Lessons from Finland:
Exercise balls, baby boxes, and Karelian Pies.

“Direct them to it by what amuses their minds” Plato

Presented by Dr. Jacek Polubiec
What is innovative about Finnish "innovation"?
Why Finland?

Leading education system at the elementary level and for lifelong learning.

Consistently outperforms other countries on international assessments

The smallest gap between the weakest and the strongest learners!
The statement about PISA that focused the whole world on Finland...

“In Finland everyone does well...and social background has little impact”

(Scheicher, 2001, as cited in Ripley, 2013, p.16)
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

- (PISA) The Programme for International Student Assessment
- Measures scholastic performance
- 15-year-old school students.
- Assesses “the ability to think creatively” (Ripley, 2013)
Finland’s PISA Ratings 2000-2012

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

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## 2015 PISA AVERAGE SCORES

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</table>
Why learn now?
Houston, we might have a problem (or two)

- In US 39% of teachers leave the profession after 5 years of teaching
- In 2013 teacher satisfaction the lowest in over 20 years.
- Yearly national attrition cost is $4.9 billion
- Attrition is almost 50% higher in schools serving poor communities.
- We have "systemic challenges in adapting instruction to new technologies" (Rebora, 2016)
- “Teachers [schools] have been painfully slow to transform the ways they [teachers] teach” (Herold, 2016)
"The introduction of computers into schools was supposed to improve academic achievement and alter how teachers taught… Neither has occurred." (Herold, 2016)
Intrinsic Motivation

“It appeared that the motivational bank account...received large deposits in a form of intrinsically motivated, passionate, and eager to succeed teachers….school leaders did not make conscious efforts to support motivation, and teachers did not expect their motivation to be supported” (Polubiec, 2016)
Data Collection Trip 1

8 days 4/8-15/2017
5 Schools
3 Walking Tours
(Helsinki, Old Porvoo, Nuuksio)
Library of Helsinki University
Museum
Heureka Science Centre
Helsinki University Teacher Training Unit (Prof. Hannu Salmi)
February 2018
Trip to Lapland

More school visits, more visits to educational institutions, more learning outside
Some Facts about Finland

- Nordic but not Scandinavian (Sweden, Norway, Denmark)
- **Unique language** and two official languages with 5% rule.
- One of the happiest countries in the world (Business Insider, 2013).
- One of the best places to live in (The Economist, 2009)
- 187,888 lakes and 789 islands. Everyman’s Right!
- Population 5.5 million very unevenly populated. Nokia!
- Early adopters
The History

- 13th century-1809 Finnish-speaking areas are part of Sweden
- 1809 Finnish-speaking areas become part of Russia. Local laws are preserved!
- 1860s The Lutheran Church provides public education in Finnish
- 1866 A national school system is created
- 1869 Supervisory Board of Education under the Ministry of Education is created.
- 1917 Finland declares independence.
The value of education.

Seven Brothers

*Seitsemän veljestä*

(1870)
The Nordic Theory of Love (Partanen, 2016)

Authentic love and friendship are possible only between individuals who are independent and equal

The Nordic Society is about...
- Self-sufficiency and Individualism
- Sensitivity to the needs of others
- Independence in relation to other members of the community

Raising children is about...
- Helping them become independent and able to handle the life on their own.

Policy choices are about...
- Providing every member of the society with independence opportunity and freedom
- Removing all forms of dependency within the family and society
“Sensitivity to the needs of others”

What is going on in this picture?

http://imgur.com/gallery/GfPj7
G.E.R.M. Global Educational Reform Movement
1980's (Salhberg, 2015, p.143)

Focus on outcomes in literacy and numeracy

Competition and accountability
  ○ Schools and teachers compete for students and resources
  ○ Educational standards, benchmarks, assessment, testing
  ○ Prescribed curricula
## Meanwhile in Finland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Top-down, <strong>accountability-based measures</strong>, National school inspectors, 700-page centralized curriculum</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher preparation programs <strong>moved from small colleges</strong> to the main research universities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-training colleges become <strong>more selective and rigorous</strong>. 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More emphasis on early childhood education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Dismantling the most oppressive regulations. Abolishing school inspections. <strong>Increase of autonomy</strong>.</td>
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</table>
### G.E.R.M. versus the Finnish Way

(Sahlberg, 2015, p.149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G.E.R.M.</th>
<th>The Finnish way</th>
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<tr>
<td>Competition between schools</td>
<td>Collaboration among schools</td>
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<td>Standardized learning</td>
<td>Personalized learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on literacy and numeracy</td>
<td>Focus on the whole child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test-based accountability</td>
<td>Trust-based responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>School choice</td>
<td>Equity of outcomes</td>
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</table>
US Education in 1970s

- Efforts to **increase opportunities** and **improve performance** of previously disadvantaged minorities
- **Achievement** by public school students as a whole suffered.
- Every age group except primary school students **performed worse on standardized tests** than in the previous decade.
- The most significant test **score declines** were found among high school students.
- This led many people to **believe the nation was in the midst of an educational crisis** [or was it educational equity crisis?]

The Basic Principles of Finnish Education

- Providing **equal opportunities** for learning and growth to every student.
- **Support** for all learners.
- Removing all barriers to learning (physical, **attitudinal** or pedagogical) with early intervention, support and welfare. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2017)

WAIT A MINUTE!

STUDENT ATTITUDE IS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE SCHOOL SYSTEM?
Maximizing Every Child’s Potential

- Education is free at all levels
- Every student has the right to educational support.
- Focus on lifelong learning
- Teachers are recognized as keys to quality in education
- Educational autonomy is high at ALL LEVELS
- National curriculum with room for local variations
- Quality assurance is based on steering instead of controlling
- Assessment is part of daily school work
General upper secondary education is flexibly organized

Basic education is provided within a single structure
## Distribution of lessons (Government Decree, 28.6.2012)

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# 1st Grade Schedule (7-8 year olds)

Rajakyla Elementary, Vantaa Finland

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Are you ready to visit some classrooms?
Things you see...
Things you see...
Things you see...

What is innovative about Finnish "innovation"?
1st Grade Writing Lesson
The Haavi Model-Flexibility in Basic Education

Fighting social exclusion

Remaining within the education system

Adapting to learning styles or abilities.

Hands-on Learning
Math
Things you hear...

- Everything is driven by research.
- You are not compared to others but to yourself.
- Teaching students not subjects.
- Leadership and teachers as partners.
- Homework? The evening is for the family.
- Gender equality.
- Respect for nature- Everyman’s Right.
- Learning outside.
- Student have voice and independence.
- Students make their own choices.
- Recess is important
- Risk-Taking is important
- Collaboration is important
Hands-on Learning...

...and not this:}

ANYONE?

ANYONE?
Systematic School Reform
The Finnish Way
National Curriculum Framework 2016 (NCF)
“The world is changing. We have to think and rethink everything connected to school. We also have to understand that competencies needed in society and in working life have changed.”

Ms Irmeli Halinen,
Head of curriculum development with Finnish National Board of Education
The 2016 New Reform

Multidisciplinary “phenomenon-based” approach to teaching

● At least **one class or project** during the school year.
● **Broad** topics such as European Union, Climate Change, Community.
● Applying a **variety of skills** and knowledge in a single class.
● Real-life **problem solving** to understand the complexity of the world.
The Reform Process

Input from everyone

“We’re trying to help our kids know how to make meaning and sense of what they are learning so they can see who they are”
The 2016 New Reform

**Students must be involved** in the planning of phenomenon-based study periods and they **must have voice** in assessing what they have learned from it.
Would you like to see evidence of planning for this type of instruction?
VALTIOESITELMÄ
EDISON - POWERPOINT
7-10 DIAA

PEKISTIEDOT
- LIIPU
- ÄS.LUUKI
- PINTA-ALAA
- KAIVA - US KOND

SIJAINTE
MISSÄ OCASEA
NAAPURIVALTIOT

VALTIO

PÄÄ ALA
- HIISTII
- KALITUKKU
- URMEEKU
- NAHAHAIK

LUONTTO
- KASVIT
- ELIMIET

ELINKENNET
- MAANviljely
- JETTILISUNG

KARTTA XLYPUN
- MAANIITIE
- TELLSET
- KAIKA
- VIITKOHPOU
One Year Later....
Who is highly trained, well-respected and free?
According to Finnish Teachers
Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013

- Advantages of being a teacher outweigh the disadvantages 95%
- Would choose the profession again 85%
- Satisfied with their jobs 91%
- Feel their profession is valued in society 60%

ICT Internet and Communication Technology
Teacher’s Lounge
In 1948, Finland was the first country in the world to serve free school meals.

“pupils attending school must be provided with a properly organised and supervised, balanced meal free of charge every school day”. (Basic Education Act, Section 31)

“Lunch but since it is free we probably should not complain”
The meals selected by the students include traditional Finnish favorites such as potatoes and meatballs as well as macaroni and meat casserole. *Healthy and balanced school meals are an essential element of the well-recognized Finnish school system, and we are proud to highlight these tasty meals as part of our in-cabin service.*

Finnair will also celebrate Finland’s 100 years by offering rye bread and Karelian pies during the meal service onboard its long-haul flights.
Visit schools and students who are top performers in international comparisons (PISA, TIMMS) and take away fresh ideas

**Edu Tours to Finland**

- Roundtrip air travel from Boston (other cities) to Helsinki
- Hotels with Nordic Breakfast Buffet and most meals included
- Educator Program of workshops and meetings
- Sightseeing tours in Helsinki and in southern Finland
- Elementary and secondary school visits in Helsinki and other cities
- Enjoy Nordic ambience in the company of other educators

**Contact:** Dr. Marja Ingrid Urponen at Dr. U's Educational Consulting
dru@druseducationalconsulting.com.
Edu Tours to Finland

Educator travel to Finland to visit schools and learn about the Finnish education system, one of the best in the world, based on international educational comparisons such as PISA and TIMMS.
Meet School and District Administrators, Teachers and Teacher Educators.
Educator Travel to Finland designed by educators for educators.

-fresh ideas for life-long learners-

Visit schools, meet administrators and teachers, and learn about the Finnish education system, one of the best in the world (PISA, TIMMS).
Take away research-based ideas to your school or district.
Registration is open for the February and April Edu Tours!

February 17-24, 2018: Helsinki and Exotic Lapland
April 14-21, 2018: Helsinki and Medieval Turku

Both tours consist of the Educator Program of lectures, meetings and school visits, the air travel from Boston (other cities) to Helsinki, hotels with Nordic buffet breakfast, a meal a day, sightseeing and excursions.
AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT
Wife Carrying World Championships are held annually in Sonkajärvi, Finland since 1992 (where the prize depends on the wife's weight in beer).
Now that we looked from the bridge...

“the only way you can gain both clearer view of the reality and some perspective on the bigger picture.” Heifetz and Linsky (2010)

What can we try to do on the dance floor?

“If you want to affect what is happening, you must return to the dance floor” (Haifetz & Linsky, 2010)

What is one important idea that we can try tomorrow?
PLEASE SEND COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS AND REQUESTS FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO

JPOLUBIEC@GMAIL.COM
How Finland Broke Every Rule...
Nordic Theory of Love
Finland Rethinks Factory-Style School Buildings
When Finnish Teachers Work in American Schools

Building an Even Better School
Finnish Classroom Design
Inside of a Finnish Classroom
Finland School System

Finnish Educators Say... Schools Designed for Success
Everyman's Right Free to Explore Finland's Great Outdoors Life in Lapland

The Latest School Reform
School Meals in Finland

RESOURCES