Education in Finland

Visit of South African delegation
September 2007

Matti Kyrö

FINNISH NATIONAL
BOARD OF EDUCATION

For learning and competence

FINLAND IN BRIEF

- independent since 1917
- member of the European Union 1995
- land area 304,086 km^2
- population 5.3 million (17 inhabitants / km^2)
- two official languages: Finnish (91.5%), Swedish (5.5%). Sámi is the language of about 1,700 people
- religion: Lutheran (82.5%), orthodox (1%), others (1.2%), no religious affiliation (15.1%)
- foreigners: 2.3% of population
- main exports: electronics, metal and engineering, forest industry

Parliamentary Elections, 2007

Parties	Votes		Change from 2003	Seats	
		%	% points	2007	2003
Centre Party of Finland	640 428	23,1	-1,6	51	55
National Coalition Party	616 841	22,3	3,7	50	40
Social Democratic Party of Finland	594 194	21,4	-3,0	45	53
Left Alliance	244 296	8,8	-1,1	17	19
Green League	234 429	8,5	0,5	15	14
Christian Democrats in Finland	134 790	4,9	-0,5	7	7
Swedish People's Party in Finland	126 520	4,6	-0,0	9	8
True Finns	112 256	4,1	2,5	5	3
Other parties	54 894	2,0	-0,3	-	-
Others	12 588	0,5	-0,0	1	1
Total	**2 771 236**	**100**	**.**	**200**	**200**
Females	1 167 973	42,1	-0,5	84	75
Voting turnout 67.9% (65,0% incl. Finns resident abroad).					

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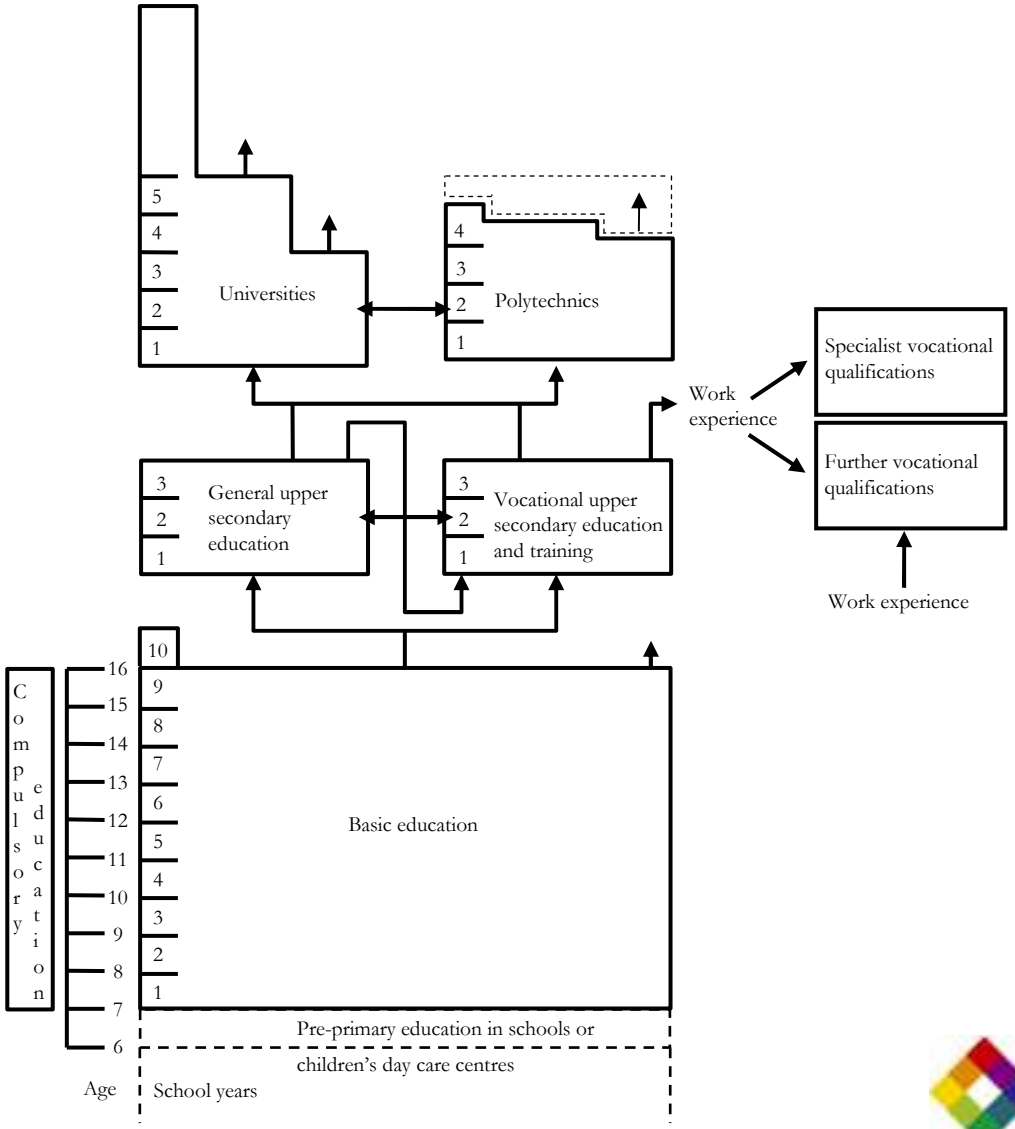
THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF FINLAND



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THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN FINLAND

The Structure of Qualification System

UNIVERSITIES

Doctor´s degree
Licentiate´s degree
Master´s degree
Bachelor´s degree

POLYTECHNICS

Polytechnic degrees
Polytechnic post-graduate degrees

WORKING LIFE

UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Matriculation examination

VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS and VOCATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTES

Vocational qualifications

Vocational qualifications
Further vocational qualifications
Specialists vocational qualifications

WORKING LIFE

Basic education

Pre-school education

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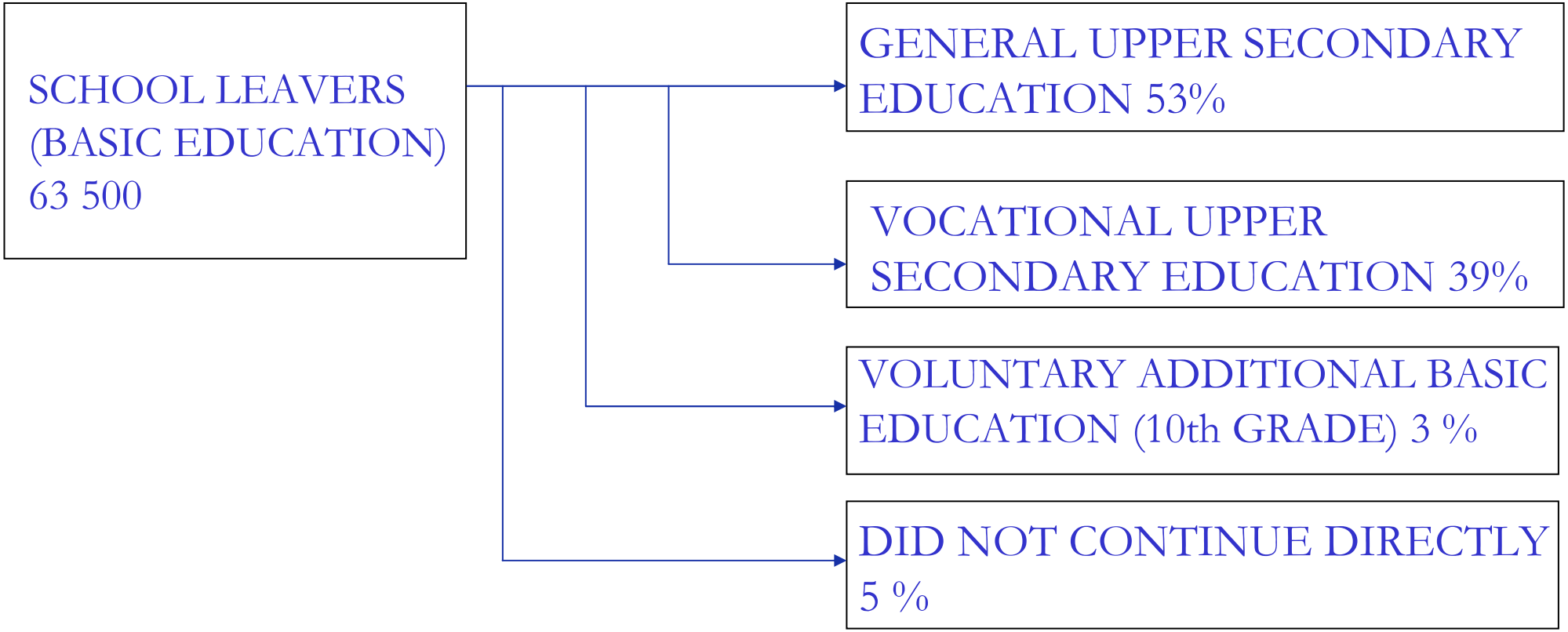
CHOICES AFTER BASIC EDUCATION 2005



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FINNISH EDUCATION IS BASED ON

EQUITY

Equity means both the equal access to education and equal opportunities for good learning within every school.

SUPPORT

Support is regarded important – national authorities support municipalities, municipal authorities support schools, principals support teachers and teachers support their students. We believe that support, not control, leads to development of teaching and learning.

TRUST

Trust is an important prerequisite in a system where there are neither national tests during basic education nor inspections.

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FEATURES OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Equal opportunities for education irrespective of age, domicile, sex, economic situation or mother tongue
- Instruction free of charge
- Centralised steering - local implementation
- Education system almost entirely publicly funded

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MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION

- Steering through legislation and norms, government planning

  - acts, curricula, Government's Development Plan
- Steering by result and performance agreement

  - universities, polytechnics…
- Information steering

  - evaluation, statistics
- Financial steering

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY RESEARCH 2003-2008

- **Promoting educational rights and active citizenship**
- **Priorities**
  - Improvement of the effectiveness of the education system
  - Preventing exclusion
  - Support and guidance
  - Promotion of adult education opportunities
  - Promotion of research and evaluation activities
- **Plan for 2007-2012 under preparation**

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EVALUATION

- Schools are not inspected in Finland
- The 1999 legislation on education requires evaluations (self-evaluation and external evaluation)
- Learning outcomes are evaluated regularly on a sample basis
- Statistical report, assessment and comparison for the school
- Placement of graduates is a good measure
- No ranking lists are published despite of the pressure from media
- Inclusion of variables relating to socio-economic backgrounds
- Education Evaluation Council (est. in 2003) evaluates education and learning, contributes to the development of evaluation and promotes evaluation research

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

FUNDING

- Majority of education is publicly funded
- Two-tiered public funding
  - The State
  - The local authorities or other education providers
- The State subsidy for operating costs (cover 57 %)
- The funding criteria are the same irrespective of ownership
- Basic education – completely free for the pupils
- Higher levels – payment for study materials, meals, transport
- Financial aid for full-time studies

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EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURE (2005)

- 6.1 % of GDP (2004)
- costs per student (2005)
  - basic education 5 600 € (variation 4 540 to 13 230 €)
  - general upper secondary 5100 € (variation 3 781 to 24 917 €)
  - vocational upper secondary 8 700 €
  - polytechnics 5800 €

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CURRENT EXPENDITURE ON REGULAR EDUCATION SYSTEM BY TYPE OF EXPENDITURE, 2005

Type of expenditure	EUR million	%
Pre-primary education[1)]	269	2.9
Comprehensive school education	3,413	36.5
Upper secondary general education	600	6.4
Vocational education	1,245	13.3
Apprenticeship training	132	1.4
Polytechnic education	726	7.8
University education and research[2)]	1,671	17.9
Other education	361	3.9
Administration	190	2.0
Financial aid for students	732	7.8
Total	**9,338**	**100.0**

[1)] Pre-primary education for 6-year-old children (pre-school education) in day-care centers and comprehensive schools.

[2)] Includes universities' external financing for research.

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SHORT HISTORY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

- **Decision on the comprehensive school system 1964 - 1968**
- **The first National Core Curriculum 1970**
  - equal opportunities of education
  - strict national orders, centralised guidance
- **Comprehensive School Reform 1972 – 1977**
  - parallel school system replaced by nine-year comprehensive education
  - same basic education for all
  - responsibility for organizing education lies on municipal authorities

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CURRICULUM REFORMS IN BASIC EDUCATION

- 1985
  - ability grouping was abolished; eligibility to further studies opened to everyone
  - role of the municipal curriculum more important
- 1994
  - delegation of power to municipalities and schools
  - The Aquarium project - cooperative way of working
- 2004
  - strengthening national norms, guidance and support
  - new distribution of lesson hours
  - active interaction between different levels and actors

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BASIC EDUCATION

- a nine-year basic education (7-16 years)
- single structure
- voluntary additional basic education, one-year(10th grade)
- 99 % of comprehensive schools maintained by municipalities
- no charges (instruction, learning, meals, materials, transport…)
- no national final exams
- repetition (0,5%) and drop-out marginal

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BASIC EDUCATION (CONT.)

- average school size 169 pupils (2005)
  - 30% under 100 pupils (50% in 2004)
  - 20% over 300 pupils
- no regulations on class size
  - information on averages not available but principally class sizes are not a key problem

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SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

- 7 % of basic education pupils full-time (70 % of them boys)

  (2000 – 2004: + 48 %)

  22 % wholly integrated

  20 % partly integrated

  33 % in special groups or classes in mainstream education

  25 % in special schools

- 21 % of basic education pupils part-time (63 % boys)

  44 % reading & writing difficulties

  17 % difficulties in speech

  17 % difficulties in mathematics

Source: Koulutuksen määrälliset indikaattorit 2005

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GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Syllabus planned for three years, but possible to be finished in 2-4 years.
- Instruction not tied to year classes, but divided into courses.
- National matriculation examination
- Free of charge (except text books)

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(INITIAL) VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

- qualifications were reformed in 1999-2001
- can be completed in the form of school-based training or apprenticeship training
- scope: 120 credits (3 years)
  - 90 credits of professional studies
  - min 20 credits of on-the-job-learning
  - skills demonstrations
  - final year project

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POLYTECHNICS

- Higher education in a multi-field environment
- Polytechnic network was built in 1990's
- Maintained by municipalities, federations of municipalities or private organizations
- 28 polytechnics in the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education (as of 1 August 2008, after mergers 26)
- The scope of education is 3.5-4.5 years
- All degree programmes include an on-the-job training period
- Polytechnic postgraduate degrees, trial period 2002-2005
- Graduates ~65 % females

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UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

- Owned by the State
- Principles: freedom of research and university autonomy
- MoE and each university sign a performance agreement for a three-year period

  -commit to certain objectives and projects and level of funding

  -revisited every year

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION cont.

- 20 universities in Finland
  - 10 multidisciplinary universities
  - 3 universities of technology
  - 3 schools of economics and business administration
  - 4 art academies
- universities select their own students independently
- a numerus clausus applies to all fields of study
- graduates ~ 59% female

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION cont.

- Bologna Process
- the scope of the lower academic degrees (Bachelor's) is 180 ECTS (~3 yrs)
- the scope of higher academic degrees (Master's) is 160-300 ECTS (~5 yrs)
- Licenciate
- Doctoral studies

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ADULT EDUCATION

- provided by about 1,000 educational institutions, including universities
- annual number of students about one million, amounting to every other adult
- certificate-oriented education at all levels
- competence-based qualifications
- employment training
- self-motivated training
- so-called liberal adult education

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LOOKING FOR REASONS BEHIND THE SUCCESS IN PISA

EMPOWERMENT

of the teaching profession produces good results. Professional teachers should have autonomy and space for innovation and they must be supported in trying to find new ways to improve learning.

SUPPORTIVE ETHOS OF EDUCATION

is essential. If we want success for all, we must be ready to notice the problems of learning and development as early as possible and to find many ways to help our children to reach their best.

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

LOOKING FOR REASONS BEHIND THE SUCCESS IN PISA cont.

HIGH STANDARDS FOR ALL

encourage and enable students to do their best. The national core curriculum supports municipalities and schools in setting goals for teaching and learning and in evaluating how these goals are achieved. Instead of ability grouping we need to find better working methods and improve learning environment for all.

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LOOKING FOR REASONS BEHIND THE SUCCESS IN PISA cont.

Factors behind the success in reading outside the school system

- engagement and interest in reading
- comprehensive network of libraries
- subtitles

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TEACHERS

- university-level education
- class teachers: Master's degree in education (~5 years)
- subject teachers: Master's degree in the subject taught + pedagogical studies (~5-6 years)
- teachers in basic education: 85% female, 34% aged 50+ years
- teachers in general upper secondary education: 66% female, 43% aged 50+ years

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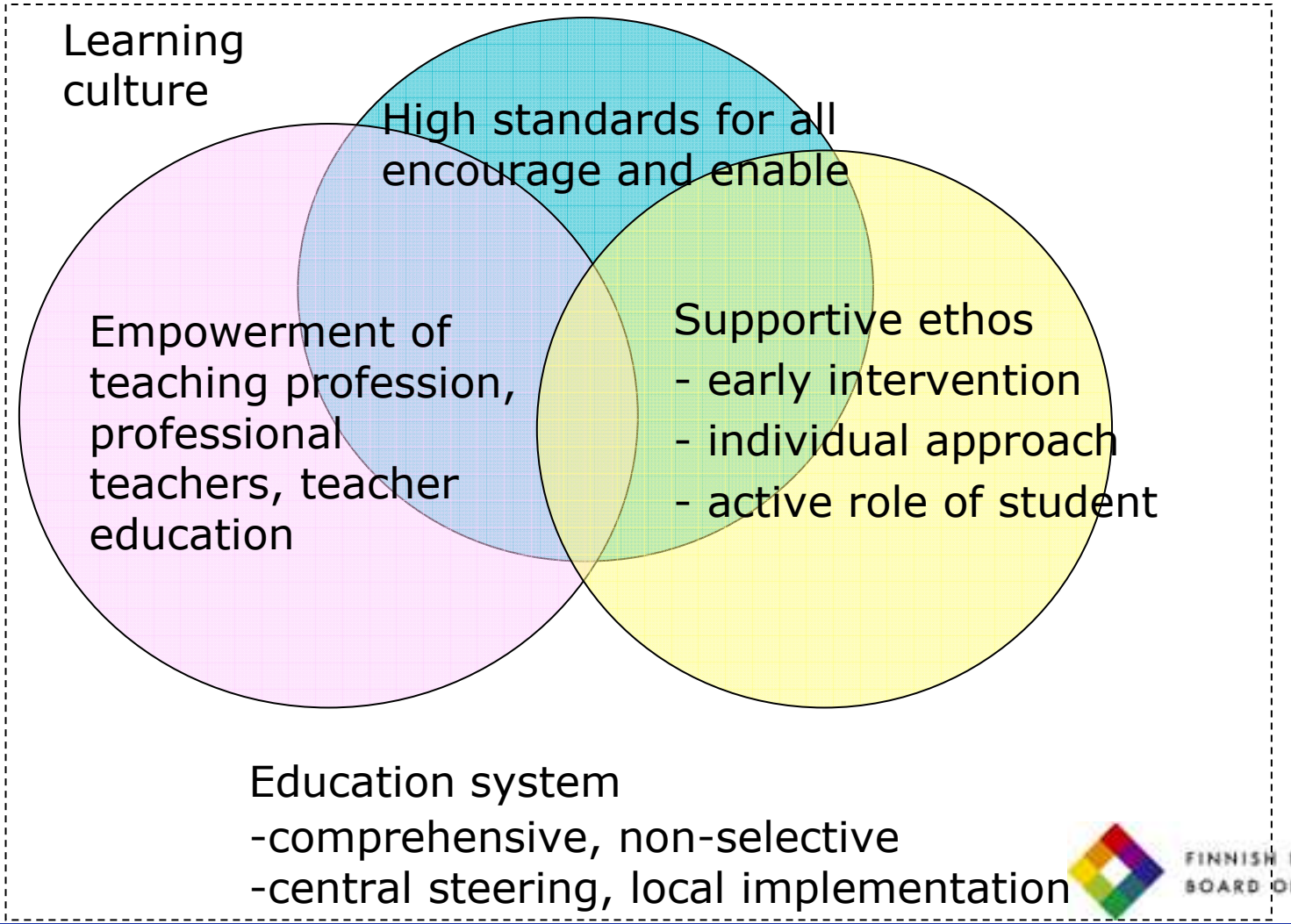
SUCCESSFUL BASIC EDUCATION



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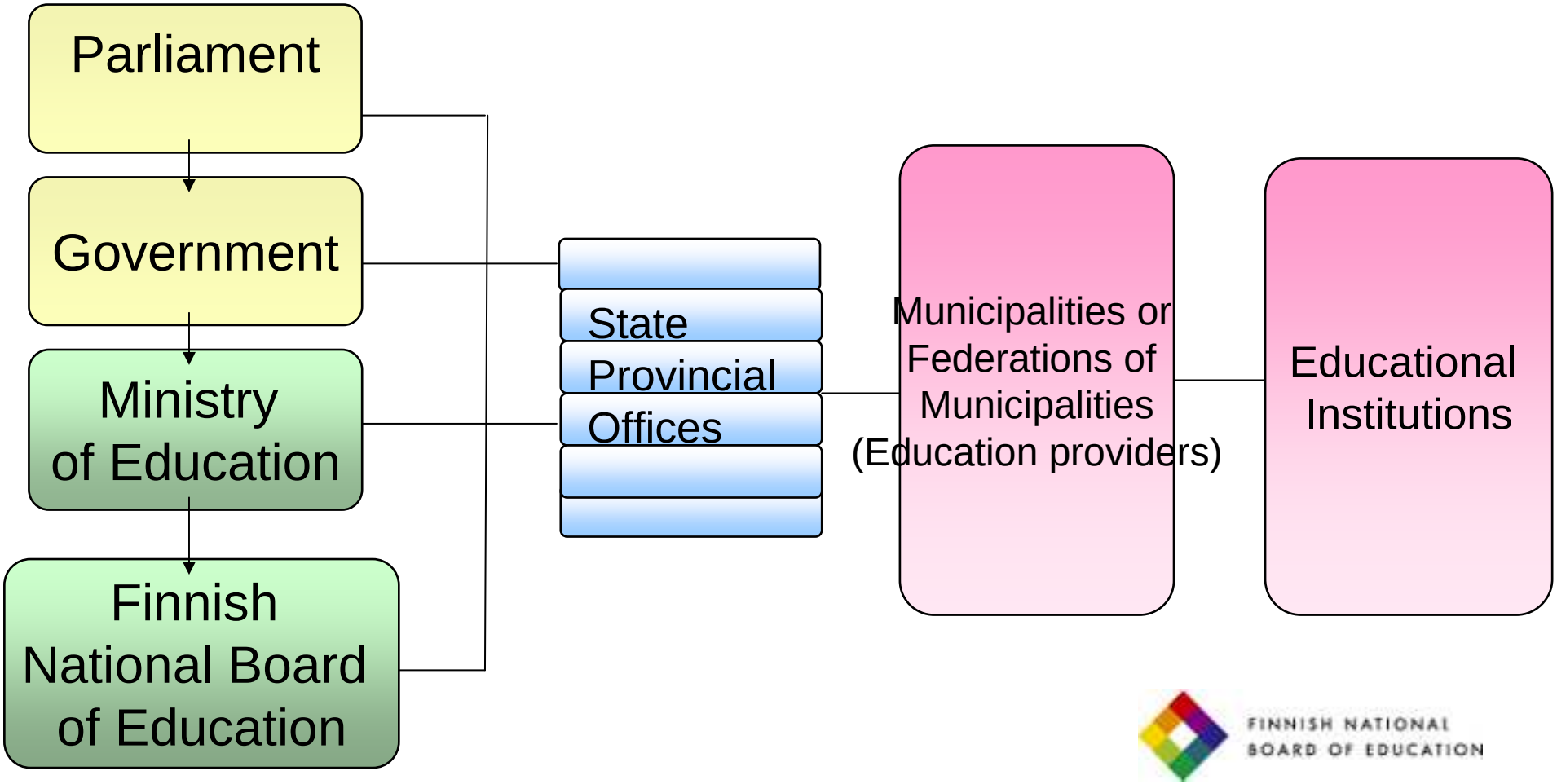
Administration



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Parliament

- legislation
- general principles and structures
- budget

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Government

- proposals for the parliament
- development plan for education (5 years)

  - government's Development Plan for Education and University Research 2003-2008 (2007-2012 under preparation)

- general structure of study programmes
- most important decisions in the cabinet

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Education Providers / Municipalities

- basic, upper secondary and polytechnic education
- allocation of funding
- local/school level curricula
- evaluation

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Ministry of Education

education, research, culture, youth affairs, ecclesiastical affairs, sports

- overall responsibility for education
- proposal for budget in the frames given by the government
- strategy for education and training
- preparation for legislation and decisions of government
- licences for education providers (including limits for the number of students under state finance)
- other crucial decisions

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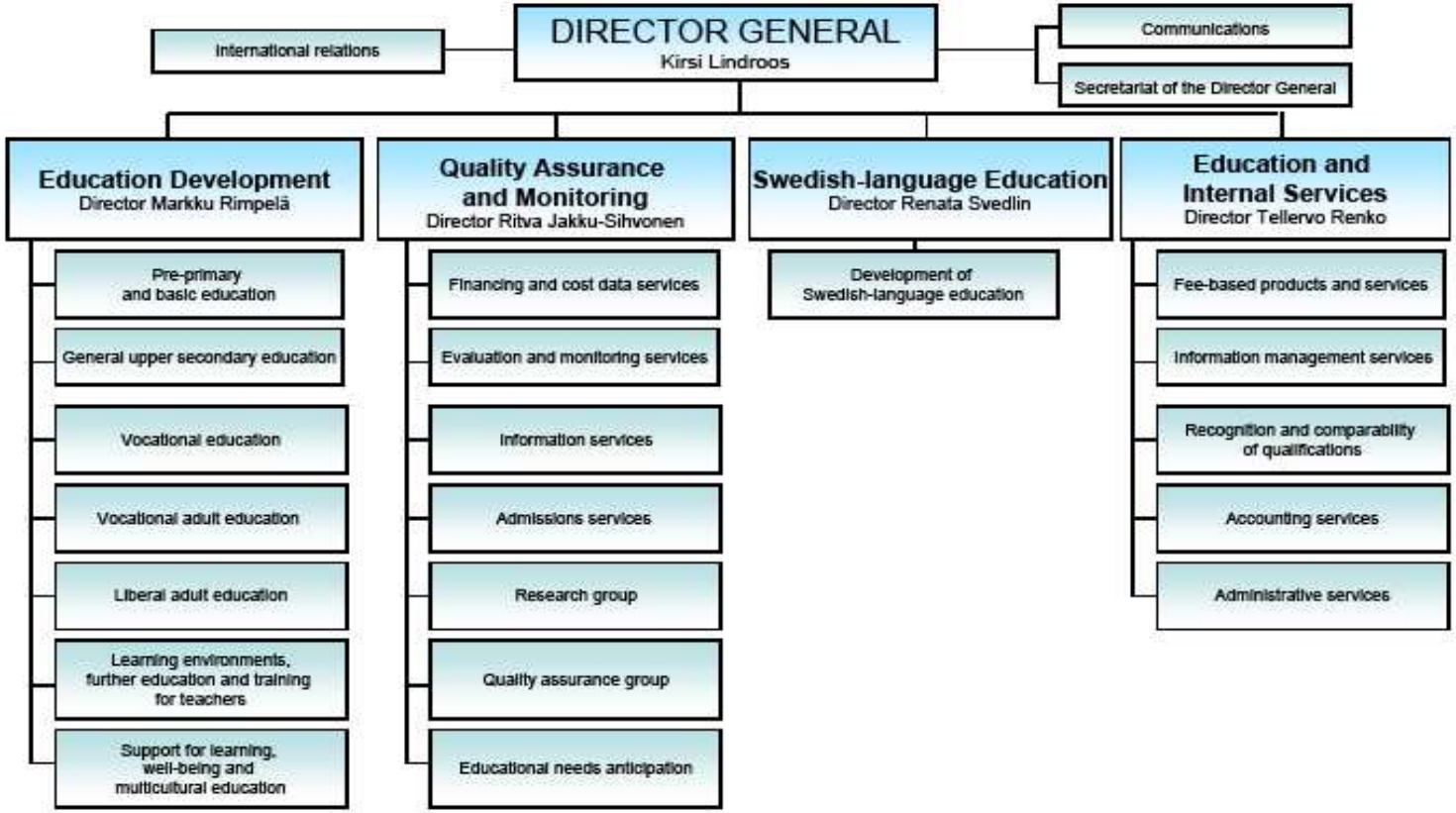
FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

ORGANISATION 1.1.2007



FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Finnish National Board of Education

- Development of education

National Board of Education draws up core curricula for basic and general upper secondary education, the framework for vocational qualifications and competence-based qualifications, and undertakes various projects to develop education.

- Quality evaluation and monitoring

The NBE evaluates learning results and improves the efficiency of training.

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Finnish National Board of Education

(cont.)

- Provision of information services

  Finnish National Board of Education co-ordinates information networks and services in the education sector, produces indicator data and information for anticipating educational needs, maintains the financing system for the education sector, and publishes training guides

- Education and internal services

  Finnish National Board of Education maintains a student selection register for upper secondary vocational training and education and polytechnics; organises language examinations; organises and funds further studies for teachers and other teaching staff; is responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications; and develops and sells learning materials.

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Further information on the Finnish education system

- Ministry of Education: www.minedu.fi/minedu
- National Board of Education: www.oph.fi/english
- Eurybase – Eurydice's information database on education systems in Europe: www.eurydice.org
- University of Jyväskylä: The Finnish success in PISA: www.jyu.fi/ktl/pisa/base.htm

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