

## THE FINLAND EDUCATION SYSTEM

Aliyeva Xurshida Anvar qizi

*Kimyo International University in Tashkent Primary Education Faculty 4rd year student*

**Annotation:** *Around the world, many countries are implementing various reforms to improve the quality of education. Among them, Finland's education system is considered one of the most effective and advanced. This country consistently achieves high results in international assessment programs. Specifically, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, Finnish students rank among the top performers in mathematics, natural sciences, and reading literacy. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the key features, advantages, and success factors of the Finnish education system.*

**Keywords:**

### INTRODUCTION:

Key Features of the Finland Education System: Equal Opportunities for All

The Finnish education system is inclusive and provides equal opportunities, ensuring that all children, regardless of their social background, have access to high-quality education (Sahlberg, 2015). Private schools often use modern technologies and advanced teaching methods, but they are not accessible to everyone. Public schools, on the other hand, guarantee education for all but sometimes face resource shortages.

Free education can yield good results, but it requires effective funding and a systematic approach. However, Finland's fully funded education system is strong, covering all levels from primary school to university. In Finland, the largest school has 960 students, while the smallest has only 11.

All schools are equally equipped, have the same opportunities, and receive identical funding. Nearly all schools are public, with only a few private schools. The primary difference between public and private schools, apart from partial parental contributions, is the higher academic expectations for students.

Private schools often function as specialized "pedagogical" laboratories, such as Montessori, Fren, Mortan, and Waldorf schools. Additionally, schools offering instruction in English, German, and French are classified as private. Following the principle of equality, Finland also maintains a parallel education system in Swedish, covering all levels from preschool to university.

Until recently, Finnish parents were not allowed to choose schools, and children simply attended the nearest one. Although this restriction has been lifted, most parents still prefer sending their children to nearby schools, as all schools in Finland maintain the same high standards. Finnish schools do not categorize students based on their abilities or preferences.

Moreover, there is no distinction between "good" and "bad" students, and comparing students to one another is prohibited. Gifted children and those with lower academic abilities are all considered unique and study together. Inclusive education is the norm, meaning that children with disabilities also attend regular schools. For instance,

mainstream schools may have specialized classes for students with visual or hearing impairments.

Teachers in Finland dedicate their full attention to students and do not show favoritism, a principle known as “respect for the student.” From first grade, children are educated about their rights.

According to Finland’s labor laws, teachers are strictly prohibited from humiliating students in any way. All teachers sign contracts for one year, with the option to extend or terminate them, and they receive competitive salaries. kun.uz(2018) Additionally, teachers do not intervene in student conflicts, instead encouraging students to develop responsibility and learn to handle real-life situations independently.

Although all Finnish schools are uniform in quality, their teaching methods vary. The grading system is based on a 10-point scale, but students are not graded until the third grade. After this point, they receive grades on a 10-point scale, but poor grades do not result in reprimands. Instead, grades serve solely as a tool for motivation. All Finnish schools are connected to the state electronic system called “Wilma,” which functions as a digital school diary. Each parent has a personal login to access the system.

Teachers use Wilma to record grades, attendance, and other updates about the child’s school life. Hidoya.uz(2024) Additionally, school psychologists, social workers, “future teachers,” and medical staff can enter relevant information into the system. Students receive free meals, school supplies, and excursions.

Those living more than two kilometers from school are provided with free transportation, all funded by the state budget. There is no mandatory school uniform, and students can wear whatever they find comfortable.

To ensure a balanced learning environment, each 45-minute lesson is followed by a 15-minute break, allowing students to refresh and remain engaged

In Finland:

- Private schools are almost non-existent, as all educational institutions are funded by the state. Finland’s education system gradually became free. Officially, public education at all levels has been fully free since the 1970s, with the state covering all expenses from primary school to university. However, this process developed over many years.

- Education is completely free, including textbooks, meals, and transportation for students (OECD, 2018). A free bus service is provided for students who travel more than 2 kilometers to school.

- Equal educational opportunities and full state funding are among the main advantages of Finland’s public education system for students and their parents. In 1921, compulsory primary education was introduced in Finland. In the 1970s, the modern education system was established, and free education was fully implemented. By the 1990s, higher education had also become entirely state-funded.

- Children with disabilities or special needs study in regular classrooms and receive additional support as needed (Halinen & Järvinen, 2021). Global experience shows that an effective education system develops through cooperation between the public and private sectors. For example, in Germany and the Netherlands, collaboration between public and

private educational institutions has led to a high-quality education system. Additionally, several countries are recognized for their successful free education systems, including:

- Germany – Public universities offer free education, and students receive strong financial support.
- Norway, Sweden, Denmark – Provide free higher education and various grants for students.
- Finland – Has a robust free education system that covers all levels of education, from primary school to university.

Stages of the Finnish Education System

#### 1. Early Childhood Education (0–6 years)

Formal early childhood education is not mandatory, but most children attend daycare or preschool. In these institutions, children develop social skills, learn to communicate with their peers, and adapt to a structured environment. This process helps them transition smoothly into school and reduces stress levels (PISA, 2019).

#### 2. Primary Education (7–12 years)

Compulsory education begins at this stage.

Students are not graded to motivate them; instead, the focus is on their development and well-being. In many countries, children are required to start school at 5 or 6 years old. However, in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, early schooling does not always lead to better outcomes, as young children may experience fatigue and loss of motivation (Simola, 2017).

5–6-year-olds are naturally more inclined to learn through play, and early exposure to strict academic structures can cause stress and burnout (Sahlberg, 2015). In Finland, children start school at age 7, which allows them to see school as a positive experience (Simola, 2017). This approach supports children's psychological, social, and intellectual development. By age 7, children can focus for longer periods, better understand teachers' explanations, and are more prepared for independent learning. Younger children (5–6 years old) still require more sleep, and early schooling may lead to sleep deprivation and excessive fatigue (OECD, 2018).

Starting school at age 7 ensures that children get enough rest, leading to better overall health.

#### 3. Secondary Education (13–16 years)

Students continue their education without excessive testing and stress.

After age 16, students can choose between a vocational college or an academic high school.

#### 4. Higher Education

Finland offers two types of higher education institutions: universities and polytechnics (vocational higher education institutions).

University education is free, and students receive housing support and scholarships.

#### Conclusion

In summary, the Finnish education system is designed to foster creativity, independent thinking, and essential life skills in students. One of its most important aspects is that education is free from excessive stress and pressure. Teachers and

educational institutions enjoy autonomy, creating a supportive environment where each child can develop as an individual. If other countries aim to improve the quality of education, they should take inspiration from Finland's experience and adapt it to their own contexts. Finland's policy of starting school at age 7 is specifically designed to support children's psychological, social, academic, and physical development. This approach:

- Reduces stress,
- Increases student motivation,
- Improves academic performance,
- Provides sufficient time for healthy development.

For these reasons, many education experts suggest that the Finnish model could be adapted and implemented in other countries to enhance their education systems.

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