

TEACHER STATUS IN FINLAND

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Abstract:-

In Finland there is an equitable high quality education system based on the concept of teaching as a sophisticated profession in which all teachers hold a master's degree (2 years of study) that includes disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge and combines research and practice. Teaching has become the most attractive profession after medicine, and many teachers aspire having a PhD degree and persist the profession. Teaching is perceived in Finland as a long-term profession where people can grow into leadership positions and develop expertise in their field [13].

The high achievements of Finnish students in international exams, the lack of educational gaps between the center and the periphery and transforming teaching to a prestigious and highly desirable profession in Finland - all have made the small Nordic country's education system a subject of admiration and envy of worldwide educators. Basically, even advanced education after basic education is free. The Finnish education system is built to provide everyone an opportunity to obtain vocational or high education.

In addition to the Finnish people speaking Finnish or Swedish, the non-Finnish people, speaking Sami language, who live i

n the norther part of the country, have also the right to develop and keep their language and culture.

The education institutes network cover the whole country. The basic education is close to home or in a distance of a free bus drive.

Students are allowed to apply to studies in high school, university or vocational education anywhere in the country.

Key words:-*Education, teaching, training, curriculum*

TEACHERS TRAINING IN FINLAND:

Reporters and researchers in the US and UK describe a wave of criticism of teachers, countries with a strong professional vision encourage teachers and refer teaching as an important profession based on knowledge that should be controlled if equality of opportunity is desired for all students [8].

Teachers' development systems include coordinated policy decisions that balance different areas, including: recruiting high-quality candidates taking care for their training, integration, professional development, evaluating and developing their professional path, and keeping them from dropping out of the system. However, each country chose to focus on its unique aspects. Finland invest a lot in the training phase. For empowerment, teachers get considerable support and autonomy reflected in time allocation for team work of peers and developing evaluation programs and methods.

Teaching standards as a profession building strategy - One of the emerging strategies in different countries is setting standards about what teachers need to learn and be able to do. The action theory is that this kind of standards, which guide teaching certificates and teaching license granting, may guide teachers learning and influence entering the profession and persisting it. In Finland, the teaching standards work in two ways: 1) a joint framework that guides teachers training in the eight universities which perform training programs and 2) through entrance exams for elementary school teacher candidates. The training program is aimed to train teachers to research and to use researches as well as making them skilled practitioners addressing each child's needs, who deeply understand children's development and learning, have a rich repertoire of teaching strategies and the ability to distinguish between support and teaching.

Teaching profession in Finland:

Finland's strong demand for an equitable high-quality education system has relied substantially on creating a sophisticated profession of teaching in which all teachers hold at least a 2-year master's degree that encompasses both disciplinary and pedagogical preparation and combines research and practice. Teaching has become the most sought profession after medicine, and many teachers pursue a Ph.D. degree and continue teaching. In one generation, Finland leapt from a relatively poorly educated nation to a twenty-first-century powerhouse with a current literacy rate of 96%, high rates of school graduation and college studies and top scores in all areas on the PISA assessments. It is not a coincidence that teachers are highly respected and supported. The Finnish view is that teaching should be a long-term profession where people can grow into leadership positions and develop expertise over time [1].

Entering the profession

(a) Recruitment – strengthening the teaching profession requires reciprocity between standards, training and support.

In Finland, all the training is funded by the government and the candidates accrue subsistence allowance or salary during training. All of them get the same quality training program. Teaching is considered a prestigious profession and only a quarter of the candidates are accepted for studies. The situation in Singapore is the same, there is a generous support by salary, guidance, books and laptops. The commitment is to teach 3-5 years according to the program type. Not complying the commitment requires the funding repayment. This structure, in addition to supportive integration program, promotes profession persistence and recruit new students. Salaries are competitive compared to other professions.

(b) Training – uniform / similar and quality training for teachers in Finland is a very explicit goal. The teachers study 2-3 years for master's degree prior to entering work.

Finland – building pedagogical thinking skills that allow teachers to manage the teaching process in a diagnostic way using research as a basis for teaching and conducting action research as practice training;

(c) Ongoing professional development – (c1) The integration stage –

In Finland – school and the local authority are responsible for the integration; the methods and support rates are diverse. The interest in deeper understanding of integration programs leads to cooperation between new teachers center in the US in order to create models that will suit Finland.

(c2) The professional development stage – Finland – the teachers take responsibility and develop together the curriculum and the evaluation methods as part of their professional role. The national curriculum is reduced to guiding lines. The professional development does not consist of a fragmented courses, it is structured as systematic and theoretically based learning aimed to make a broad school improvement. Diverse responsibility areas are integrated in the teacher's role without being dropped out of teaching. They have the opportunity to get higher hierarchical and rewarding roles. They are encouraged for further academic studies. A recent survey shows that teachers spend additional 7 work days a year for studying at their own expense. Some reported 20 - 50 days.

The transition from the training stage to teaching stage is known as a critical stage in teachers' professional development sequence. Many researchers described the challenges beginner teachers face when they start working and the professionally and emotionally demanding transition as "a reality shock" [12]. Some of the factors are: disconnection between teacher training programs and daily life at school, and the tension between theory and practice in teaching, and the limited links between training, professional development and school needs, which require strengthening and improvement [9].

Teachers' professional development is perceived as a sequence of training, entering the profession and professional development. The sequence basic idea is to shift the professional learning from the primary training stage, which cannot provide teachers all the required skills and knowledge, to other stages of professional path, and thus support and promote lifelong learning. However, a lack of the mentioned connections violates the existence of such sequence. Defining

teacher's development as a "journey and not a destination" requires rethinking about the goal and pedagogy of training and development [8].

By the sequence approach new pedagogies were developed and it allows a continuing dialog between the training institute and school. Among the spoken pedagogies may be found pedagogies like "hybrid space" [13] and 'reach pedagogies" [8], or "spaces with transitions and crossing borders" (liminal space (Wood, 2012)). These pedagogies tend to blur borders between formal and informal learning and acknowledge the informal learning and other life spheres [4].

The pedagogy of learning communities (in its various shapes) enables a professional dialog and shared research of colleagues in the same school or beyond to change teaching methods and social connections in classes and schools to maximize students' achievements. This direction is also expressed in the training stage in order to prepare the beginning teachers to pedagogies they might meet at school.

The induction stage as step on the sequence – this stage links between training and professional development [10] and has large influence on the development, efficiency, satisfaction, motivation and persistence in this profession. The induction stage may be defined in three linked ways: 1) as a training process for teaching and professional development, 2) as socialization, 3) as supporting new teachers. In the wider sense we may claim, that the integration stage as socialization begins in the training stage and the training institute has to consider it in its activities [6].

Mentoring – mentoring is considered an essential process while entering to teaching. Many researches have indicated the advantages and strengths of mentoring processes [5]. In response to criticism and reflection on mentoring and integrated with new knowledge in the field, today are emphasized more collegial perceptions of mentoring characterized by dynamism, collaboration and mutuality [4]. This is "co-mentoring", or "peer group mentoring" which is aimed to emphasize the collegial and equitable character of the connection and the fact that the mentor and the guided person can both learn from their interaction.

Peer mentoring – mentoring by the "group mentoring" / "peer mentoring" model was developed in Finland, by this model teachers in different stages of their professional development meet to mutual study [3]. This method may be used in the induction stage and in more advanced stages. This is a collaborative activity of mutual experiences and its reflection, discussions on problems and challenges, and encouragement and listening to colleagues [7]. This model is similar and linked to models of professional learning communities.

Mentors training in Finland – teachers who had a special training to guide peer groups guide the peer mentors work. The training model was developed and applied by all the training institutes all over the country in a national program for teachers' development. The mentors' training goal is to give them the skills and ability to promote a professional reflective dialog between teachers. The reflective dialog is driven by functional, cooperative and creative methods using visual and verbal materials and various types of games and social interactions, to inspire debates and reflection. The model reflects the Finnish educational culture which is based on wide autonomy of the teachers and a lot of trust, while the basic assumption is that teachers are competent action people, experts in their profession with the ability to examine together their work.

Linda Hammond is one of the most important education researchers in the US. She was interested in the most equitable and successful education system in the world and even wrote a long research about it. This is the Finnish education system, which is ranked first in the world in its students' achievements in the international compression exams (PISA tests) for many years.

Hammond, with no doubt, is surprised by the Finnish education system achievement, especially since this system works the opposite of the accepted in the US (and in Israel). It is a system where there is almost no central administration; almost no compulsory curriculum; no school achievement measurement (except, of course, the international tests); there are no comparisons between schools; and there is no reward or punishment for schools by their academic success level [2].

Schools get from the Finnish ministry of education only few instructions about the required curriculum and how it should be taught. Schools, and the teachers themselves, are those who eventually determine what their school curriculum is, and they are mainly those who determine how they will teach it. Thus, schools become a constant laboratory of innovative learning methods.

To function as a learning methods laboratory, teachers in Finland are educated in an exceptional method. First, only the excellent 15% of the students in Finland can be accepted to teaching studies, and there is a long waiting list. Second, teaching studies takes five years, unlike in the US (or in Israel), the teachers are not being taught only the curriculum or accepted teaching methods. Instead, teaching education in Finland focuses on learning research methods and problem solving. In addition, all the teachers study special teaching (for children with special needs). These focuses in teachers' curriculum are meant to give teachers two tools. One, is the tool to identify and know how to help students with difficulties. Those who study special teaching, naturally will know better how to cope with a regular student who has difficulties.

The second, is the tool of developing thinking and ability so solve problems. Hammond's assessment is that the main reason for the better success of Finnish students in international tests, is not due to **more comprehensive curriculum or longer study hours. The reason is that the students in Finland learn to cope better** with problems and learn how to solve it – whether it is a problem in mathematics, language or science.

The teachers' quality and teaching quality – this is the secret of Finnish education system's success. Finland achieved this success thanks to 35 years of systematic work, systematic training of teachers and full freedom of operation to the teachers and schools – to encourage their creativity, motivation and enterprise. It is exactly the opposite from the accepted management solutions of education systems around the world, including Israel.

The Finnish lesson is applicable to Israel at least in two essential points: the first, the need to decentralize the education system management and transfer of authority and responsibility of school management to the principals. If the ministry of education fails to manage, maybe the school principals will do better - provided they have the tools to manage, including the ability to promote or fire teachers.

The second point is be strict with the teachers' quality and their constant training. Raising teachers' salary is undoubtedly one of the tools to improve their quality, but as Finnish experience shows – teachers' salary in Finland is higher than in Israel, but not very high – salary is not everything. Motivation, satisfaction, promotion, creativity and school collaboration to create a sense of cohesion and mission - all these can improve the teacher's status, along with improving their salary.

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