

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and blue, dancing across a dark sky. Below the lights, a sunset or sunrise is visible over a body of water, with a dark silhouette of a forest on the left. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

# The Finnish Education System

-

## Less is more



# Finland

**Population** 5.5 million

**Surface** 390 908 km<sup>2</sup>

**GDP per capita** 40 638 EUR



Finland has

**187,888**  
lakes



Finland is the **happiest country** in the world



Finns use the **most mobile broadband data** in the EU at

**11** GB  
per month



Finns **consume the most coffee** in the world :

**12.2** kg  
per person a year



# FINLAND

THE HAPPIEST COUNTRY  
IN THE WORLD - AGAIN!

TRUST  
LUOTTAMUS

FREEDOM  
VAPAAUS

NATURE  
LUONTO

MINÄKÖ  
ONNELLINEN?\*)

EDUCATION  
KOULUTUS

EASY  
DAILY LIFE  
HELPPO ARKI

\*) ME,  
HAPPY?

EQUALITY  
TASA-ARVO

SISU

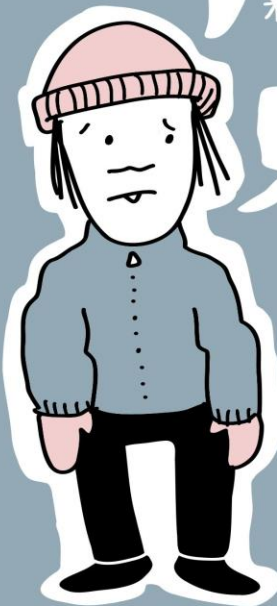
NO  
JOO.\*)

HONESTY  
REHELLISYYS

SAUNA

\*) WELL,  
YES.

HEALTH CARE  
TERVEYDENHUOLTO





# High performing Finland

# High performing Finland



**1<sup>st</sup> Best  
Universities in the  
world**



**2<sup>nd</sup> Higher  
Education  
Performance**



**1<sup>st</sup> Best  
Education in  
the OECD**



**1<sup>st</sup> Happiness  
Report**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Socially just  
country**



**1<sup>st</sup> Safest country to  
travel to**



**4<sup>th</sup> Most  
Innovative  
country**



**1<sup>st</sup> Greenest  
country in the  
world**



**1<sup>st</sup> Best Air quality  
in the world**

# History of the Finnish education system

**1970**

Until 1970 – a strongly centralized & inequitable education system with highly variable teachers

**1980–2000**

Decentralization of the comprehensive school system with large autonomy for the local authorities (end of inspection!)

Redevelopment from the bottom up & centralized reform with highly educated teachers (entrance exams for teachers!)

**1970–1980**

# History of the Finnish education system

## 2000–2010

Reform with more emphasis on development goals, pupils' rights and responsibility

## Costs

Equal and qualitative comprehensive education at relatively moderate costs (5.3% GDP in 2020)

A student-oriented and flexible system based on empowerment (student counselling, tutoring and special needs education).

## 2010–2022



Central Steering  
vs  
Local decisions



# Central steering

## Ministry of Education and Culture

- **Education policy**
- **Preparation of legislation**
- **State funding**

## Finnish National Agency for Education

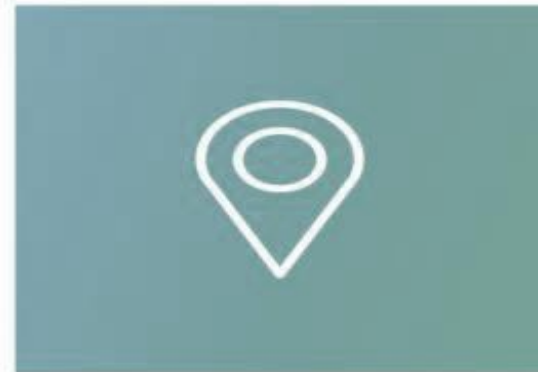
- **National development agency**
- **National core curricula & qualification requirements**
- **Support for evidence-based policy-making**
- **Support for reform and development**
- **Services for learners**

# Central steering and local decisions



## Central / national

- Educational priorities
- Minimum time allocation
- National core curricula
- State subsidies



## Local / municipalities

- Educational priorities
- Local curricula
- Allocation of subsidies
- Class size
- Recruitment



Education is  
publicly funded

# Cost per student

Pre-primary education

6285 EURO

Basic education

9607 EURO

General upper secondary

7939 EURO

Vocational upper secondary

10443 EURO

# Education developed in partnerships

National  
authorities

Local authorities

Teachers' union


Social partners

Parents

Pupils and students

Research  
institutions

Relevant  
stakeholders

The image features a central, dark blue, irregularly shaped graphic that resembles a splatter or a watercolor blot. This graphic is set against a white background that is also covered with a light, greyish-blue splatter pattern. The text is centered within the dark blue area.

# The basic principles of the Finnish Education System

Trust and  
Responsibility

Free  
education  
at all levels

High  
Educational  
Autonomy

No national  
testing &  
No ranking

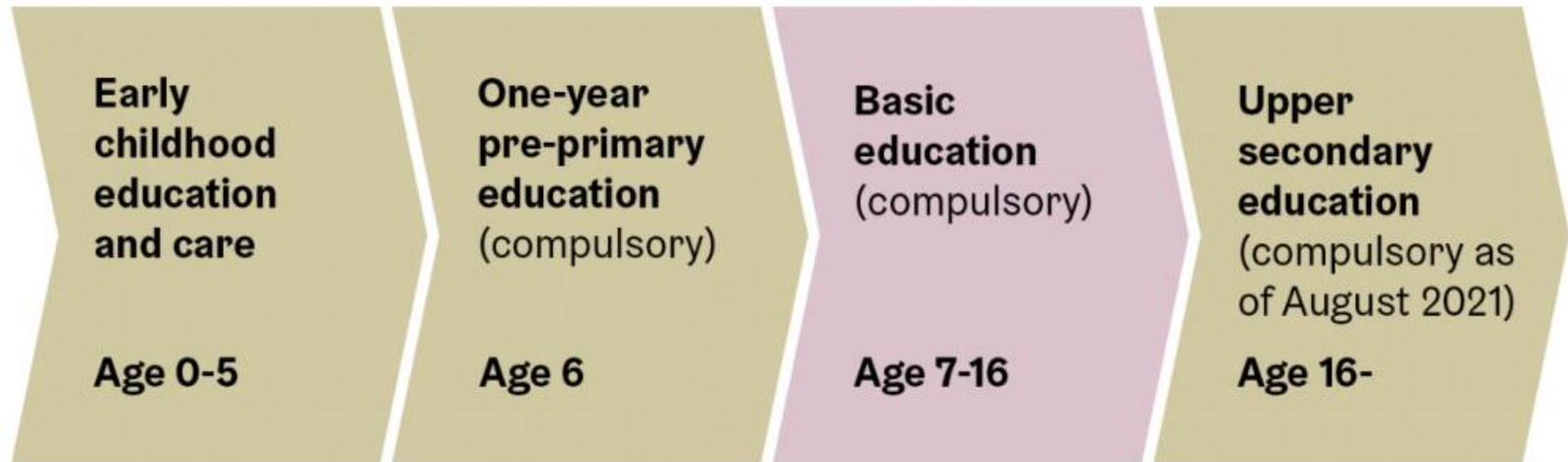
Flexibility

Highly  
educated  
teachers

Equality &  
Support

# Basic principles of the Finnish education system

Everybody is needed & everyone is taken care of





# ECEC (Early Childhood Education & Care)

- Child's wellbeing & learning through play is the most important
- Individual ECEC plan (individualized in order to define the needs of the child), but no learning standards, the plan is based on an integrative approach (interact with their environment both social and physical)
- The main goal is raising happy, healthy & responsible children in an inclusive way.

# Pre-primary education

- Free & compulsory and provided in ECEC centers or schools for 4 hours a day
- A continuous learning path from ECEC to school based on the same integrative approach to improve the child's learning abilities (with an own learning plan)
- The joy of learning and learning through playing, exploring and doing stays the most important aspect
- The main goal is raising happy, healthy & responsive children

NO BIGGIE,  
BUT IF HE  
MISSES PROBLEM 9,  
WE'LL PULL YOUR  
ACCREDITATION AND  
YOU'LL BRING SHAME  
ON YOUR COMMUNITY...

NO PRESSURE,  
BUT IF HE  
MISSES PROBLEM 9,  
YOU'RE OUT  
OF A TEACHING  
JOB!!

DAVID,  
IT'S PROBLEM 9!  
YOU KNOW  
PROBLEM 9!  
RELAX!  
RELAX!!

THE  
JOY OF  
LEARNING



# Comprehensive School education

- a nine-year comprehensive curriculum for the whole age group (school year is the same everywhere: 5 periods of 7 weeks)
- teaching is provided by schools near the home (no competition and non-selective)
- there are no national tests, no degrees and no ranking; a final certificate will be given for completing the nine years.
- teaching, textbooks, teaching materials, school transport and school meals are all free = equal access to high quality education
- Educational support and student wellbeing is extremely important. Low drop-out rate (0,3 %).

No child  
left behind

IS THIS THE  
TEST TO TEST  
US FOR THE TEST  
TO SEE IF WE  
ARE READY FOR  
THE TEST?

# "Less is More"

- Less instruction hours (3-5 lessons of 45min) and more breaks -> Means more time for reflection
- Less testing (assessment is part of the daily work) -> Means more time for learning
- Less topics in the curriculum -> Means more in-depth learning
- Less homework -> Means more free time to explore
- Less students in a classroom -> Means more care and individual attention

# Comprehensive School Education

## Lessons per week at different grades

| grade | lessons per week |
|-------|------------------|
| 1 - 2 | 19               |
| 3     | 22               |
| 4     | 24               |
| 5 - 6 | 25               |
| 7 - 8 | 29               |
| 9     | 30               |

their 9-year basic education. It is more than 1100 hours less than the OECD average. ●

# Comprehensive School Education

## National minimum time allocation sample of subjects (annual weekly lessons<sup>1</sup>)

| Forms                              | 1–2 | 3–6 | 7–9 | Total |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Mother tongue & literature         | 14  | 18  | 10  | 42    |
| Mathematics                        | 6   | 15  | 11  | 32    |
| A language (1st foreign language)  | 2   | 9   | 7   | 18    |
| B language (2nd national language) | –   | 2   | 4   | 6     |

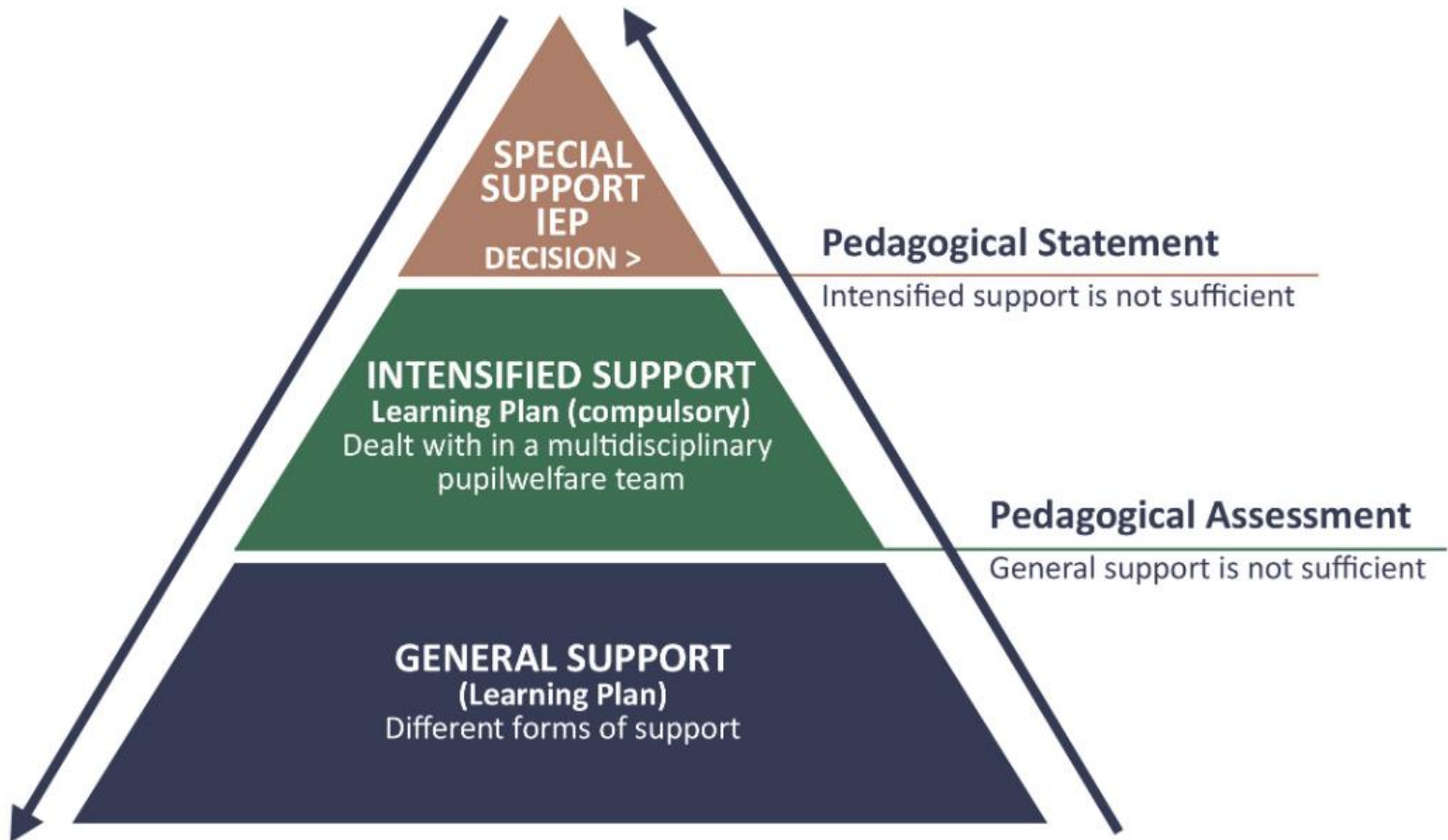
| Forms  | 1–6 | 7–9       | Total |
|--|-----|-----------|-------|
| Environment and science                      | 14  | 17        | 31    |
| History & civics                             | 5   | 7         | 12    |
| Arts, crafts & sports                        |     |           | 62    |
| <sup>1</sup> Total annual no of lessons x 38 |     | Total min | 224   |



# Special needs & Inclusion



# Three-tiered Support Model “individual care”



# Three-tiered Support Model

## “Intensified Support”

Intensified support :

- . more intense and persistent than general support
  - . support systematically the pupil’s learning and school attendance (without medical assessment)
  - . Early interventions designed to prevent problems from escalating, diversifying and accumulating.
- > How is it done: part-time special needs education, individual guidance counselling, and flexible teaching groups (transition is always possible)

# Three-tiered Support Model “Special Support”

Special support (Individualized Education Program):

- . for pupils who cannot achieve their growth, development or learning objectives

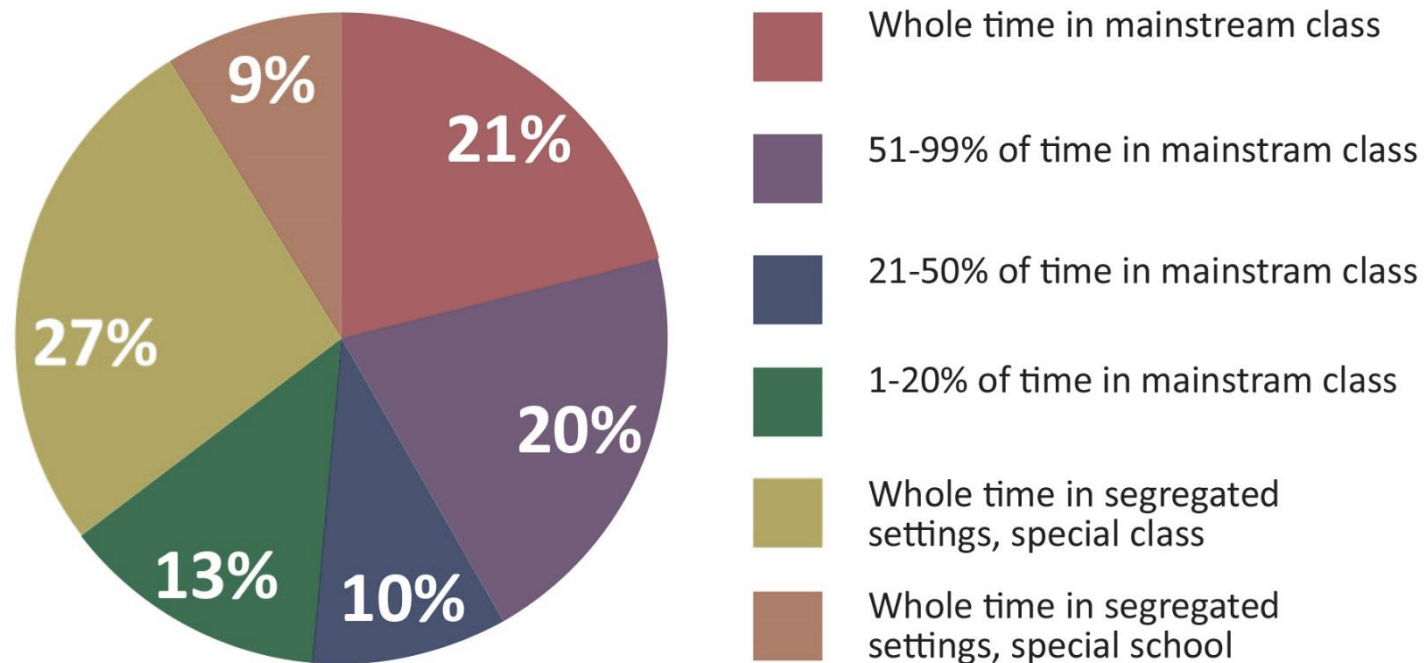
- . A pedagogical appraisal must be made as well as other necessary statements (for instance psychological, social or medical)

-> How is it done: could be anything from factors relating to teaching and counselling, pupil welfare services, assistants and other necessary services, teaching methods and working approaches, learning methods, as materials and equipment.

# Special needs

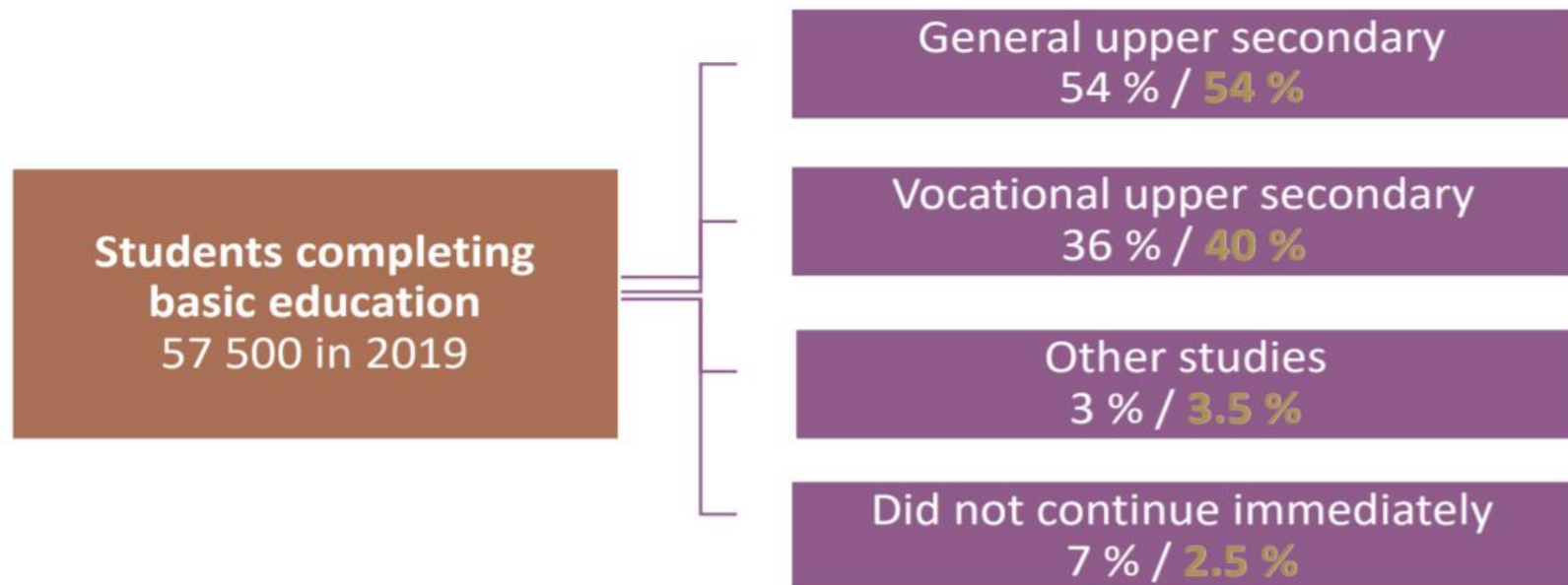
## “Students with Special Support”

2018 : Pupils with special support : Place of provision

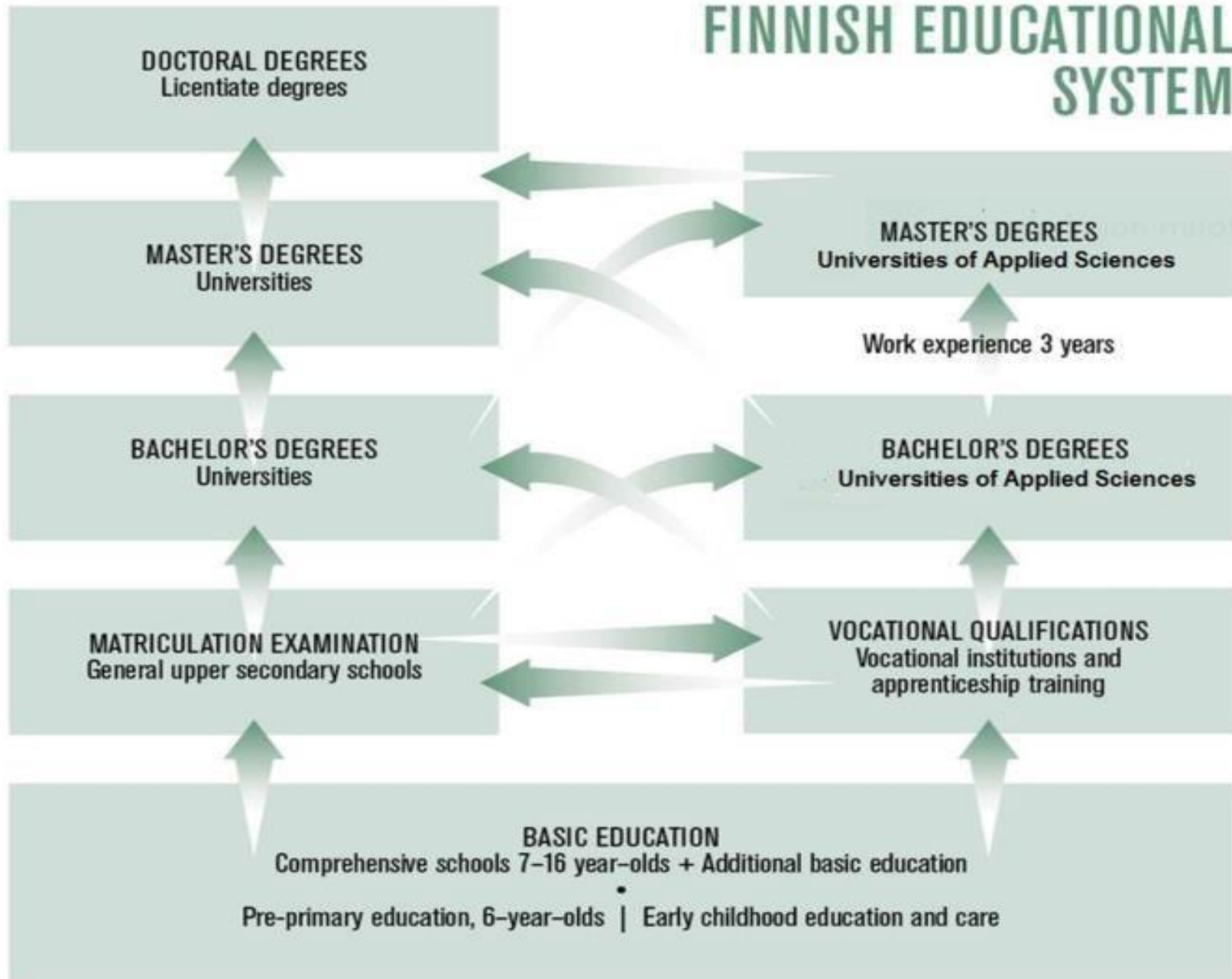


# Comprehensive School Education

What happens immediately after compulsory education? 2001 / 2019



# FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM





# Upper Secondary School Education



# Upper Secondary School Education

About 54% of students go to upper secondary school (grade marks-based admission criteria – high competition especially in the cities)

3-years personalized and flexible program leading to Matriculation Examination (individual curriculum for all students, everyone studies according to his/her own study plan)

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Compulsory courses                      | 47–51 |
| Minimum total of specialisation courses | 10    |
| Minimum total number of courses         | 75    |

# Distribution of lesson hours

Compulsory courses    Specialisation courses



Duration of a single course is on average 38 lessons.

# Upper Secondary School Education Matriculation Exam

Minimum 4 tests

Mother tongue (Finnish or Swedish)

Foreign Language

Mathematics

General studies (humanities)

One or more tests possible (biannual)

-> Important to get to university



# Vocational School Education

# Vocational School Education

About 40% of students go to vocational school education

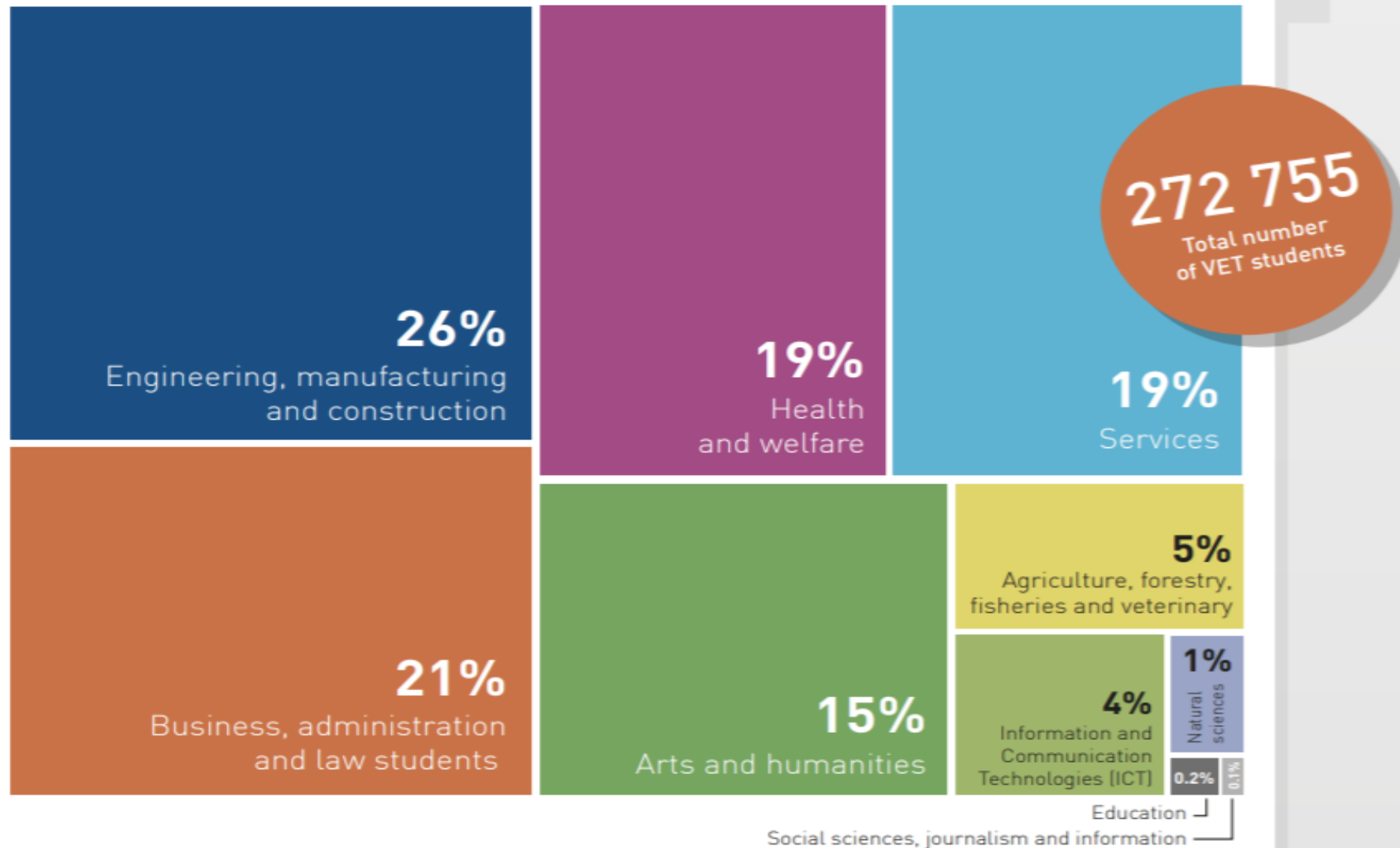
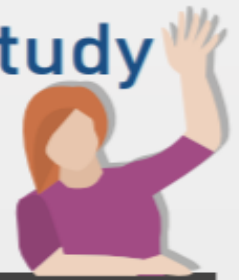
- ✓ A 3-years flexible and personalized work-based program leading to a vocational qualification (NO matriculation exam) in close cooperation with the labor market.

Individual curriculum for all students, everyone studies according to his/her own study plan (total 180 units):

- ✓ 35 units general or common studies
- ✓ 145 units for specific studies and internships

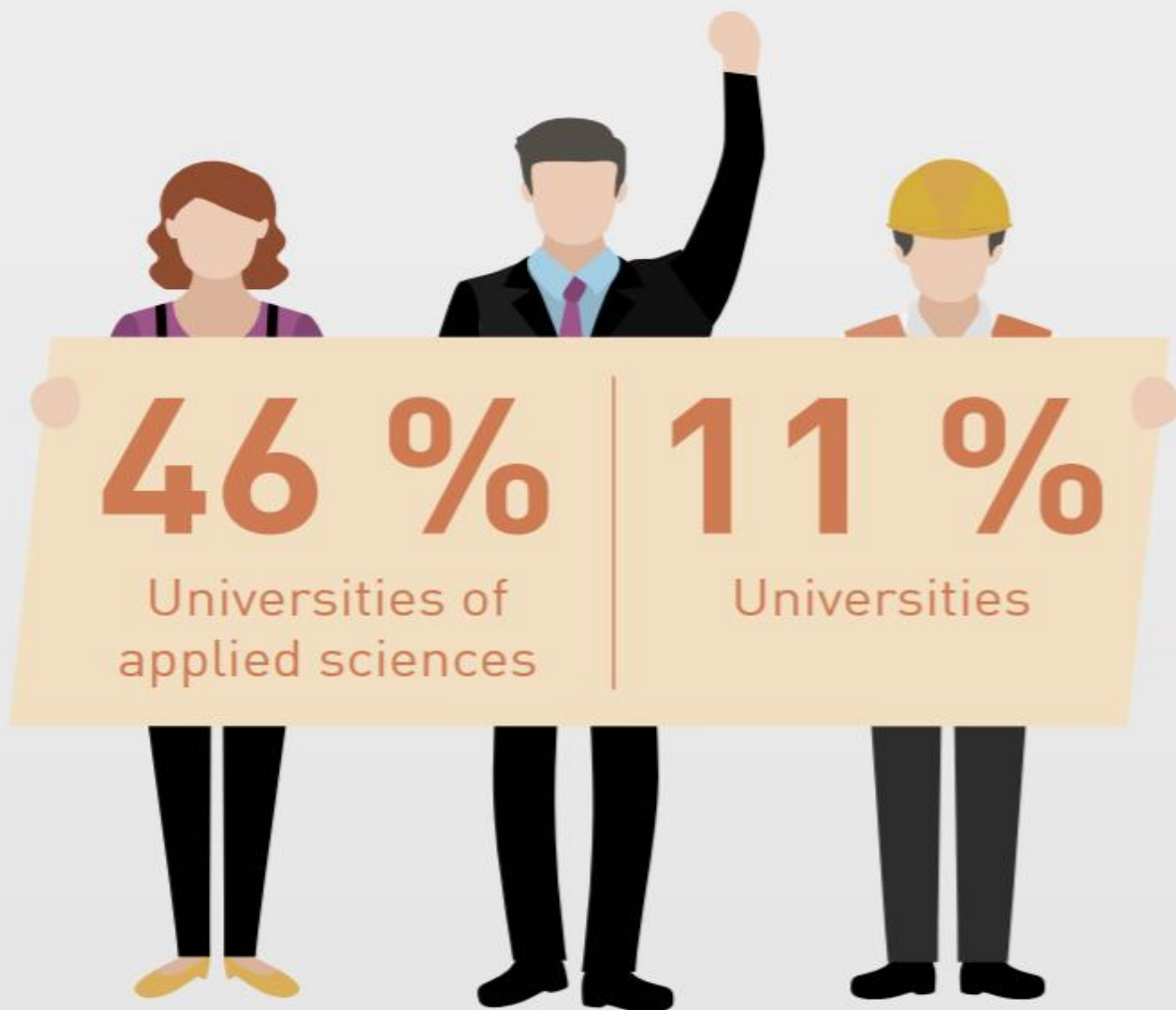
Free for all students, except books and materials

# Distribution of VET students by field of study 2017 (%)



# Open pathways from VET to higher education

The proportion of new student with a VET background in 2017



# Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

## Admission rate to teacher education in 2016:

41%

Vocational  
teacher  
education

16%

Kindergarten  
teacher  
education

11%

Class  
teacher  
education

## Number of applicants to teacher education in 2016

Vocational teacher  
education

4 100



Kindergarten teacher  
education

3 000



Class teacher  
education

6 800





# Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

**Kindergarten teachers**  
180 ECTS (3 years)

**Class teachers**  
300 ECTS (5 years)

**Subject teachers**  
300 ECTS (5–6 years)

**Teachers  
of vocational  
studies:**

**Master's , Bachelor's  
+ work experience+  
pedagogical studies  
of 60 ECTS**

**(1 year)**

**Principals:**  
teacher education  
+ e.g. certificate  
in educational  
administration

# Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

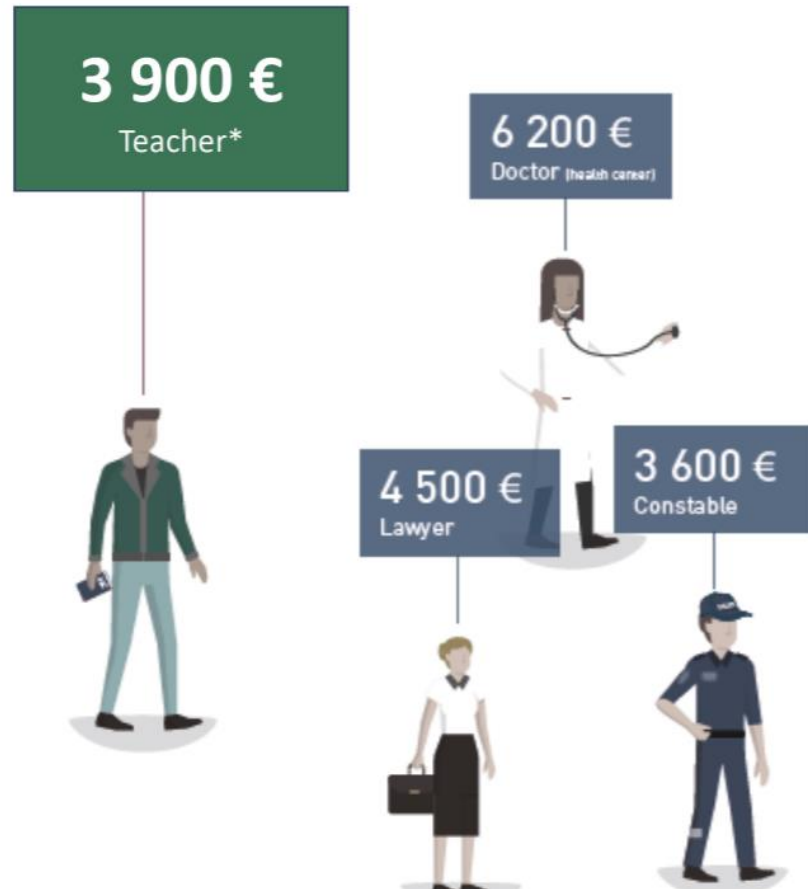
- Highly qualified and competent teachers & principals -> Everyone has a masters' degree in basic and upper secondary school education.
- Teachers and principals are highly respected as practitioners and researchers
- Teachers and principals enjoy a high amount of educational autonomy and freedom in the classroom (own teaching methods, teaching materials, student assessment and NO inspection)

# Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

**Salary is not the reason to become a teacher**

Average actual monthly salary in the municipal sector 3 200 €

\* lower secondary subject teacher  
Source: Statistics Finland



# Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

## Teacher and principal salaries in Finland

(permanent contract, average actual gross salaries per month 2018)

- kindergarten teacher 2 700 €
- class teacher, primary education 3 700 €
- subject teacher, lower secondary 4 100 €
- subject teacher, general upper secondary 4 600 €
- vocational studies teacher (VET) 4 300 €
- principal, basic education 5 800 €
- principal, general upper secondary 6 000 €

**Average salary in the municipal sector in Finland 2018: 3 200 €**

# Finnish Education in international comparison

**Instruction  
time low**

**Differences  
between schools  
small**

**Girls outperform  
boys**

**Moderate  
costs**

**Socio-economic  
effect moderate**

**Teachers feel highly  
valued**

# Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

## *Teachers' statutory teaching hours (45-minute lessons)*

|                                  |       |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Class (primary) teachers         | 24    |
| Lower secondary subject teachers | 18-24 |
| Upper secondary subject teachers | 16-23 |

# More information

**Check out more via the official website of the Finnish agency for education**

**<https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications>**



Thank You!