Dutch – Scandinavian exchange on cultural education

**Arts education in Finland**

**Quick view**
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**In school**

In Finland, art is perceived to be a very important subject. Art is essential for personal development and wellbeing. By allowing students to understand the experiences of their classmates and themselves, the arts help students become self-aware. Art plays an important role in promoting a child’s creativity, which applies to all subject areas. Basic education in the arts is a compulsory subject. Progressing from one level to another, it is goal-oriented. Arts education teaches children skills in self-expression and capabilities needed for vocational, polytechnic and university education in their chosen art form. Participation is voluntary and the education providers may charge moderate fees.

In primary education, the core subjects taught in comprehensive schools include physical education, music, visual arts and arts and crafts. In upper secondary education, students must take and complete five compulsory arts and skill courses in music, arts and physical education. In vocational education, the compulsory core studies include arts and skills subjects, like arts and culture.

Basic education in the arts differs from compulsory basic education. A local authority providing basic education in the arts receives statutory government transfers based on the number of inhabitants. Further, public and private education providers receive government grants based on the confirmed number of lesson hours given. The main subjects of basic education in the arts focuses on music, visual arts and craft. Each of the subjects has different aim as defined in the National Core Curriculum (2004). The Finnish National Board of Education decided on the objectives and core contents of each art form.

**Out of school**

In addition to compulsory arts education, the system provides art and culture participation options through out of school platforms. These are divided into three categories. Cultural and art services provided by municipalities include: performances, concerts, and exhibitions and other cultural events. In early childhood education, basic education and upper secondary level out of school art activities are found in afternoon clubs, arts education in day care. This also includes implementers of cultural education plan and continuous education for teachers in the field. In addition, there are art and cultural participatory activities for citizens in municipalities of all ages, which include projects, courses, workshops and summer camps, activities in care.
homes and hospitals, activities for special groups such as immigrants and youth under the risk of alienation.

**Extended research**
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_Situated in northern Europe, Finland is a Nordic country with an area of 338,2 km² and a population of 5,5 million._

**History of Finnish education**

Since the 1970s, Finland's education system has been focused on providing a comprehensive and egalitarian approach. Increasing the autonomy of schools and educators, the system became decentralized and developed a market economy model in the 1980s. Coupled with an aging labor force, generation gaps, and increased demand for professional development, lifelong learning came into focus in the 1990s. This remains to be Finland's main goal with education.

**The Finnish education system**

The Ministry of Education and Culture oversees the education system in Finland. To develop goals, content, and methods for primary, secondary, and adult education, The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) collaborates with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Institutions providing basic and upper secondary level education are managed on the local level, which sometimes involves a joint municipal board. The national core curriculum for basic education is determined by the Finnish National Board of Education. Within this framework, there is flexibility, and each school drafted their own curriculum.

With a basic right to education included in the country's constitution, Finland's main objective is to offer all citizens the same educational opportunities. There are no tuition fees, and success isn't measured by testing. To remain globally competitive, Finland emphasizes learning in its education policies. Finland is interested in quality, efficiency, equality, and internationalization. Finland believes that many fundamental childhood educational insights are globally interchangeable.

In Finland, there is a distinction between the following education levels.

1. **Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)**
   ECEC is for babies and children from 0 to 6 years old,

2. **Pre-Primary Education**
   Pre-primary education begins at age 6, and prepares students for compulsory education. At this level, there is an emphasis on socializing and play. Impacting 79% of the 6-year-old population, pre-primary education is voluntary. Based on a child's own knowledge, skills, and expe-
periences, the general principles in the core curriculum emphasize individuality, active learning, and group participation.

3 Primary Education
Primary education, also called Peruskoulu, encompasses 9 years of learning, and engages students from 7-16 years old. Funded by local authorities, there are approximately 3,700 primary schools, of which 30 are private. In 2016, 550,200 pupils were enrolled.

For the first 6 years, basic education is provided by the same instructor. Subject specialists are introduced in the last 3 years. Throughout the 9 years, students may enroll in between 19 and 30 different courses. This depends on how many optional subjects they wish to engage in.

4 Upper Secondary Education
Upper secondary education provides eligible students with general and vocational upper secondary level training. In Finland, there are approximately 440 upper secondary schools with an enrolment of 104,100 students. The goal is to prepare students for either a matriculation examination or vocational competence.

Designed for the last 3 years of a student’s learning career, upper secondary education may also be completed in either 2 or 4 years. Based on course completion, students receive an upper secondary school certificate when all requirements are fulfilled.

5 Higher Education
Higher education in Finland is tuition-free and involves either a general university, which emphasizes scientific research and instruction, or a more practical university of applied sciences. There are 20 universities, of which 10 are multidisciplinary and 10 are technical, and 29 universities of applied sciences in Finland. The total number of university degrees awarded in 2015 was 32,700. Entrance is based on matriculation examination and tests, and not all students are accepted.

Success of the Finnish Education System
Internationally, Finland ranks high. Its success can be attributed to the following factors:
1. Equality
   Regardless of socio-economic background, all students start at the same level. They learn basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes of lifelong learning.
2. Instructor Quality
   All teachers receive training in academic universities. Since a master’s degree is required, they are highly respected and appreciated in Finnish culture.
3. Tests
   There are no mandatory tests and exams. Based on constructive feedback (instead of grades), teachers design their own assessment methods. This removes competitiveness amongst students, and creative thought is highly regarded.
4. Autonomy
   To cater to individual student needs, schools can design their own curriculum. The only exceptions are guidelines for learning goals and assessment criteria provided by the National Board of Education.
Main facts about Finnish education

There are a few elements that characterize the Finnish education system.

1 Focus
Learning, rather than testing, is the focus of education. Except for one final high school exam, there are no standardized tests in Finland.

2 Personalized Learning
The amount of homework asked of students is much less than most other developed nations. There are no rankings, comparisons, or other indicators for competition among students, schools, or regions. Instead, Finland provides ‘personalized learning,’ involving warmth, collaboration, and teacher-led encouragement.

3 Educators
Regardless of a town or city’s own population and resources, Finland’s quality of education remains the same. This is because every school pulls from one pool of university-trained educators.

4 Assessment
Teachers are responsible for guiding and encouraging study behaviours, which is handled by continuous assessment. At the end of a course, students should understand and comprehend its objectives.

5 Breaks
Four 15 minute outdoor free-play breaks are provided for children attending Finnish public schools. Teachers believe these breaks are a powerful engine of learning which improves a student’s focus, behaviour, well-being, attendance, physical health, and test scores.

Art and Culture in Finnish Education

With 1.2 million participants (21.8% of the total population), art education in Finland is a substantial part of their curriculum and includes music, visual arts, crafts, physical education, and home economics (arts and skills). As part of other subjects, dance and drama are also taught through physical education and native language and literature classes.

Art and culture education definitions
Art education in Finland has been mainly education in the arts, where education through the arts, usually is coming under the title ’holistic teaching’ (’kokonaisopetus’), which has been considered to belong to the education at lower elementary levels. The arts in Finland have always had an important role in education, however at organizational level, The Ministry of Education is divided into an Educational Division and a Cultural Division, each having its own ministers. Where on the one hand The Cultural Division supports arts education outside the schools, The Educational Division is responsible for the arts in the schools.
The main subjects of basic education in the arts focuses on music, visual arts and craft. Each of the subjects has different aim as defined in the National Core Curriculum (2004).

- The music education is characterized in helping the pupils find their object of interest in music and to give them means of expressing themselves musically.
- The visual arts education aim is to support the development of pupils visual thinking and aesthetics and ethical awareness and to make pupils capable of their own visual expression. In visual arts construction the main key concern is the understanding and manifestation of visual culture in society as in in the art, media and the environment.
- The craft education task is to develop the pupils skills in craft, so their self-esteem will grow on the basis of joy and satisfaction from their work. Moreover, the use of different materials increases and they learn to appreciate the quality of the material and work. The pupils receive an introduction to cultural traditions of handicraft among the Finns and other cultures.

1 Primary education

The core subjects taught in comprehensive schools include physical education, music, visual arts and arts and crafts. The minimum number of lesson hours in these subjects over the nine years of basic education is 56 weekly lessons (one weekly lesson means a module of 38 hours of instruction, and 56 weekly lessons means that the number of lesson hours dedicated to art and skill subjects is 2,128 over the nine years of basic education). Comprehensive schools give instruction in the art and skill subject to 550,000 pupils, of whom some 200,000 also participate in school club activities. Participation in club activities is voluntary and free of charge for pupils.

Based on a comparison of time spent on the arts in primary education in OECD countries, approximately 13% of the instruction time is spent on arts subjects.

2 Upper secondary education & vocational education

Under the Government Decree on the general objectives of upper secondary education and the allocation of lesson hours, students must take and complete 5 compulsory art and skill courses in music, art and physical education. From the 440 upper secondary schools in Finland, 18 have special arts education mission, like specializing in music, art, music and art or music and dance. In the upper secondary schools, approximately 115,000 students study arts subjects.

The vocational qualification curricula contain core subjects amounting a total of 16 credits. The compulsory core studies include art and skill subjects, like art and culture. This subject is generally taken by 50,000 first years students.

In general, in upper secondary education students must take and complete 3 compulsory art courses (a course = c. 38 lesson hours) in music and visual arts. In addition students must be offered a choice of at least three optional courses in each of these subjects.

Basic education in the arts

Basic education in the arts is goal-oriented, progressing from one level to other. It teaches children skills in self-expression and capabilities needed for vocational, polytechnic and university education in their chosen art form. Participation is voluntary and the education providers may charge moderate fees.
Basic education in the arts differs from compulsory basic education. A local authority providing basic education in the arts receives statutory government transfers based on the number of inhabitants. Further, public and private education providers receive government grants based on the confirmed number of lesson hours given.

The network of art education institutes thus funded comprises 89 music institutes and 41 schools in the other arts.

The full extent of the network of schools / education institutes providing basic education in the arts in Finland:
- 393 schools / institutes
- 251 municipalities (85% of all municipalities in Finland)
- 126,000 students (approximately 15% of the age group participating in the basic education)

Overall, basic education in the arts for children and young students is provided by schools and other institutes. The objective and core contents are determined in national core curricula. Nine different art forms are distinguished: music, literary arts, dance, performing arts (circus and theatre) and visual arts (architecture, audiovisual arts, visual arts and crafts). The Finnish National Board of Education decided on the objectives and core contents of each art form. The curricula for basic art education is divided into basic syllabus and advance syllabus and contains the core curricula, the structure of training and the scope of training.

Assessment
The Finnish national curriculum includes requirements for core subject areas including music, visual arts, and crafts education. For each of these subjects, there are various parameters which must be met. For example, with music, students must ‘master, as individuals, the basic technique of some rhythm, melody, or harmony instrument so as to be able to play in an ensemble’ or ‘know how to listen to both their own music and music produced by others, so as to be able to make music together with others.’ Assessments in the main art subjects (music, visual arts, and crafts) are based on paper and production assignments.

A total of 152 surveys were conducted and indicated Finnish students had a positive view towards art education. They valued the opportunity to express their own thoughts and felt art education was a significant part of their education. Pupils, teachers, and principals view art education as a resource for community building.

EQF
Finland carries out its referencing of the qualifications framework to the EQF and the self-certification to the European higher education area as one process. In the figure below, an overview of the NQF of Finland can be found.
The Importance of Arts education in Finland - Goals and aims

Finland perceives art to be important, and essential for personal development. It supports the wellbeing. By allowing students to understand experiences of classmates and themselves, the arts help students become self-aware. Art plays an important role in promoting a child’s creativity, which applies to all subject areas. For example, music instruction helps with linguistic skills. The creative process also helps with skills like problem solving. Moreover the training in basic art education (BEA) provides children and young people with an opportunity for a regular long term arts hobby and learning. Finally, art and culture are important for participation in the growing creative economy and provide tools for active citizenship.

Funding

The funding of basic education in the arts is mainly governmental by a municipal but also comes from tuition fees and private fundraising. The public funding enables reasonable participation fees, social equality and prevention of alienation, good quality, encouraging and inspiring as well as safe teaching spaces, good quality education and rich local culture and joy and wellbeing.

Art education outside of school

Besides basic art education in the art that is taking place inside of school as an inherent topic of study, the art education system provides art and culture participation options in out of school platforms. These platforms are divided into three: Cultural and art services provided by municipalities which includes: performances, concerts, exhibitions and other cultural events; In ear-
ly childhood education, basic education and upper secondary level out of school art activities are found in afternoon clubs, arts education in day care. That also includes implementers of cultural education plan and continuous education for teachers in the field; In addition there are art and cultural participatory activities for citizens in municipalities of all ages. Projects, courses, workshops and summer camp activities in care homes and hospitals, activities for special groups such as immigrants and youth under the risk of alienation.

Challenges

According to the information collected the main challenges in the art and culture education field is as follows: The educational system deals with a difficulty to attract high quality university level professional teachers to the fields of art and culture. Tests that have measured pupils knowledge and basic skills in music, visual arts and crafts showed that there has to be an improvement in the skills the pupils can demonstrate. Moreover the art and culture educational challenges the system by maintaining the philosophy of art education: ‘learning by doing’. Keeping the engagement with the arts and culture active and creative. Further challenges for the educational system is developing collaborations between schools and professionals in the field of arts and culture (museums, theatres, cultural organizations, artists) and preserving existing projects such as the Oak of Finland, Creativity and Cultural Education Project Lähde (Fountain).

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