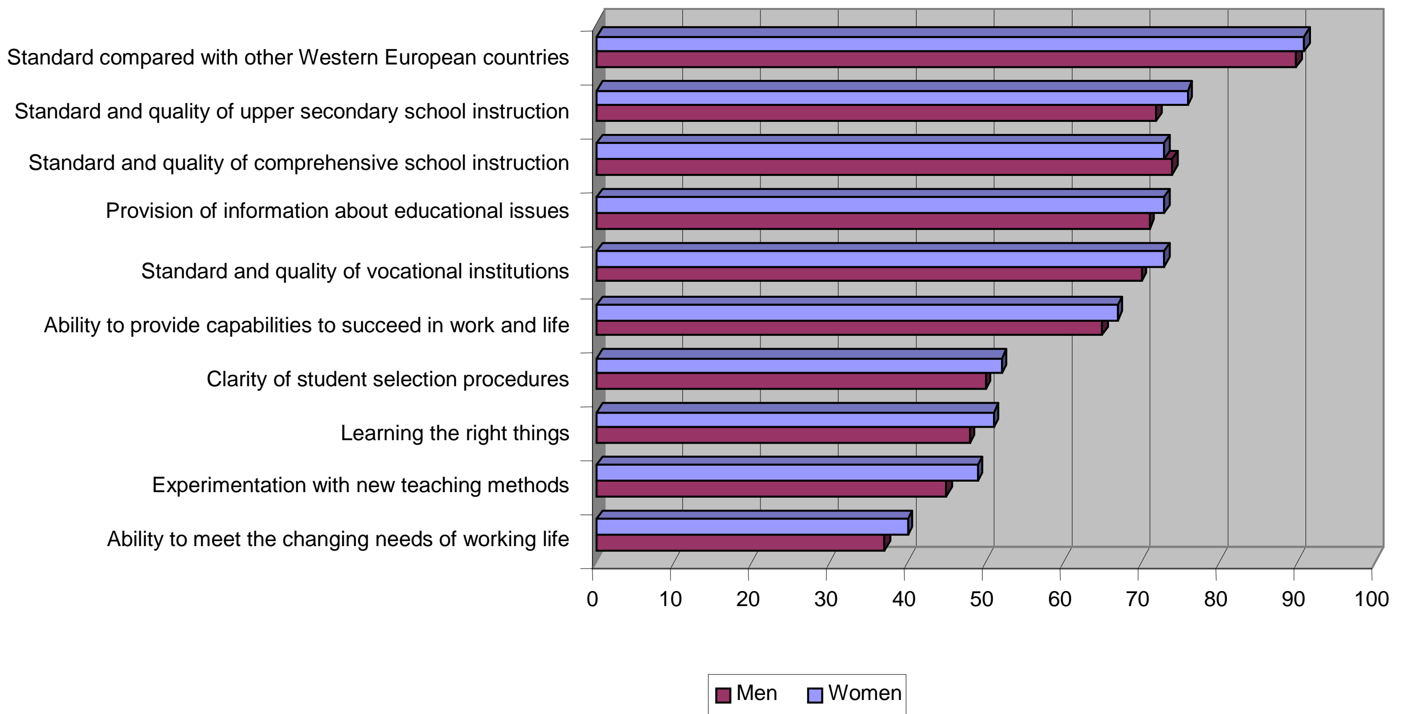
There were no significant annual variations during the investigation period; instead, the distributions followed similar trends in all three years. When asked for their impressions of the standard of the Finnish education system compared with other Western European countries, nine out of ten respondents considered the standard to be very or fairly good. The education system was given its lowest marks for its ability to meet the changing needs of working life (Figure 1). Even in this respect, however, those scoring it fairly or very poor only accounted for about a quarter of all respondents, which was clearly less than the proportion of those who gave fairly or very good marks.

Women's attitudes towards the statements concerning education were almost invariably more positive than their male counterparts, regardless of the topic. Although differences were small, it is fair to say that this also reveals more general differences between genders in terms of attitudes towards education. Women receive education more actively than men. With the exception of the compulsory comprehensive school and postgraduate researcher training, women are in the majority at all levels of education and also among those who have completed an educational qualification in Finland (men only hold more qualifications among the group aged 60 and above).

In terms of the effects of background variables on attitudes, the most considerable differences appeared to be in line with educational background and occupational status. The most positive attitudes towards education and the Finnish education system were held by those without vocational education. Attitudes became steadily more critical among respondents with higher level of education. Entrepreneurs and agricultural entrepreneurs as a separate group, in turn, were the most critical among all occupational groups. This was especially evident when respondents were asked to grade the ability of the Finnish education system to meet the changing needs of working life.

In addition, age also seemed to have some bearing on how the education system was evaluated, at least on the basis of certain questions. The more recently a respondent had been at school, the more likely it was that the respondent had a positive attitude towards education. This could be seen clearly from questions concerning the capabilities provided by education and learning the right things.

Figure 1. Marks given to the Finnish education system and education (very or fairly good, %)



Source: Koulutusbarometri 1997 [Education Barometer 1997].

In the 1990's, the issue of the comprehensive school starting age was at the top of the agenda in Finnish education debates. In international terms, Finnish children start comprehensive school relatively late, as the school starting age is seven. Citizens' view on the starting age was that the current situation was quite good. In all three surveys, more than 70% of respondents stated that the school starting age should be seven. About one fifth of respondents felt that children could start school at the age of six.

The fact that the surveys asked about the school starting age reflected the education debates at the time. They did not have any significant bearing on the debates, however, because the results were unambiguously in favour of the prevailing situation. They may have only contributed to the conclusion that young children's education was to be provided on the basis of national culture and traditions. Consequently, political decisions made at the turn of the millennium aimed to organise pre-primary education by obligating the local authorities to provide pre-school education for all 6-year-olds, while a separate National Core Curriculum was drawn up for pre-school education in co-operation between education and social services authorities.

As part of the above-mentioned issue, respondents were also asked to express their views on the duration of continuous basic schooling. In these surveys, basic schooling was understood to cover primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. About half of all respondents also favoured the current system, i.e. 12 years of basic schooling. Two out of five respondents stated that it could be shorter, while only one in twenty felt that it should be longer.

2.2 The Nordic School Barometer 2000

In 2000, Finland participated in the joint attitude survey in the Nordic countries entitled ‘Nordisk Skolbarometer 2000’, or the 2000 Nordic School Barometer. Sampling for the survey was conducted in the same way in all Nordic countries by selecting three equal target groups: parents of comprehensive school pupils (aged about 6/7 to 15), parents of students in upper secondary education (aged about 16 to 19/20), and adults not falling within either of the first two groups. The Finnish sample comprised 1,950 respondents, with 650 people for each group. The survey was carried out as a postal questionnaire survey, where non-responses were subsequently replaced by telephone interviews. In Finland, response rates among the whole sample and among parents of pupils or students were 62% and 63% respectively. The response rate was relatively good in Finland, compared with other similar surveys.

In all countries, more women than men answered the questions. In a number of cases, a gender-related pattern became apparent from the answers. Women are generally more positive about school results; and women and men placed different emphasis on the different subjects.

The answers generally also show a difference between the attitudes of parents of students in further education and parents of children in compulsory education. Parents of students in further education answered ‘don’t know’ to the questions to a greater degree.

One statutory duty of schools is to provide education in certain theoretical and practical subjects, and therefore both parents and other people were asked to indicate how important the different subjects were and to what extent schools succeeded in providing knowledge and skills in different subjects.

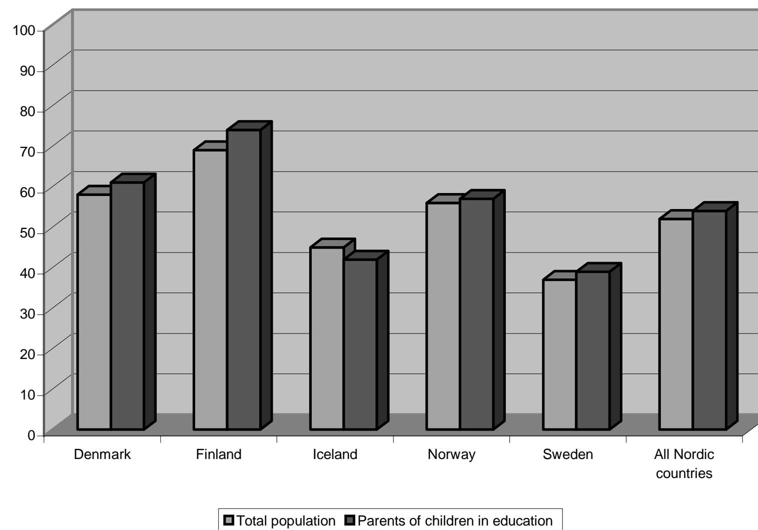
It is perhaps no surprise that most people agree that instruction in their native language, English and mathematics (in that order) are important subjects. Social sciences and natural sciences are also considered to be important. In terms of other subjects (physical education, music, art, other languages, etc.), a number of respondents, in the range of 10–25 per cent, do not feel that good knowledge of these subjects is important. Religious studies holds a special position, with a wide variation in the attitudes of respondents, both within and between different countries.

On the question of how schools are succeeding in providing instruction in the different subject areas, opinions begin to differ. Yet at the same time, a clear pattern is visible. Finns feel that schools are largely successful, while Swedes are the least confident. Parents are without exception more satisfied than the overall population. This is most noticeable in Sweden.

A number of people feel that schools have been successful in creating equality between the sexes. Almost as many people feel that schools definitely provide good knowledge and skills in different subjects, and that schools are able to encourage students’ ability to work alongside other people. About half are satisfied with the ability of schools to prepare students for continuing studies. However, there are other goals at which schools are considered to be less successful, such as

developing students' self-confidence and encouraging their curiosity and own initiative, as well as developing opinions on moral questions. Less than half of the respondents feel that schools are successful in this respect.

Figure 2. Proportion of people of the opinion that schools successfully promote equality



Source: Nordisk Skolbarometer 2000 [Nordic School Barometer 2000].

Parents are more satisfied than the population as a whole and this is true for most questions. In this study, Swedes are often the most critical, while Finns and Danes are the most satisfied. However, this is not always the case – people in Finland are the least inclined of all the Nordic populations to feel that schools are able to foster students' ability to work together, although 60 per cent of Finnish parents felt that schools were successful in this respect. For questions about the ability of schools to develop students' self-confidence and to prepare them for the labour market, the general population in all countries expressed critical attitudes.

With one general question, the study attempted to capture a general assessment of schooling: 'How much confidence do you have in compulsory school/further education as a whole?' On average, about half of all respondents answered that they had a high level of confidence in these institutions. Parents were more confident than the population as a whole. Finns are most confident of all the individual countries, while Swedes are the least confident. A large proportion of respondents are neutral about this question, and at most only a quarter of each country's respondents had little confidence in the school system.

Parents feel that schools succeed in certain areas, including discussions about their children's progress at compulsory school, and how schools handle information-related tasks in almost all areas except one – how resources are used and distributed. Here, about a third feel that schools handle their duties well and an equal number feel that they handle them unsatisfactorily.

In terms of the size of classes/teaching groups, the attitudes of parents in all countries are quite similar – just under half the parents in Sweden and Iceland and just over half in the other countries feel that the size of classes is satisfactory. It is only in Denmark and Finland where just over half of

parents feel that the opportunities for children to get extra help and support are good, while that figure in the other countries is around 32–38 per cent.

Parents were asked to determine whether there were sufficient resources in a number of areas in terms of their children's schooling. The alternative responses were simple and decisive – satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Here the differences between the countries were unusually significant. There are only two areas where one could say that the different countries were more or less in agreement – namely, that the number of lessons was sufficient and that resources for extracurricular activities were not sufficient (Denmark deviates in the latter area). Swedes are most dissatisfied with the number of teachers, Danes and Norwegians with the condition of school buildings and Norwegians with resources for IT equipment and computers. Icelanders and Finns feel more strongly than other respondents that resources such as textbooks, IT equipment and other educational materials are sufficient.

It appears that the majority of parents feel that things are generally good in a number of areas, including the number of tests and the scope of lessons. Around half are satisfied with students', teachers' and parents' abilities to influence schools. The remainder would prefer to see an increase in influence rather than a decrease. The largest increase that parents want to see is the use of computers in education and contacts with organisations outside school, followed by a desire to increase international cooperation.

There is relatively broad consensus among the countries in terms of their opinions on changes in schools. Certain countries set themselves apart in certain respects – of all respondents, Icelanders most want to see an increase in students' ability to find things out for themselves and to become responsible for their own learning, as well as developing students' ability to work in groups. Swedes and Danes are most satisfied with things the way they are now.

The population as a whole and parents in Denmark and Finland, to a greater degree than those in the other countries, feel that schools are generally successful in this respect and that there are good opportunities at their own child's school.

In general, Finns have a positive attitude towards Finnish education and teaching. They are particularly satisfied with how schools have been able to provide their children and young adults with knowledge and skills in different school subjects. They are not in agreement with their Nordic neighbours about knowledge requirements in schools being too low. History is the school subject that Finns feel is less important than their Nordic neighbours. Teaching still enjoys a high status in Finland, which is reinforced through current public debates in Finland, which emphasise the responsibility of teachers and their impact on society. (The debate has also indicated that there will be a shortage of teachers in Finland when the baby boomers begin to retire.)

2.3 Parents and the comprehensive school system – a study into representations of school and educability

The attitudes of pupils' parents towards school reforms and their satisfaction with the operations of comprehensive schools have been investigated in a research study at the University of Joensuu (Mäntysaari-Hetekorpi 1996). The topical context was school reforms, which the study approached from the perspective of the theory of social representation. The survey aimed to investigate how parents had made the unknown familiar, i.e. how they had dealt with school reforms. Parents' attitudes towards schools were examined as part of a broader social representation of educability.

The research was carried out in the form of a questionnaire survey. Respondents comprised a nationwide sample of parents of children aged 9–10 (N = 560).

Parents' assessment of the comprehensive school system was positive. The idea of a market-based school did not receive much support. Many parents were concerned about equality and the disadvantages of competition. Reforms were also considered to be one-sided and hasty. In particular, attitudes differed according to the respondents' social status. Those with vocational education and in blue-collar occupations felt that comprehensive schools functioned well and criticised the one-sidedness and hastiness of reforms, being concerned about equality and the disadvantages of competition. Conversely, those with an academic background and in upper level white-collar occupations were more in favour of criticism of the levelling tendency, being altogether more positive about school reforms.

Parents were also satisfied with the operations of comprehensive schools, in particular with teaching, co-operation and pupil assessment. The most unsatisfactory aspect was consideration for children's individual qualities at school. Satisfaction also differed according to social status: respondents with an academic background and in upper level white-collar occupations were more satisfied with the school's fairness than those with vocational education and in blue-collar occupations.

The study also showed that the definition of talent was intertwined with attitudes towards school. Firstly, some respondents considered talent to be a special quality that increased a pupil's value. They linked this differential psychology's view to ideas about competition and a market-based school. They also criticised the comprehensive school system for its levelling tendency and perceived that it had failed to teach gifted pupils. Others took the opposite view of talent as a social classification leading to inequality. They were concerned about equality and the disadvantages of competition. In addition, another view, independent of attitudinal differences, was raised by those regarding talent as being a diverse quality of all people.

2.4 The school's role in career development

A research and development project conducted by the Centre for Educational Evaluation and Development within the University of Turku Faculty of Education and the School Centre of the City of Turku investigated the socio-affective educational conditions of primary and lower secondary levels of comprehensive school in 1999–2001 (Turkulainen koulu elämänuran muokkaajana [How does a school in Turku influence career development?]). The project focused in particular on improving conditions for education and learning among schools and groups of pupils in need of special support. The research project involved an extensive questionnaire survey targeting pupils' parents. The sample comprised 1,500 parents of comprehensive school pupils, 68% of whom returned the questionnaire. The researchers consider that the survey also reflects the views of schoolchildren's parents in major Finnish cities in broader terms.

When parents were asked for their opinions on their children's school, the responses were mainly positive. Seven out of ten parents were fairly or very satisfied with the standard of instruction provided by schools. Differences in assessments occurred between parents of pupils in primary and lower secondary education and according to parents' social status. Instruction was considered to be better at lower secondary level compared with primary level, while respondents in the highest social group considered instruction to be of a high standard more frequently than other groups.

Based on their analysis, the researchers divided respondents into four groups: satisfied, dissatisfied and two intermediate groups of atmosphere critics and resource critics. Just over a quarter of all respondents were classified as satisfied, i.e. gave very positive feedback about their children's school. About one in seven respondents was dissatisfied. The group of atmosphere critics included just under a third of respondents. They considered that the poorest aspects in their children's school were the atmosphere, teachers' enthusiasm, and co-operation between home and school. Resource critics formed a slightly smaller group, which was most critical about the sizes of schools and classes, for example.

The research project also investigated the views of immigrant people on comprehensive schools. Satisfaction with comprehensive schools was higher among immigrants than among Finnish parents. It also seems that nationality does not have a bearing on children's satisfaction with school and likelihood of being bullied.

3. Participation in Decision-making in the Schooling Process

3.1 Involvement of parents and other members of the community

3.1.1 General administration at local level

In Finland, the local level has been entrusted with considerable responsibility for provision of education. Local administration is mainly managed by the local authorities (municipalities), which have self-government and the right to impose taxes. Their operation and administration are regulated by the Local Government Act (356/1995). There are 432 municipalities in Finland, 114 of which are urban municipalities (cities and towns). The highest municipal power of decision is vested in the municipal council, which is formed following a general election. In order to organise administration, the municipal council adopts the necessary administrative and financial regulations and standing orders, which determine the various municipal authorities and their functions, division of authority and duties.

In addition to the municipal council, the municipal bodies include the municipal board, several committees and management boards, their divisions as well as commissions. The administration of educational services in municipalities functions in accordance with the general provisions of the Local Government Act. In bilingual municipalities, separate bodies are appointed under the educational administration for each language group, or there may be a joint body with divisions for the two language groups.

The local authorities are responsible for organising basic education at a local level, and are partly responsible for financing it as well. The task of the local authorities is to offer all children of compulsory school age – including those with mental or physical impairments – an opportunity to learn according to their abilities. Almost all schools providing basic education are maintained by local authorities.

In addition to organising instruction, each local authority is generally responsible for social welfare services for pupils and students. A local authority must, in certain circumstances, organise such services as transportation for pupils who need it. Welfare services also include free school meals, school health care, dental care as well as the services of school welfare officers and psychologists.

There is no statutory obligation for local authorities to organise general upper secondary education and vocational education and training, but they are obligated to assist in financing them. Day-care centres, comprehensive schools and general upper secondary schools are mostly maintained by local authorities. Vocational institutions are maintained by the local authorities, joint municipal boards (federations of municipalities), the State and private organisations. In recent years, almost all state-owned vocational institutions have been municipalised or privatised. The local authorities and the joint municipal boards also maintain the majority (about 70%) of vocational institutions.

3.1.2 Educational institutions, administration and management

The Basic Education Act (628/1998) does not contain any provisions on the administration and management of schools; instead, the administration of schools providing basic education is primarily subject to the general provisions of the Local Government Act concerning municipal administration. Consequently, the administrative bodies of schools may be determined by the administrative regulations and standing orders issued by the local authority in question. Nevertheless, each school is required to have a rector, who is responsible for its operation. General upper secondary education and upper secondary vocational education and training follow the same principles. In addition, each institution providing general upper secondary education and vocational education must have a student body, with the task of promoting student co-operation and schoolwork.

Educational institutions may have a board. Comprehensive and upper secondary school boards may include parent representatives. The boards of vocational institutions usually include representatives of the local business community. However, not all educational institutions have their own boards. According to the Government's survey, just over half the schools providing basic education or general upper secondary education do not have a board. More than half the providers of vocational education and training report that they have delegated authority to other bodies or office-holders. Instead of boards, they have formed unofficial co-operation bodies to carry out co-operation between home and school, such as parents' committees. (VN 2002, 31 [Government 2002, 31])

[Educational institutions providing basic education and general upper secondary education may co-operate with local businesses. This is often known as 'sponsor class activities'. These activities include study visits to businesses and pupils' working for the businesses during the period of workplace guidance in the last (9th) form of basic education.]

Legislation governing general upper secondary education does not contain any provisions on administration; instead, the general provisions on administration in the Local Government Act also apply to the general upper secondary education provided by local authorities. Consequently, the administration can be determined by the administrative regulations and standing orders of the local authority in question, similar to basic education. Nevertheless, institutions providing general upper secondary education must also always have a rector responsible for their operation. In addition, each institution providing general upper secondary education and vocational education must have a student body composed of students, with the task of promoting student co-operation and schoolwork.

The administration of vocational institutions is arranged according to the same principles as that of general upper secondary schools. Consequently, the administration of vocational institutions owned by local authorities and joint municipal boards is subject to the provisions of the Local Government

Act and municipal administrative regulations and standing orders. In addition, institutions providing vocational education and training always have a student body.

3.1.3 Co-operation between home and school in the light of research

The increasing significance of parents in school development and in matters concerning the quality of education is related to the strong decentralisation trend in Finland, where decision-making powers and responsibilities have been transferred from central government to local level. The new Basic Education Act, effective as from 1999, requires schools to be developed in co-operation with parents. In addition, the fact that schools draw up their own curricula independently on the basis of the National Core Curriculum has also brought school operations closer to parents. (Niemi 2000, 22)

Possible forms of co-operation between home and school include parent-teacher meetings, school festivities, parents' meetings, discussion events and one-to-one discussions between individual teachers and parents. In addition, some 'performance discussions' are conducted between individual pupils, their parents and teachers. Nevertheless, regular performance discussions are not very common in Finland (Virtanen & Onnismaa 2003, 352).

The majority of Finnish research studies into co-operation between home and school focus on primary schools. When pupils move to lower secondary level, co-operation between home and school often fades away, despite both parents' and schools' wishes to the contrary (Virtanen & Onnismaa 2003, 352).

Research carried out in the 1980's showed that the attitudes of Finnish parents towards co-operation between home and school were positive. Nevertheless, real participation was often less obvious than interest. Parents were not very enthusiastic about active co-operation between home and school. On average, 10% of parents – or 20–30% in some cases – were not at all willing to participate in any events organised by schools. Irrespective of their positive attitudes, not many parents were willing to take responsibility for such activities. Almost all active parents complained that responsibility for the activities had been left to just a few parents. (Siniharju 2003)

Research conducted in the 1990's also suggested that parents' attitudes towards co-operation were positive. In a nationwide survey carried out by the National Board of Education (Apajalahti et al. 1996) concerning the progress of curricular work in comprehensive schools, almost all primary school rectors involved in the survey (n = 221) reported that pupils' parents had participated in preparation of the curriculum. About 70% of schools had also provided parents with an opportunity to participate in setting objectives for pupils and in pupil assessment.

In a follow-up survey of curricular work (Pietilä & Toivanen 2000), primary level teachers (n = 388) stated that parents' involvement in curricular work, evaluation of school operations and instruction had increased. However, no information about the extent of co-operation or the effectiveness of parents' opinions is available.

In addition, a report by the National Board of Education on experiments in development of pupil assessment in 1994–1995 stated that primary schools (n = 50) had experienced an increase in co-operation between home and school and in parents' active involvement (Apajalahti & Merimaa 1996). A study by Syrjäläinen (1995), concerning the experiences of Helsinki-based rectors and teachers of the implementation of school-specific curricula, involved 25 primary levels. According

to primary school rectors and teachers (n = 33), co-operation between home and school had increased and taken new forms along with curricular work. Parents' involvement and interest in school had increased significantly. The majority of respondents perceived that the increase in co-operation was a positive development that supported the work of schools. Nevertheless, some teachers had experienced parents who were too active, even to the extent of interfering with schoolwork.

Teachers did not feel that they had received enough training to allow them to co-operate with parents. Niemi and Tirri (1997) found that, according to assessments from both teachers and teacher trainers, co-operation with parents was among the ten most poorly achieved objectives.

A study by Tuija Metso (2004) examines the relationships between home and school in two lower secondary level comprehensive schools in Helsinki. The study shows that parents take responsibility for their children's upbringing firmly in their own hands, perceiving that the role of the school and teachers is to focus on teaching.

From the school's perspective, parents are considered to be the school's backers and additional resources, whose role is to facilitate the success of schoolwork, support teachers' work and create conditions at home for successful schooling. In the classroom, for example, teachers may use contact with parents as a form or threat of punishment for pupils. In conflict situations, parents are expected to understand the school's point of view and to take the teacher's side.

In addition, Metso's study shows that the parent dealing with the school was usually the mother. Mothers attended parent-teacher evenings, maintained contacts with teachers and attended to children's school matters at home more frequently than fathers. Being a mother was concrete, everyday and inconspicuous. The significance of fathers was upheld rhetorically at school: schools were in need of male teachers to provide male role models for children from divorced families.

In the interaction model of co-operation between home and school, the key participants are the child, the teacher and the parents. There is some research information about the opinions of teachers and parents, but children's views on co-operation have been investigated to a lesser extent. It would indeed be interesting to study the opinions of teachers, children and parents at the same time, thus obtaining comparable information from different points of view.

3.2 Factors influencing participation

The connection between the level of education and social class of parents and their opinions on co-operation between home and school has been investigated in studies by Soininen (1986), Kananoja (1993) and Torkkeli (2001). The results of Soininen's study, which involved parents of pupils in the first form (n = 656), showed that attitudes among parents with the highest level of education were somewhat more positive and active compared with parents with a lower level of education. The case study by Kananoja (1993) on two first-form classes within the Helsinki Metropolitan Area also found that parents' socio-economic status had a bearing on their expectations of co-operation between home and school.

According to an interview study by Räisänen (1996), dealing with class teachers' work (n = 32), some teachers felt that well-educated parents could be the most difficult partners in co-operation between home and school. Conversely, in Torkkeli's study, the occupational status (upper white-collar employees, lower white-collar employees and blue-collar workers) of fathers of first-form

pupils (n = 115) had no effect on their attitudes towards co-operation between home and school. However, fathers' occupational status did have a bearing on their support for their children's schooling. Blue-collar workers considered that teachers play a key role in supporting their children's schooling clearly more often than other groups.

Metso's study (Metso 2004) suggests that co-operation between home and school was more active at those schools where pupils' parents had a higher level of education. Highly educated parents were associated with expectations about appreciation of education and values shared by the school. The school and such parents were perceived to be close to each other in cultural and social terms. The school had to take parents into account in its activities. At the same time, it was also effectively involved in making room for co-operation between home and school and for parents' active involvement. Despite the established forms of co-operation between home and school, the school's own operational culture and operating methods had a bearing on the nature of relationships formed with pupils' parents.

All parents involved in the study appreciated education and were interested in their children's schooling, irrespective of their social background. Social background provided parents with different cultural and social resources to support and help their children with schoolwork, examine and assess schools and make their voices heard within school. The effects of social background were also evident in the choice of school: in families with cultural capital, parents played an active part in choosing a school for their children. (Metso 2004.)

4 Pupils' choices and values

4.1 Pupils' attitudes

No information is currently available that would facilitate comparison of the opinions of pupils, their parents and teachers on the significance, objectives or contents of education.

Conversely, the opinions of pupils have been charted quite extensively in as many as three different contexts: the annual School Health Surveys, the National Board of Education's sample-based evaluations of learning outcomes and the evaluations of learning to learn skills. This chapter deals with the first two studies, since their design refers to concrete attitudes rather than to the type of in-depth analysis involved in learning to learn studies.

The theme has been investigated in extensive School Health Surveys by the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (Stakes). The indicator of the School Health Surveys that best addresses this is the 'How do you like going to school at the moment?' question. The 2002 and 2003 surveys cover the whole of Finland, because the surveys were implemented in different parts of the country in alternate years.

School Health 2003

		Comprehensive school, form8		Comprehensive school, form 9		Upper secondary school, form 1		Upper secondary school, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 8: How do you like going to school at the moment? I like going to school:	A lot	4	7	4	5	7	8	5	6
	Quite a lot	47	57	42	54	55	63	50	57
	Not very much	40	31	43	36	34	27	40	34
	Not at all	9	5	11	5	4	2	5	3
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		12,330	12,014	11,605	11,053	5,299	7,138	4,820	6,989

School Health 2002

		Comprehensive school, form8		Comprehensive school, form 9		Upper secondary school, form 1		Upper secondary school, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 8: How do you like gong to school at the moment? I like going to school:	A lot	5	7	4	6	6	8	6	6
	Quite a lot	45	55	42	53	54	61	50	56
	Not very much	40	33	43	35	35	29	40	35
	Not at all	10	5	11	5	5	2	4	3
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		13,607	13,434	13,406	12,790	6,361	8,539	5,686	7,769

The following tables, in turn, reveal the trends of change.

		Comprehensive school, form 8					
		Boys			Girls		
		96/97	98/99	00/01	96/97	98/99	00/01
Q 11: How do you like going to school at the moment? I like going to school:	A lot	3	3	3	5	5	5
	Quite a lot	43	42	40	55	53	50
	Not very much	44	46	46	35	36	38
	Not at all	10	9	11	5	5	6
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100
N		13,558	14,353	13,582	13,752	14,008	13,372

		Comprehensive school, form 9					
		Boys			Girls		
		96/97	98/99	00/01	96/97	98/99	00/01
Q 11: How do you like going to school at the moment? I like going to school:	A lot	3	3	3	5	5	5
	Quite a lot	39	38	37	51	50	50
	Not very much	46	48	48	39	40	40
	Not at all	12	11	12	5	5	6
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100
N		12,668	13,907	13,316	12,697	13,520	13,250

Percentage distribution adjusted for form level and gender
Comprehensive schools (forms 8 and 9) involved in the survey
in 1996/1998/2000 or 1997/1999/2001

		1996/1997	1998/1999	2000/2001
Q 11: How do you like going to school at the moment? I like going to school:	A lot	4	4	4
	Quite a lot	47	46	44
	Not very much	41	42	43
	Not at all	8	8	9
N		52,675	55,788	53,520

Based on opinion surveys conducted by the National Board of Education in connection with its evaluations of learning outcomes, we know the following points about the factors underlying pupils' attitudes:

1) In general terms, pupils' attitudes are positive regardless of the school subject.
2) There are no fundamental differences in attitudes between provinces, different types of municipalities (urban, suburban, rural) or EU Objective areas, for example.
3) Attitudes are more negative among older pupils than younger pupils.
4) Gender differences vary stereotypically by subject area in that attitudes towards mother tongue, the other national language and foreign languages are more positive among girls than boys, whereas boys have more positive attitudes towards mathematics than girls. The same stereotype is also evident in natural sciences: boys like physics and chemistry better than girls, whereas girls prefer geography and biology.
5) There is also a statistical relationship between attitudes and learning outcomes in that good learning outcomes are related to more positive attitudes. This applies both to pupils and schools. However, it is difficult to judge which is the cause and which is the effect. It is likely that this is an interactive relationship, but results indicate that the relationship between attitudes and learning outcomes is stronger in higher forms than in lower forms.
6) Attitudes are invariably more positive among pupils who move on to upper secondary school compared with those continuing in vocational education and training. Attitudes among the small number of pupils who do not intend to apply for upper secondary education immediately upon completion of comprehensive school are the most negative of all.
7) There is a noticeable group of pupils whose attitudes towards school are very negative. This group only represents a fairly small proportion of pupils, but indifference to school (regardless of subject area) is an issue that requires some corrective action.

These are general trends, which can be perceived from national evaluations and research projects carried out in Finland concerning basic schools pupils.

Engagement in schooling was charted in connection with the OECD's PISA survey. This further analysis of the PISA survey constructed two dimensions to measure engagement: sense of belonging and participation. Sense of belonging was based on students' responses to six questions describing their personal feelings about being accepted by their peers and whether or not they felt lonely, 'like an outsider' or 'out of place'. Participation was measured by the frequency of absence, class-skipping and late arrival at school during the two weeks prior to the PISA 2000 survey. (OECD 2003)

Two operational indicators were created for the study: low sense of belonging and low rate of participation. The criteria for these indicators were based on the scores of the relevant questionnaire items. Almost one quarter (24.5%) of all students in OECD countries had a low sense of belonging and one fifth (20%) had a low participation rate. (OECD 2003)

Finland did not differ essentially from the OECD average: in Finland, the proportions of students with a low sense of belonging and those with a low participation rate were 21.3% and 22.9% respectively. In most OECD countries, the odds of having a low sense of belonging and a low participation rate were clearly greater among students from low socio-economic family backgrounds than for their peers with average socio-economic backgrounds. Conversely, the differences in Finland were very small when these indicators were examined on the basis of socio-economic background. (OECD 2003)

The annual national Youth Barometer surveys examine the attitudes of young people (aged 15–29) towards different social phenomena. Each Youth Barometer also includes questions charting attitudes towards education. Young people have been presented with statements such as 'Education essentially improves job opportunities'. In 2002, about 65% of young people completely agreed with this statement. Between 1994 and 2002, the proportion was just above or below 70%. An exception was in 1994, when the proportion was less than 60%. At the time, Finland had a very high unemployment rate. (Nuorisobarometri 2002 [Youth Barometer 2002])

4.2 Pupil absences

Nationwide information about pupil absences and reasons for these have been collected by Stakes in extensive School Health Surveys (see Section 4.1), covering pupils in forms 8 and 9 of basic education and upper secondary school students. The most recent data is from surveys carried out in 2002 and 2003.

According to the 2003 survey, absences among pupils involved in the survey were distributed as follows:

Table 1. Absences among comprehensive school pupils and upper secondary school students in 2003 by form level, gender and reason

School Health 2003

		Comprehensive, form 8		Comprehensive, form 8		Upper secondary, form 1		Upper secondary, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 13: How many full school days have you missed due to illness during the LAST 30 DAYS?	None	59	56	58	53	71	66	71	63
	One day	15	15	14	16	13	16	13	18
	2–3 days	16	18	17	20	12	13	11	13
	Over 3 days	11	10	11	11	4	5	5	6
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		11,989	11,636	11,215	10,696	5,181	6,959	4,710	6,826

School Health 2003

		Comprehensive, form 8		Comprehensive, form 8		Upper secondary, form 1		Upper secondary, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 13: How many full school days have you missed due to truancy during the LAST 30 DAYS?	None	84	81	78	76	74	72	66	65
	One day	9	12	12	14	16	19	19	22
	2–3 days	3	4	6	6	6	7	9	9
	Over 3 days	4	3	5	4	4	3	5	4
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		11,489	11,173	10,876	10,307	5,129	6,860	4,694	6,751

School Health 2003

		Comprehensive, form 8		Comprehensive, form 8		Upper secondary, form 1		Upper secondary, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 13: How many full school days have you missed for other reasons during the LAST 30 DAYS?	None	76	72	75	67	81	76	75	70
	One day	11	16	12	18	9	13	13	16
	2–3 days	5	6	6	9	5	6	7	8
	Over 3 days	7	6	7	6	5	4	5	6
Total, %			100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		11,050	10,332	10,254	9,500	4,772	6,164	4,298	5,982

The corresponding figures for 2002 were as follows:

School Health 2002

		Comprehensive, form 8		Comprehensive, form 9		Upper secondary, form 1		Upper secondary, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 13: How many full school days have you missed due to illness during the LAST 30 DAYS?	None	57	53	57	52	73	66	73	65
	One day	15	16	15	17	12	16	12	16
	2–3 days	18	20	17	20	10	13	10	13
	Over 3 days	10	11	10	11	5	5	4	5
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		13,213	13,001	12,961	12,349	6,200	8,323	5,569	7,559

School Health 2002

		Comprehensive, form 8		Comprehensive, form 9		Upper secondary, form 1		Upper secondary, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 13: How many full school days have you missed due to truancy during the LAST 30 DAYS?	None	83	80	76	73	72	68	63	61
	One day	9	12	12	15	16	19	19	23
	2–3 days	4	5	6	6	7	8	11	10
	Over 3 days	4	4	6	5	5	5	7	6
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		12,706	12,465	12,630	11,976	6,156	8,231	5,585	7,535

School Health 2002

		Comprehensive, form 8		Comprehensive, form 9		Upper secondary, form 1		Upper secondary, form 2	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Q 13: How many full school days have you missed for other reasons during the LAST 30 DAYS?	**None**	75	71	73	65	82	77	76	70
	One day	11	15	13	18	9	12	12	15
	2–3 days	6	7	7	10	4	6	7	9
	Over 3 days	8	8	8	7	4	5	6	6
Total, %		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		12,062	11,429	11,806	10,905	5,697	7,309	5,048	6,606

There is also trend data available for the 1996–2001 period:

Percentage distribution adjusted for form level and gender
Comprehensive schools (forms 8 and 9) involved in the survey
in 1996/1998/2000 or1997/1999/2001

		1996/1997	1998/1999	2000/2001
Q 16: How many full school days have you missed during the LAST 30 DAYS A) due to illness?	**None**	54	51	51
	One day	17	16	16
	2–3 days	18	19	20
	Over 3 days	11	13	13
N		54,493	53,188	51,678

Percentage distribution adjusted for form level and gender
Comprehensive schools (forms 8 and 9) involved in the survey
in 1996/1998/2000 or1997/1999/2001

		1996/1997	1998/1999	2000/2001
Q 16: How many full school days have you missed during the LAST 30 DAYS B) due to truancy?	**None**	75	71	73
	One day	14	15	14
	2–3 days	6	7	6
	Over 3 days	5	7	6
N		53,775	49,172	47,861

4. 3 Education choices

The education choices made by pupils or their parents can be divided into three groups: choices within the school, choices concerning schools and choices concerning forms of education. The main principle in Finland is that whichever choice one makes, it will not restrict one's future options. The findings of the OECD report entitled 'School: A Matter of Choice' concerning the increase in a child's role in making decisions are still valid. However, it is impossible to give any precise estimates that would be more than just a general tendency.

In this context, *choices within schools* refer to the subjects chosen by pupils and students. Choices are naturally limited by the range of provision, which in turn is decided by municipal education committees and individual schools.

Choices are most commonly made in relation to language studies. Choices may already concern the first, compulsory language selected in the early school years, which most commonly starts in the third form (the A1 language). This may be the other national language (Swedish for Finnish-speaking and Finnish for Swedish-speaking pupils) or a foreign language, such as English, German, French, Russian or another language. The next language choice concerns the optional language (A2), which usually starts in the fourth form. The range of languages is as above. In addition, pupils in forms 7–9 of basic education may also choose the B1 and B2 languages, where the B1 language must be the other national language, unless it has already been selected as an A language. In addition to the options mentioned above, some schools also offer Latin.

Elective additional courses may also be selected in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and geography. The majority of those studying the first three of these subjects are boys, whereas the gender distribution for the last two, biology and geography, is fairly well balanced. Conversely, optional languages are more commonly chosen by girls than boys. This may reflect the somewhat stereotypical ideas held by pupils or their parents about mathematics, physics and chemistry as boys' subjects and languages as girls' subjects.

The stereotypical nature of these ideas is also evident in evaluations carried out by the National Board of Education, which involved charting pupils' attitudes as well. Girls like mathematics, physics and chemistry less than boys, whereas boys like languages (including the mother tongue) less than girls. In addition, girls' perceptions of their own mathematical skills are lower than those of boys, although there are no gender differences in terms of command of this subject in reality. Conversely, the fact that perceptions of own skills in language subjects are lower among boys than girls also corresponds to real differences between genders in learning outcomes.

In addition to the above-mentioned subject choices, schools offer a varying range of elective subjects, but it is not appropriate to list all these in this context.

The number of options increases in general upper secondary education, but the basic trends remain the same.

The choice of schools involves specialised schools, schools with specific focus themes, and schools emphasising a specific pedagogical (Steiner schools) or ethical philosophy (schools maintained by

religious communities). Nevertheless, the significance of these schools is marginal in the scope of the Finnish school system as a whole: 98% of Finland's schools are maintained by local authorities and specialised schools and those emphasising a specific theme are exceptional.

A topic that has stimulated more discussion is the pupils' right to choose a school other than the one located closest to where they live. In Finland, every pupil is entitled to attend the local school, but they are also entitled to apply to another school, which may admit them if it has sufficient places. In major population centres, this has led to choices that intensify the differences between schools. In particular, children with highly educated parents tend to apply to another school, if their local school is located in an area with a relatively low socio-economic status. This development is also familiar in other countries. The direction in more sparsely populated areas is from the periphery to schools located in the area's population centre.

Choosing the local school is more common among younger pupils (forms 1–6) than for those in higher forms (7–9). The Finnish comprehensive school system is no longer divided into upper and lower stages (primary and lower secondary levels). In practical terms, however, it is still very common that, upon completion of sixth form, while transferring from primary education mostly provided by class teachers to lower secondary education taught by subject teachers, pupils also transfer to another school. During this transitional phase, some pupils transfer from the local primary school to a lower secondary school other than their local school.

Parental surveys conducted in Helsinki suggest that the reasons for choosing a non-local school in primary education can be listed as follows.

Attractive qualities of the non-local school:
- the better reputation of the non-local school;
- afternoon care provided in connection with or close to the school;
- travel between home and school is short and safe;
- the non-local school's language programme or themes emphasised in instruction;
- siblings or friends attending the same school;
- the child's own opinion;
- number of pupils at the school.

The following reasons were considered to be obstacles to choosing the local school:
- the large number of pupils at the school;
- the bad reputation of the school;
- difficulties or perceived dangers in travelling between home and school;
- the school lacked certain focus themes.

When asked about the reasons for choosing a lower secondary school, the attractive factors mentioned by respondents included the following:
- the young person's own opinion;
- educational provision, language programmes and focus themes;
- the school's good reputation;
- friends' school choices.

The following factors were mentioned as obstacles to choosing the local school:
- the young person's own opinion;
- the bad reputation of the school;
- lack of focus themes.

It is difficult to determine a precise order of importance, because the relative weight assigned to different reasons has varied from year to year – mainly due to random factors related to samples and non-response rates apparently.

Although spontaneous school choices intensify differences between schools due to different operating environments in areas such as average learning outcomes, social differences in Finland are relatively small in international terms. There have been no signs indicating that this trend would have led to a decline in the standard of education in some schools. Quite the contrary, in fact, as the international PISA 2001 survey shows that differences between Finnish schools are lowest among the countries who participated. Nevertheless, attention is being paid to possible differentiation trends between schools.

Choices of upper secondary education (which are probably not the main subject of this survey) reveal four effective factors, namely, school performance, gender, area and social background. The average performance at comprehensive school was better among pupils moving on to general upper secondary education compared with those opting for vocational education and training, while more girls applied to upper secondary schools than boys (in 2001, girls accounted for 58% of both upper secondary school students and matriculants). Furthermore, it is more common to apply for general upper secondary education in urban areas than in rural areas. The data based on students' social background (their parents' level of education) dates back to 1995 (Havén 1998). At that time, the proportions of 17–18-year-old children with fathers with basic level education studying at upper secondary school, vocational institutions and other educational institutions were 39%, 39% and 2% respectively, while the remaining 20% did not study at all. The corresponding figures for children with fathers with upper secondary education were 52%, 34%, 2% and 13%. Almost four fifths (79%) of children with fathers with higher education had chosen upper secondary school. Only about a tenth (11%) had opted for vocational education and training, while 3% had chosen another educational institution and the rest (7%) did not study at all. This data was collected as early as ten years ago and the number of students in upper secondary education has increased during the elapsed time. However, the data has not been updated since then.

5. Diversity in the Structure of School Systems and Influence over the Curriculum

5.1 Fundamental principles of education policy

5.1.1 Overview

The main objective of Finnish education policy is to offer all citizens equal opportunities to receive education, regardless of age, domicile, financial situation, sex or mother tongue. Education is considered to be one of the fundamental rights of all citizens. Firstly, provisions concerning fundamental educational rights guarantee everyone (not just Finnish citizens) the right to free basic education; the provisions also specify compulsory education. Basic and compulsory education are stipulated in more detail in the Basic Education Act. Secondly, the public authorities are also obligated to guarantee everyone an equal opportunity to obtain other education besides basic education according to their abilities and special needs, and to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship.

In addition, the public authorities are obligated to provide for the educational needs of the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking population according to the same criteria. Approximately 5.6% of the population have Swedish as their mother tongue. Both language groups have the right to education in their own mother tongue. Regulations on the language of instruction are stipulated in legislation concerning different levels of education. The entirely Swedish-speaking Province of Åland has its own educational legislation.

Members of the Sami population living in the northernmost parts of Finland are an indigenous people, and they have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. The Act on the Sami Parliament (974/1995) came into force on 1 January 1996. The Act guarantees the Sami-speaking population cultural autonomy concerning their language and culture. The Sami language can be the language of instruction in basic education as well as in general and vocational upper secondary education and training, and it can also be taught as the mother tongue or as a foreign language. In the four municipalities located in the Sami domicile area, pupils speaking the Sami language must primarily be provided with basic education in that language, should their parents so choose.

The aims of immigrant education, for both children and adults, include equality, functional bilingualism and multiculturalism. The objective of immigrant education provided by different educational institutions is to prepare immigrants for integration into the Finnish education system and society, to support their cultural identity and to provide them with as well-functioning bilingualism as possible so that, in addition to Finnish (or Swedish), they will also have a command of their own native language.

A major objective of Finnish education policy is to achieve as high a level of education as possible for the whole population. One of the basic principles behind this has been to offer post-compulsory education to whole age groups. In international terms, a high percentage of each age group goes on to upper secondary education when they leave comprehensive school: more than 90% of those completing comprehensive school continue their studies in general upper secondary schools or vocational upper secondary education and training.

5.1.2 Status of private education in Finland

Education in Finland is mostly financed through public funding. Day-care centres, comprehensive schools and general upper secondary schools are mostly maintained by local authorities. Vocational institutions and polytechnics are mostly owned by local authorities, joint municipal boards or private foundations. The State generally only maintains general and vocational institutions providing special education. In addition, universities are owned by the State.

Education is free of charge for pupils and students. The private schools are not allowed to collect student fees (excluding some expections). Students in upper secondary and higher education receive additional financial support.

Although there are some private schools in Finland, the majority of these are publicly funded and under public supervision; in other words, they follow the national core curricula and the requirements of the competence-based qualifications confirmed by the National Board of Education. The Ministry of Education may grant private educational institutions licences to provide education in so far as they deem these to be required due to an educational need and to fulfil other conditions set out in legislation. If a licence to provide education is not granted (or if it is not even

applied for), the private school concerned may still be established, but it will remain outside public supervision and the resultant benefits (such as public funding). There are very few such schools.

Publicly supervised private schools generally receive state aid according to the same principles as other schools; the form of ownership has no bearing on the funding, because funding is granted on the basis of the field of education. Education providers are granted state subsidies according to the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (635/1998).

Only about one per cent of schools providing basic education are private (67 schools). Pupils at these schools account for two per cent of all pupils in basic education. Private education providers are licensed by the Government. A private provider of basic education is usually required to have a contract with a local authority. If the education is deemed to serve a national need for education, however, a contract with a local authority is not necessary.

As part of granting a licence to provide basic education, the Government may also assign a specific task to the provider. Such a task has been assigned for example to the Steiner schools, religious schools and foreign-language schools. Specialist schools may emphasise the curriculum according to the assigned task.

Those no longer subject to compulsory education may also receive basic education from general upper secondary schools for adults, folk high schools and adult education centres. Some folk high schools and most adult education centres are private institutions.

In 2003, 11% of general upper secondary schools and 52% of vocational institutions were privately owned.

5.1.3 Language of instruction and instruction for special groups within the Finnish education system

5.1.3.1 Pre-School education and basic education

In Finland, compulsory education starts in the year when a child celebrates his or her seventh birthday. For one year before that, the child can participate in pre-school education intended for six-year-olds. Pre-school education is mostly organised as part of the day-care system, but comprehensive schools may also offer pre-school education to six-year-olds. Participation in pre-school education is voluntary. In practical terms, almost all six-year-olds (96%) participate in pre-school education.

The objective of basic education is to support pupils' growth towards humanity and ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed in life. Education should promote learning and equality in society as well as acquisition of the skills and knowledge that pupils need to study and develop in later life. Education also aims to guarantee sufficient equality in education throughout the country.

According to the Basic Education Act, children permanently residing in Finland are subject to compulsory education. Compulsory education starts in the year when a child becomes seven years of age and ends when the syllabus of basic education has been completed or 10 years after the beginning of compulsory education. The parents or guardians of children of compulsory school age

are required to ensure that children comply with this obligation. The local authorities are obligated to organise basic education free of charge for school-aged children living within their respective areas.

A child may be granted the right to begin basic education one year earlier than stipulated, provided that psychological and medical examinations show that the child has the aptitudes for coping at school. Correspondingly, a child may also be granted permission to begin basic education one year later than stipulated, on the basis of similar examinations.

The scope of the basic education syllabus is nine years. There is no obligation to attend school in Finland, but compulsory education may also be completed by studying at home, for example. In such cases, the municipality of residence is obligated to verify a child's progress in his/her studies. The number of those studying at home is minimal.

In practical terms, compulsory education is monitored by the local authorities by keeping a list of all school-aged children. The parent or other guardian is informed when a child is to be registered at a school. The rector of the school lists all registrations. In the event that a child of compulsory school age has not registered, the parent or guardian is notified. If the child is still not registered or his/her instruction organised in some other way (for example, at home), the parent or guardian may be fined for neglecting his/her supervisory duty.

There may be special classes in comprehensive schools. Special classes may also form a special school. Comprehensive schools may provide no more than two years of pre-school education for children with severe disabilities or illnesses, whose compulsory education starts at the age of six and lasts eleven years.

Basic education is also provided for children of compulsory school age in hospitals. The municipality where the hospital is situated is responsible for arranging the instruction. Furthermore, pupils who are lagging behind in their lessons due to illness, absence for other reasons or temporary learning problems have the right to receive remedial instruction.

There are special arrangements for refugees and other immigrants. Children of compulsory school age who have entered the country either as refugees or asylum seekers may receive preparatory instruction in their own group for six months before they start comprehensive school. At comprehensive school, these children, like other immigrant pupils, are usually put into classes appropriate to their age and skills. There is a special appropriation for providing immigrant pupils with the opportunity to receive special remedial instruction and instruction in their mother tongue.

The Basic Education Act is being complemented with provisions to cover the welfare of pupils. Pupils will be entitled to receive those pupil welfare services that they need in order to be able to participate in instruction free of charge. In order to monitor pupils' attendance in compulsory education better, education providers will be obligated to inform parents of unauthorised absences. Schools are to lay down regulations; the powers of the headteacher and other teachers to maintain order are also being increased.

After completing basic education, a young person can continue studying or enter working life. It is not considered advisable to move into working life immediately, but one of the objectives of education policy is to provide the whole of each age group with upper secondary education free of charge. If schooling is continued, a choice is usually made between general upper secondary school

and vocational education and training. In 2003, young people completing comprehensive school continued their studies as follows:

- 56% moved on to general upper secondary education;
- 35% opted for vocational upper secondary education and training;
- 2.5% continued in the additional 10th form of comprehensive school;
- 7% did not continue their studies straight away.

5.1.3.2 General upper secondary education

General upper secondary education builds on the basic education syllabus. The scope of the general upper secondary school syllabus is three years. The upper secondary school syllabus should be completed within a maximum of four years, unless a student is granted a continuation of the completion period for a legitimate reason. At the end of general upper secondary education, students usually participate in the national matriculation examination, which provides general eligibility for higher education. Upper secondary schools select their students autonomously on the basis of criteria determined by the Ministry of Education.

The objective of general upper secondary education is to promote the development of students into good, balanced and civilised individuals and members of society and to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary for further studies, working life, their personal interests and the diverse development of their personalities. In addition, the education must support students' opportunities for lifelong learning and self-development during their lives.

The language of instruction at an institution providing general upper secondary education is either Finnish or Swedish. Other possible languages of instruction are the Sami language, the Romany language or sign language. In addition, it is also possible to provide instruction primarily or entirely in a language other than those mentioned above (foreign language instruction) as part of a separate teaching group or institution.

Immigrants may apply to any upper secondary school for a student place. If necessary, it is possible to apply for general upper secondary education at times other than during the joint application period. It is possible to admit people to general upper secondary education even if they have not completed the basic education syllabus due to a stay abroad, for example, provided that they are deemed to have sufficient capabilities to cope at upper secondary school.

In the matriculation examination, a foreign-language student may, instead of participating in the mother tongue test intended for Finnish-, Swedish-speaking or Sami-speaking students, take a test in Finnish or Swedish as a second language.

A two-year IB programme leading to the International Baccalaureate is provided by 14 upper secondary schools. It is preceded by a 'preparatory class', which takes one year. A Reifeprüfung examination may be taken at the German School of Helsinki. These examinations guarantee the same eligibility for further studies as the Finnish matriculation examination.

5.1.3.3 Upper secondary vocational education and training

The scope of upper secondary level vocational qualifications taken after basic education is 3 years (120 credits). Even if education and training mainly take place in vocational institutions, all qualifications include at least 20 credits (about six months) of instruction in the workplace. Vocational qualifications may also be completed as apprenticeship training, which also includes courses arranged by vocational institutions. Furthermore, upper secondary vocational qualifications may also be obtained through competence tests independent of how the vocational skills have been acquired. Like other vocational adult education and training, competence-based qualifications are governed by a separate act. It is also possible to apply for vocational upper secondary education and training upon completion of general upper secondary schooling.

The objective of upper secondary vocational education and training is to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to acquire vocational competence and to provide them with the potential for self-employment as well as further studies.

There are special arrangements guaranteeing vocational study opportunities for those students who would otherwise have difficulties with education due to illness, disability or other such reason. Vocational special education and training are provided by regular vocational institutions in both integrated and special groups and by vocational special institutions.

5.1.4 Eligibility for higher education

Upon completion of general upper secondary school or vocational upper secondary education and training, students can apply for higher education. The Finnish higher education system consists of two sectors: universities and polytechnics. Eligibility for polytechnic studies is gained through upper secondary education – either the general education completed in an upper secondary school or an upper secondary vocational qualification. General eligibility for universities is provided by the matriculation examination or a vocational qualification with a scope of at least three years. The majority of new students have completed the matriculation examination.

5.2 Principles for choosing a school

In Finland, parents are entitled to choose the comprehensive school that they consider to be most suitable for their own children. This has been possible since the late 1990’s, when the former division into school districts was abolished as a result of new school legislation. According to the legislation, the local authorities are obligated to organise basic education for children of compulsory school age residing in their respective areas. A municipality with both Finnish- and Swedish-speaking inhabitants is obligated to organise basic education separately for both language groups. Consequently, the local authorities must assign a school place to each pupil. Instruction must be organised in such a manner that pupils’ travel to school is as safe and short as possible. Pupils may also apply to a school other than that assigned to them, which may admit them at the discretion of the education provider.

When selecting pupils for an ‘alternative’ school, all applicants must be subject to equal selection criteria. If a school emphasises one or more subjects in its instruction, the school may also use tests to determine pupils’ aptitudes in pupil selection. Nevertheless, the local authority may decide that children living within its area are given priority in education that it has organised.

The Government report suggests that the legal provision on pupils' admission to their local schools is generally considered to be effective. According to education providers, the majority of pupils in basic education were admitted to their local school. When admitting pupils to an alternative school, priority has usually been given to pupils living in the municipality in question. Other selection criteria have included siblings already studying at the school, pupils' language choices and the school's curricular emphases. Further methods used to select pupils for alternative schools have included tests to demonstrate pupils' aptitudes, interest shown in an interview and other criteria or the drawing of lots. (VN 2002, 16 [Government 2002, 16])

Pupils' choices vary according to the size of the municipality. In small municipalities, which may only have one comprehensive school, there is little choice. Conversely, there are plenty of options in major cities. No precise information is available concerning the extent to which parents exercise their options, because there are no relevant national statistics.

At upper secondary level, students are entitled to apply to any institution offering upper secondary education and training. General upper secondary education is open to those who have completed the syllabus of basic education or a corresponding previous syllabus. Vocational education and training are open to those who have completed the syllabus of basic education or a corresponding previous syllabus. Students primarily apply to both general upper secondary schools and vocational upper secondary institutions through the nationwide joint application system. In the joint application system, the applicant may apply for a study place in a maximum of five study programmes involved in the system anywhere in Finland by filling in a single application form.

5.3 Co-operation in the preparation of curricula

The National Board of Education decides on the national core curricula for pre-school education, basic education and upper secondary education and on the national requirements of competence-based qualifications. The national core curricula include the objectives and core contents of different subjects, as well as the principles of pupil/student assessment. The current national core curricula were adopted in both comprehensive and general upper secondary schools in 1994. The core curricula are being renewed and will be adopted gradually.

The education providers, usually the local education authorities, and the schools themselves draw up their own curricula within the framework of the national core curriculum. These curricula may be prepared for individual municipalities or institutions, or they can include both sections. In upper secondary education, curricula may also be drawn up by joint municipal boards. Preparation of a curriculum involves co-operation between home and school and between vocational institutions and representatives of working life.

The Basic Education Act stipulates that instruction must be conducted in co-operation with homes. In practical terms, this is accomplished by parent-teacher meetings, for example, where parents and teachers also have the chance for private discussions. Co-operation between home and school also utilises various notices, etc. Parents may also participate in developing local curricula and planning their children's studies. The governing bodies of schools may also include representatives of pupils' parents or other guardians.

The Upper Secondary Schools Act stipulates that general upper secondary education must be conducted in co-operation with students' homes. In practical terms, general upper secondary schools primarily promote the co-operation between home and school by arranging discussions and information meetings for the students' parents or other guardians. Parents or guardians have also been able to participate in the development of school curricula. Upper secondary school boards may also include representatives of students' parents or other guardians.

The Vocational Education Act provides that special attention should be focused on working life needs in education. Education must be organised in co-operation with representatives of business life and other sectors of working life. The most important channels through which the social partners and representatives of business life can participate in the planning of vocational education and training at a national level are the training committees set up by the Ministry of Education and the governing bodies and consultative committees of educational institutions. Usually, vocational institutions seek to establish local networks to become involved in regional business life.

In general terms, it is fair to say that local providers have plenty of opportunities in Finland to decide on the ways in which co-operation between their schools and pupils' or students' homes and other representatives of the local community is to be implemented. Parents have the opportunity to participate in the preparation of curricula at a school or local level. Parents also take advantage of this opportunity and their contribution is important. In addition, it should be mentioned that there is plenty of co-operation with representatives of local working life within vocational education and training. However, it is difficult to estimate the precise extent of parents' opportunities to influence the preparation of curricula. There is no relevant research information covering the whole country.

5.4 Basic values of the curricula, citizenship education and religious instruction

5.4.1 Basic values and citizenship education

The National Core Curricula for basic education and upper secondary schools have recently been reformed in Finland. The new National Core Curriculum for Basic Education will come into force gradually by August 2006. The National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education will come into force gradually by August 2005. The National Core Curricula that are currently effective date back to 1994. The effective and new National Core Curricula will be examined in parallel in the following sections. These will be followed by an analysis of the National Core Curricula for vocational education and training.

The basic values within the **effective National Core Curricula** for comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools rest on the following themes:

- promotion of sustainable development;
- clarification of cultural identity and internationalisation;
- promotion of physical, mental and social well-being;
- growth into a member of civil society.

The essential basic values within the **new National Core Curriculum** for Basic Education include human rights, equality, democracy, preservation of natural diversity and viability of the environment, and acknowledgement of multiculturalism. Basic education must also promote sense

of community, responsibility and respect for individuals' rights and liberties. Instruction in different subjects in basic education is politically independent and non-denominational. The basic values set out in the new National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education are very similar.

The new National Core Curricula for both basic education and general upper secondary education include key themes of educational and teaching work, the objectives and contents of which are included in several different subjects. One such theme in the new National Core Curricula deals with citizenship and entrepreneurship in both comprehensive and upper secondary schools.

In basic education, the cross-curricular theme entitled 'participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship' aims to help pupils to structure society from the perspectives of different participants and to develop the capabilities required for participation and to create a foundation for entrepreneurial operating methods. The school's learning culture and operating methods must support pupils' development into independent, proactive, goal-oriented, co-operative and contributing citizens and support pupils to form a realistic idea of their own opportunities to influence. A similar theme in general upper secondary education is known as 'active citizenship and entrepreneurship' and its objective is to educate students to become contributing, responsible and critical citizens.

Citizenship education in both basic education and general upper secondary education focuses on social studies. According to the **effective National Core Curricula**, social studies is taught alongside history. The key objective of social studies in basic education is to teach pupils those skills and knowledge that they will need in order to function and conduct their own business in society. Social studies also examines Finland's political and social system and citizens' role in society. This topic will be further consolidated in general upper secondary education. Key areas of study include human rights, political and social rights and division of powers and control of the exercise of power.

According to the **new National Core Curricula** for Basic Education and for General Upper Secondary Education, social studies is an independent subject. The role of social studies in basic education is to guide pupils to grow into active and responsible members of society. Instruction in social studies in forms 7–9 of basic education must provide pupils with basic skills in and knowledge of the structures and workings of society and citizens' opportunities to influence. The purpose of instruction is to support pupils' growth into tolerant and democratic citizens and to provide them with experiences of societal activities and democratic participation. Instruction in social studies at upper secondary school will consolidate students' understanding of society around them.

The key basic values within the qualification-specific National Core Curricula for Upper Secondary Vocational Education and Training are expressed in the objectives of education and training: vocational education and training must encourage students to take up interests and to develop their personalities and must also support their capabilities for further education by providing them with diverse free-choice studies. Education and training must create an open and positive learning environment, which consolidates life skills and where students develop into responsible and dutiful citizens and members of their working community. Education and training must promote democracy, equality between men and women in all sectors of society, as well as general equality in working life and society.

One of the key areas of core skills in vocational education and training comprises ethical and aesthetic skills. In order to develop ethical and aesthetic skills, education and training must provide students with capabilities to enable them to function in a responsible and fair manner and in accordance with what has been agreed. In addition, they must be aware of their own values and of the aesthetic values based on culture, and to take account of these in their actions.

In vocational education and training, citizenship education is related to social, business and labour-market subjects, the core contents of which comprise functioning as a member of a community and of society and as a citizen of the EU, the central effects of households and businesses on the national economy of Finland, and functioning as a member of a working community and according to the procedures of the labour market.

5.4.2 Principles of religious instruction

About 85% of Finns are members of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church. Approximately one per cent of the population are members of the Orthodox Church, whereas about 13% are not members of any religious denomination. Both the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church are so-called State Churches; these Churches have the right to levy church taxes from their respective congregations.

In Finland, both comprehensive school pupils and upper secondary school students have the right to religious instruction in accordance with their own denomination. About 85% of comprehensive school pupils participate in Lutheran religious instruction. The majority of upper secondary school students also participate in Lutheran religious instruction. Consequently, religious instruction for the majority of pupils and students complies with the Lutheran faith and is compulsory for those belonging to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church. Those pupils and students who are not members of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church may choose between religious instruction and ethics. As a subject, ethics has a multidisciplinary foundation, including philosophy and social and cultural sciences.

Where parents of at least three comprehensive school pupils demand provision of non-Lutheran religious instruction and this is not organised in their own school, the education provider must meet the parents' requirement to provide religious instruction in some other way. The same principle applies to upper secondary schools, but the students themselves have a say in this.

The **effective National Core Curricula** for Comprehensive Schools and for Upper Secondary Schools determine the contents and objectives of religious instruction in accordance with the Evangelical-Lutheran and Orthodox religions. The curricula for other religions are to be drawn up in accordance with the general objectives set for religions within the National Core Curricula. The same principle is also included in the **new National Core Curricula** for Basic Education and for General Upper Secondary Education.

According to the **effective National Core Curricula** for comprehensive and upper secondary schools, the general objective of religious instruction for all religious groups is for pupils and students to achieve diverse religious and philosophical all-round learning.

The role of religious instruction within the **new National Core Curriculum** for Basic Education is to provide pupils with knowledge, skills and experiences to use as materials for building their identity and philosophy of the world. The instruction will provide pupils with capabilities to deal with the religious and ethical aspects of their own lives and of their community. The general

objective of instruction is to provide religious and philosophical all-round learning. According to the new National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education, the key role of instruction in religion is to familiarise students with their own religion, its cultural heritage and the life philosophy and ethical thinking that stem from religion. Other religions will be introduced from their respective points of departure.

Religious instruction is not provided in upper secondary vocational education and training. It is possible to study ethics as an elective subject. The key objective of ethics studies is for students to be able to acquire information about ethical issues in their own field as well as to evaluate the values and ethical problems related to their own lives, human relations, society, the environment, working life, business activities and occupations.

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Statistics

Comprehensive schools in 2003

	State-owned		Municipal or joint municipal		Private		Total	
Type of Institution	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
Comprehensive schools	5	1,595	3,493	564,162	26	3,464	3,524	569,221
Basic level special schools	15	618	198	9,668	7	244	220	10,530
Other basic level and general upper secondary schools:								
- basic level education	10	5,350	2	359	25	8,881	37	14,590
- general upper secondary education*	10	2,458	2	173	25	6,265	37	8,896
Åland	27	3,094	0	0	0	0	27	3,094
Total	57	10,557	3,693	574,189	58	12,589	3,808	597,435

* Not included in the overall total

Swedish was the language of instruction in 324 comprehensive schools in 2003 and there were 36,800 pupils in these schools, accounting for 6 per cent of all comprehensive school pupils.

Source: Statistics Finland

Upper secondary schools according to maintaining body in 2003

Maintaining body	Number
State	10
Municipality	436
Joint municipal boards	3

Private	37
Total	487

Source: Statistics Finland.

Upper secondary schools and their students according to language of instruction in 2002

	Upper secondary schools	Students	Average number of students per upper secondary school
Finnish	436	117,744	271
Swedish	37	6,870	186
Other languages*	4	696	174
Total	477	125,310	263

*The German School of Helsinki, the International School of Helsinki, the English School of Helsinki and the bilingual Rudolf Steiner School of Helsinki
Source: Statistics Finland.

Matriculation examinations in 1940-2003

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2003
Girls	1,323	2,115	4,369	10,753	17,892	16,379	21,069	20,642
Girls %	49.1	51.9	57	58.8	62.4	59.6	59,1	58,7
Boys	1,369	1,958	3,297	7,527	10,800	11,090	14,592	14,540
Total	2,692	4,073	7,666	18,280	28,692	27,469	35,661	35,182

Source: Statistics Finland.

New students in upper secondary level initial vocational education in 2003

Educational sector	Number
Natural resources	3,720
Technology and transport	20,638
Business and administration	7,475
Tourism, catering and home economics	7,616
Health and social services	10,422
Culture	4,295
Humanities and education	1,079
Natural sciences	3,139
Other education	460
Total	58,844

Source: Statistics Finland

Vocational institutions* by owner in 2003

State	1,1%
Local authorities + joint municipal boards	79,7%

Private	19,2%
Total	100%

* including vocational special institutions