



A COLLABORATION

TOOLBOX TO BUILD

A SCHOOL FOR ALL.... TOGETHER IS BETTER!

NEWSLETTER 5

Our 5th project meeting in Oulu, Finland



12-14 January 2015 *“Winter in Oulu”*

Monday 12/01/2015

We started our working day at Tervaväylä Learning and Consulting Centre at their Lohipato-unit. This is a school for children with a physical disability with comorbidities. They have a two way task: it's a school, but they are also a learning and consulting centre supported by the government. The school was warmly introduced by the principal, Anne Martikainen. She gave us some more information about the Finnish culture and their typical way of communication and behaviour. Education is very important and has a very high standard in Finland. It's even the main reason why people like to live in Finland.

The Finnish school system

Education is provided for everyone, independent from wealth or origin. Everyone has the duty to have the same education and is free of charge.



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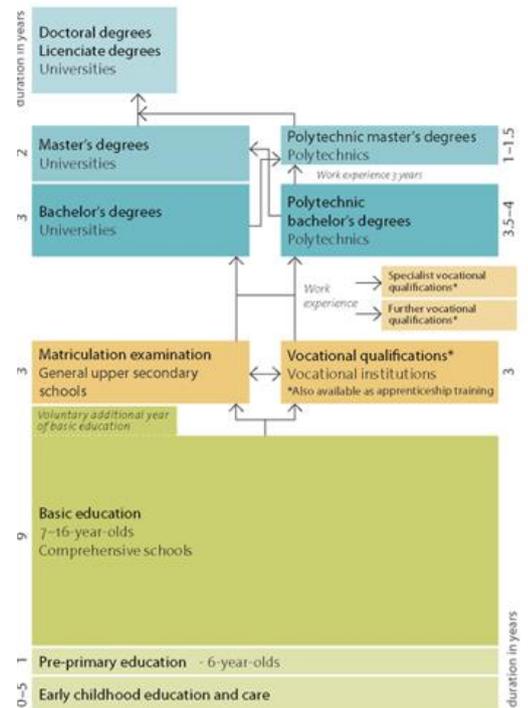
Some facts about the Finnish school system:

- The school year starts in August and ends in May
- Based on trust and responsibility
- Educational autonomy is high at all levels (curriculum and timetables can be different in every school)
- In 2016 there will be a new curriculum. Everyone has the possibility to read it and make some comments.
- Quality assurance is based on steering Instead of controlling
- Assessment is part of daily schoolwork
- Vocational education and training in cooperation with the world of work
- Responsibility for educational funding is divided between the state and the local authorities

If you want to know more, you can visit the following website:

http://www.oph.fi/download/146428_Finnish_Education_in_a_Nutshell.pdf

Education system in Finland



Tervaväyla school Learning and consulting centre (www.tervavayla.fi)

Tervaväylä is a state-funded special school and centre for development in special needs education. The school has an over a 100-year history in the education, treatment and rehabilitation of children and youth in need of special support. Tervaväylä consists of two units: Lohipato and Merikartano Units.

It is a school and a learning and consulting centre. The values of the school are customer orientation, expertise and cooperation. They provide expertise to inclusive schools. It is their goal to bring individual solutions through cooperation. Their system works on three levels.

1. Consultation
2. Short intervention in Tervaväylä
3. Permanent stay: 1 year or longer at Tervaväyla

In the school there are 85 permanent students and around 10 students who stay for a short term. There is also a possibility to stay in a residence. In this unit they take care of children with physical disability with comorbidities.

After the global presentation of the school, Eija and Kimmo took us for a tour in the Lohipato Unit.



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From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

*It was the opening day of the 3 day conference at the Tervaväylä Learning and Consulting Centre, Lohipato unit (later to be known as home base); all of the project partners were finally reunited! Principal Anne gave the very warm welcome, stressing the importance of education in Finland. Eija followed, going through the programme for the 3 days to come. Kimmo gave the group an overview on the Tervaväylä Learning and Consulting Centre. We were presented with a great deal of information on the history of the school, the 2 units, vision, values and philosophy. It was highlighted that "Rehabilitation **at** school is very important", the teachers and other professionals work very hard as a team to try to offer all the support they can for the students **at** school. Sanna then presented the Finnish education system explaining that comprehensive school started in the north and gradually it reached the Southern Finland and that curriculum reform in the country happens every 10 years.*



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Kastelli Multi-purpose building



In the afternoon we visited the Kastelli school. We were welcomed by Timo Salmi, the principal of the primary school. The Kastelli building is not just a regular school. It's an educational, leisure and culture centre for the residents of the nearby areas and the entire City of Oulu. The Kastelli community centre features facilities for a total of approximately 1,500 children and adolescents. The total floor area of the building is approximately 23,000 square metres.



In the Kastelli building there are 4 schools, a day care centre, a primary school, a secondary school and a sports school. The secondary school is split up in 3 parts: lower secondary, upper secondary and an adult upper secondary school.

In the building there are also a lot of facilities that can be used by the pupils and by the citizens of Oulu: a library, an auditorium, sports halls, ...The joint target of the Kastelli community centre is to offer day care, preschool education, primary and secondary school education, youth, library and sports services as local services to the residents of the area as well as opportunities for cultural and leisure services from "babies to pensioners."

The main purpose of the Kastelli school is to be a school for everyone. Their slogan is "Together we do more". Our project felt a high connection to this slogan! They want to integrate the pupils with all sorts of problems into a normal class. The problems can be various: behavior problems, learning problems or a combination of both. To support the teachers there are some teacher-assistants when needed.

Immigrants stay in a special class for at least 6 months. They work in small groups to learn the Finnish language with the intention of joining the normal classes as soon as possible. The Kastelli school opened its doors in September and is brand new.



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From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

We were treated to a very hearty and healthy lunch in the cozy dining hall. After lunch, wrapped up in our warmest winter gear, we were kindly transported by the school buses to Kastelli Comprehensive School where we were greeted by Principal Timo Salmi. This grand structure and state of the art school and community centre is the largest school building in Northern Finland and is comprised of 4 schools, a youth center, massive sports halls and a day care. After a very informative presentation Mr. Salmi took us on a tour of the massive complex where we saw the impressive art, design and tech and music classrooms. After the visit ended we boarded the bus back to home base.

Welcome party

In the evening our Finnish hosts invited us for a little welcome party. They prepared for us a delicious meal with a lot of salads, sausages and beverages.

If you wanted to eat a sausage you had to make it yourself in the Kota, a small Finnish cabin with a fire inside. We also had the chance to go into the sauna and the hot tub. The hot tub was even too hot at the beginning of the evening. Thank you again, Finnish friends, for the nice evening!



From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

The work day ended and the various country groups disbursed among the centre of Oulu to shop, explore or head back to the hotel for a rest before we met for the "get-together party" in Myllyoja Residents House on the Oulu River. The setting of the small chalet was picturesque, sitting along the glistening snow and ice covered river. We were treated to a lovely and cosy dinner of sausages and salads, having the opportunity to fire our own sausages in the small "kota". There were also some who took the exciting opportunity to experience the traditional Finnish sauna and hot tub by the river.



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Tuesday, 13/1/2015

On Tuesday Jezerka and Andreja of Slovenia started the day with a cold swim in the open river of Oulu. BRAVO ☺!



Teacher training school

We visited the teacher training university where the Koskela school, a comprehensive school, was located.

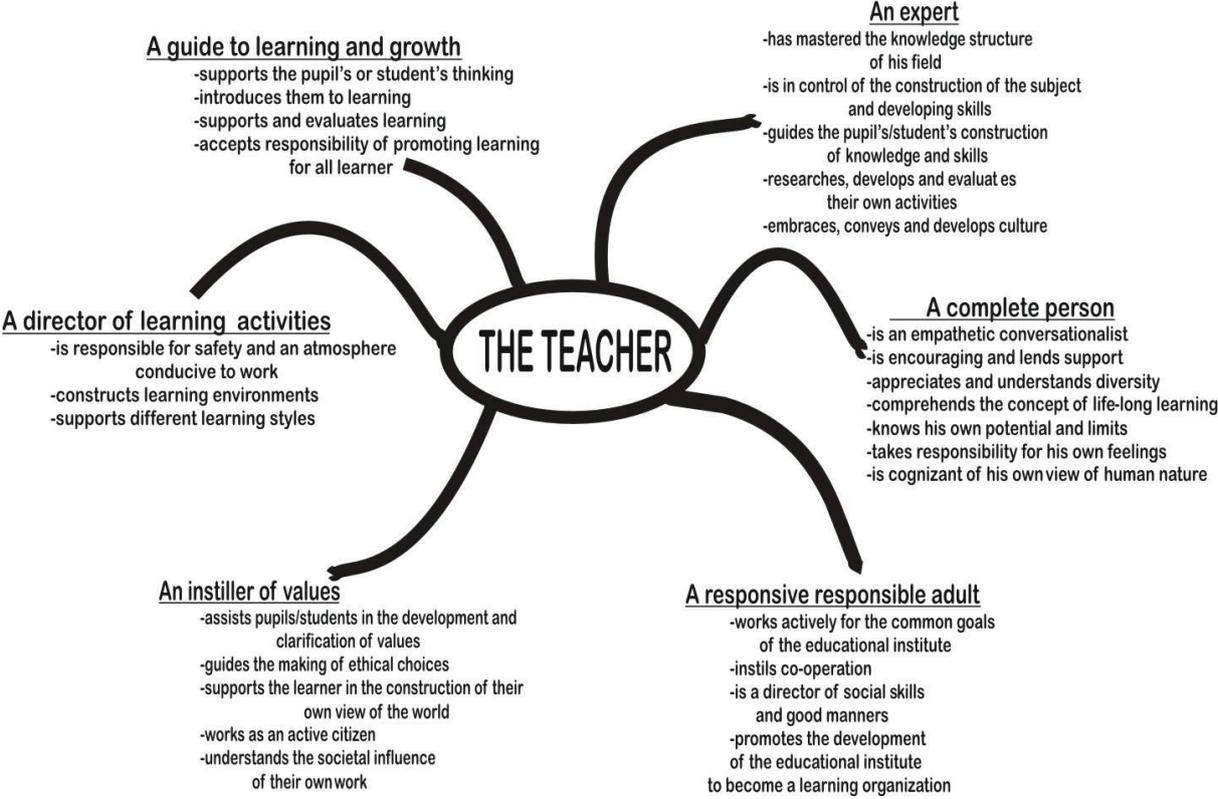
We got a guided tour and had the opportunity to follow 3 lessons in mainstream classes. Afterwards we visited a class where immigrants get to be prepared to integrate into the mainstream classes. The main goal is to teach these children enough Finnish language and Finnish culture to cope in a mainstream class. The integration goes bit by bit. First they get partially integrated by following only music, sports and art in the mainstream. Afterwards they also follow the lessons with more demands for language skills. In what term they leave preparatory class depends on their individual development. Every two months the teacher has a comprehensive meeting with the parents, supported by an interpreter. An assistant teacher is always present in the classroom and is the right hand of the teacher.

The principal of the teacher training school explained the teacher education in Finland.

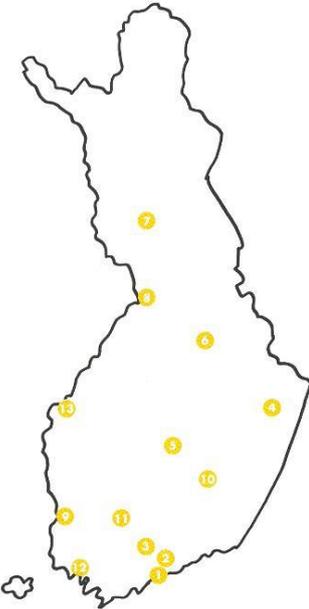


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What Makes a Good Teacher



There are 11 teacher training schools all over Finland:



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Duties of the teaching training schools are:

- Providing teaching
- Tutoring student teachers
- Teaching experiments and research
- Providing in-service education

The quality of teaching practice defines the quality of teacher training (Zeichner 1990)

The Finnish teacher education system has a strong emphasis on research.

The central aims of the teaching practice periods are for the students

- to evolve into pedagogically thinking teachers
- to grow into the profession
- to become aware of their practical theories and views on educational matters.

The aim of research-based teacher education is to educate students to be able to make educational decisions based on rational argumentation in addition to intuitive argumentation.

According to the principle these are the abilities needed in teaching profession

- The ability to support different learners
- The ability to co-operate with other teachers in schools or other educational settings
- The ability to promote co-operation with parents, authorities, businesses, etc.
- The ability to develop and improve the curriculum and learning environments
- The ability to solve problems in school life
- The ability to reflect on one's own professional identity

From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

It was an early and exhilarating start to the day for two very brave project partners from the Slovenian team. Jezerka and Andreja took the opportunity to take a quick dip in Oulu's open river. "It was great and something special...I'd like to do it again!" exclaimed Jezerka when asked about the experience. The rest of the not-so-brave and reserved group met in front of home base at 8:30 am and were driven to Koskela School, Oulu University's Teacher Training School. There we were greeted by the Principal, Seija Blomberg. We had the opportunity to split off into different groups where we were privy to observing various lessons and classes. After the tour and observations, the group reunited in the computer lab where Seija gave an in depth presentation on: "Teacher Training and Teaching Practice in Finland and in Oulu". She highlighted the unique way of organizing teacher training in Finland and stressed the importance of quality education and teaching, as well as the values that make a good teacher.

Working groups

After a delicious lunch, offered by Merikartano unit, we worked in our different working groups: Toolbox, vision on inclusion, closing conference, newsletter, blog, digital team.



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From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

After finishing at the Koskela School we were on our way to the Tervaväylä Learning and Consulting Centres' second unit- Merikartano. We were greeted by a grand display of pride and glory, a sparkling snow castle that was well on its way to growing above the heads of the students who were building it! We were invited in the snow castle and many photos were taken. It was time for lunch; yet another fresh, warm and healthy one! Thank you so much dear Finnish hosts! After lunch, we had the opportunity to visit a couple of classes to observe the set up and the beginning of lessons. The afternoon was reserved for meeting in our various working groups; toolbox/ conference content, digital team, glossary team, newsletter and blog teams, and the conference/organisation/ inclusion team.

To start our last nice evening, Eija guided us through Oulu and we had dinner in Sokeri-Jussin Kievari.



From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

We finished the day at 4pm and headed back to our hotels for some downtime before we were to meet again for a "walking tour of Oulu", followed by a cosy traditional dinner at Sokeri Jussin Kievari, a beautiful old rustic restaurant. Reindeer and Arctic Char were available; and delicious!

Wednesday, 14/1/2015

Luovi vocational school



After a fresh morning walk we visited the Luovi vocational School. Luovi offers vocational special needs education and training (VET) for young people and adults between 16 and 25 years old.

Before VET-studies

Familiarization with VET options

- VET try-outs
- Identification of needs and desires
- Assessment of working and functional capacity and need for special VET



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- Student selection

VET-studies start

- Identification and recognition of skills and capacities
- Identification of individual goals
- Needs assessment and service-delivery planning
- Plan for tailor-made studies and services

During VET-studies

- Compulsory and optional studies in modern work-related learning and working environments
- On-the-job learning
- Skills demonstrations
- Assessment of learning and required skills

VET-studies end

- Identification and recognition of skills and capacities
- Needs assessment for the future
- Evaluation of goals achievement
- Feedback

After VET-studies

- Follow-up
- Placement guidance and counselling

The school provides education at over 20 sites in 17 locations all over Finland.



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In every class are between 11 and 13 pupils. Besides the main teachers every group has its full-time teacher-assistant who follows the group everywhere they go. Depending on the needs the pupil can get a personal assistant.

Besides the education they also have an important role in international networking.

They provide preparatory training for initial VET and also for work and independent living. Luovi offers continuing VET options for adults who need support in their studies to update and develop their vocational competence. Additionally, Luovi offers specialist services, such as training, consultation, publications and teaching materials, to mainstream VET and associates.

They offer equal learning opportunities and individually tailored routes to employment and towards a good quality of life.

They aim to be the most qualified and respected national VET provider for young people and adults and an esteemed specialist and partner in the field of special needs education and training.

Creativity, innovation, competence, caring and joy are the most important values they stand for.

From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

The group met at 8:45am in front of home base and walked together to the Luovi Vocational School. We were welcomed by Miia Pyykkö, who is the Assistant of International Affairs at the College. Miia gave a very in-depth and interesting presentation of the College, happily answering questions and inquiries along the way. The best part of any visit is always the walking around and observing... we all split off into various directions, where we had the opportunity to visit the preparatory class. Here the ultimate goal is for independent living and work. The students are able to practice their work skills for between 1-3 years in the preparatory classes. I think it is safe to say that we were all very impressed by the class content and the support and encouragement that is available for the students in the preparatory class at Luovi Vocational School.

State of play & working groups

In the afternoon we met again for the presentation of each team's state of play.

Afterwards we gathered together in our working groups to continue our project work.



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After a very interesting, instructive and very nice stay in Oulu, Finnair brought us safe back home. We learned that Finnish communication is clear and unambiguous. For example: never ask your husband if he loves you because he will tell you when he doesn't anymore.

Thank you again, Finnish colleagues, for your hospitality!

From Sara's and Bojan's blog:

After the visit, we walked back to home base for the last time to have coffee and lovely snacks! Half of the participant counties had the opportunity to present their State of Play and the impact of the project on their school before we had our lunch break. We also had the opportunities to observe 2 students model two different technology aids: the first being a smart phone which operates various electrical devices that the student uses most in her daily routines; allowing for independence and confidence building, and the second, an electric device which enables the student to manoeuvre two separate switches with his/her head to operate a tablet independently. Incredible opportunities for the students! Lunch was served; delicious and nutritious yet again! The final groups presented their State of Play and impact of the project on their school. We had the opportunity to really see how the Comenius Project was making its mark on all of the participating professionals, their schools and ultimately, their communities. Eija gave a brief presentation on ICF (http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/icf_more/en/). Our last opportunity to split off into the working groups and finally the local teams before we said our goodbyes until March in Graz!

Kiitos to our very hospitable and kind Finnish friends for such an incredible programme and exciting learning experience!



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