



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

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Evidence-based co-authored and open-access report of most promising pioneering policies and practices

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## Finnish comprehensive school system [1]

<b>Country</b>	Finland
<b>Authors of the table</b>	<i>Kleemola, K., Toom, A., Hyytinen, H. &amp; Tuononen, T.</i>
<b>Name of the policy / practice</b>	Finnish Comprehensive School [1]
<b>Short description and the main characteristics of the policy / practice</b>	The comprehensive school covers grades 1 to 9, including primary school and lower secondary school. Within comprehensive school, all children receive the same basic schooling, without tracking, in terms of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education regardless of their family background, place of living etc. Teachers who have received masters' level education, act autonomously basing their pedagogical work on the Core Curriculum. Comprehensive schools are mostly run by municipalities. Very few private schools exist and even they adhere to the Core Curriculum.
<b>Target group of the policy / practice:</b>	All children in Finland aged 7-15 years
<b>Educational stage or transition phase of the policy / practice</b>	Children aged 7-15 years (grades 1-9, including primary and lower secondary education)
<b>Type of inequality the policy / practice tackles</b>	<p><b>Access:</b> Every child with a permanent residence in a Finnish municipality has access to the comprehensive school, including refugees and disabled children. To support inclusion, preparatory classes for language support are offered, and learning support through three-tiered support system is given. Additionally, decisions on extended schooling are made if the student is unable to achieve common objectives of the basic education.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Every child has received the same basic education when they complete comprehensive school, giving an equal starting point for pursuing further education.</p>
<b>Level of implementation</b>	National level policy, implemented in municipal and institutional levels: The Core Curriculum is adhered everywhere, but municipalities, institutions and teachers have autonomy in implementing it.
<b>MILC dimensions</b>	<p>Multilevel: across all levels</p> <p>Intersectional: does not explicitly express intersectional objectives but in practice serves students who share several vulnerabilities</p> <p>Life course: Addresses citizens from childhood to adolescence</p>

<b>Key dimensions of the identification procedure</b>			
<b>CONDITIONS: Foundational premise level</b>	<i>Comprehensive</i>	Finnish comprehensive school is meant for all children throughout Finland. Children from all family backgrounds, and regions receive the same basic education. Finnish comprehensive school is inclusive, and provides versatile multiprofessional support for all learners.	High
	<i>Coherent</i>	Finnish comprehensive school is coherent in the broader educational system, includes national core curriculum system and three tier support, assumes master level academic teacher education that Finland has as well	High
	<i>Continuous</i>	Finnish comprehensive school aims to foster continuity of education, learning and growth on individual pupils. It fosters continuity on systems level in the context of a broader educational system and society.	High
<b>ELEMENTS: Structural level</b>	<i>Contextual</i>	Finnish comprehensive school is sensitive to the contextual features (e.g., cultural, linguistic, economical) aspects, and takes them into account. It does not force fixed application, but rather allows a variety of applications. While the Core Curriculum is adhered everywhere, the regional and school-level adjustments to the curriculum are encouraged.	High
	<i>Relational</i>	Finnish comprehensive school is responsive to the pupils' needs, e.g., focusing on local or regional topics. Activities, such as projects or visits, can be enacted in collaboration and dialogue with the local actors around school, and local and regional stakeholders, and authorities.	High
<b>TOOLS: Action level</b>	<i>Autonomous</i>	Allows and requires teachers and other educators to act autonomously, plan and adjust their pedagogical work in the framework of national core curriculum for basic education.	High
	<i>Reflexive</i>	Allows and assumes reflexivity of the education professionals and all involved. Teachers can evaluate their work and develop accordingly in the framework of the Basic Education Act, teacher's capability requirements and the Core Curriculum	High

<p><b>Evidence backing the policy / practice:</b></p>	<p>There exists a lot of various kinds of evidence that Finnish comprehensive school enhances equality and equity among children from different family backgrounds, provides possibilities for further education in the Finnish educational system. Research conducted in Pioneered brought out a strong expert opinion on comprehensive school being the main tool of educational equity and equality in Finland.</p> <p>Kerr and colleagues (2013) investigated effects of the school system on mathematical, verbal, and logical reasoning skills of cohorts across the transition from a tracked system to the comprehensive school using a large-scale register data and Basic Skills Test of the Finnish Army. They concluded that especially students with low socioeconomic background benefited from the reform. According to Sahlberg (2007), comprehensive school and the rest of the educational system have supported equity in education and student learning.</p> <p>Kerr, S. P., Pekkarinen, T., &amp; Uusitalo, R. (2013). School Tracking and Development of Cognitive Skills. <i>Journal of Labor Economics</i>, 31(3), 577-602. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1086/669493">https://doi.org/10.1086/669493</a></p> <p>Sahlberg, P. (2007). Education policies for raising student learning: The Finnish approach. <i>Journal of education policy</i>, 22(2), 147-171.</p>
<p><b>Brief concluding analysis of policy / practice in the context:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same comprehensive school for every child</li> <li>• Same national core curriculum throughout Finland</li> <li>• Same teacher qualification requirements (university level master's degree in education)</li> <li>• Same support services, e.g., three-tiered support</li> </ul>