



Education in Finland

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Land of a thousand lakes



Key facts Finland

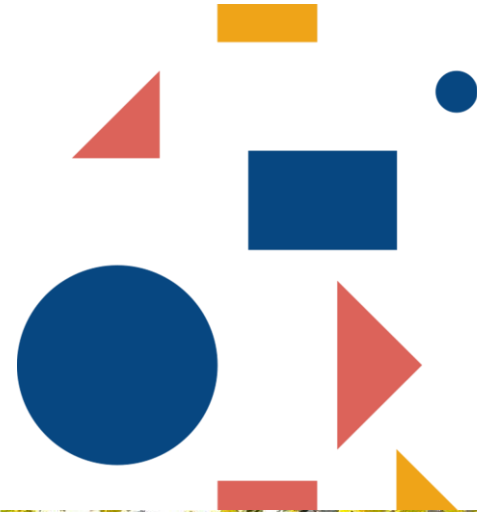


- population 5.6 million (18 inhabitants/km²)
- two official languages: Finnish and Swedish
- persons with foreign background: about 9% of the population (20% in the Helsinki region)
- education level of the working age population:
 - 11% basic education
 - 46 % upper secondary education
 - 43% tertiary education
- Happiest country in the world for 8 consecutive years (UN World Happiness Report)



In this presentation...

- Finnish education system in a nutshell
- Special features of Finnish education
- Current challenges



Core principles

- **Education is free at all levels, including higher education**
 - learning materials, transport, and meals are free in primary and secondary education
- **Equality**
 - no ranking of schools; minimal standardized testing
- **Global reputation**
 - high performance in PISA studies and strong equity in outcomes
- **Teacher independence**
 - all teachers have a master's degree or higher; high level of autonomy

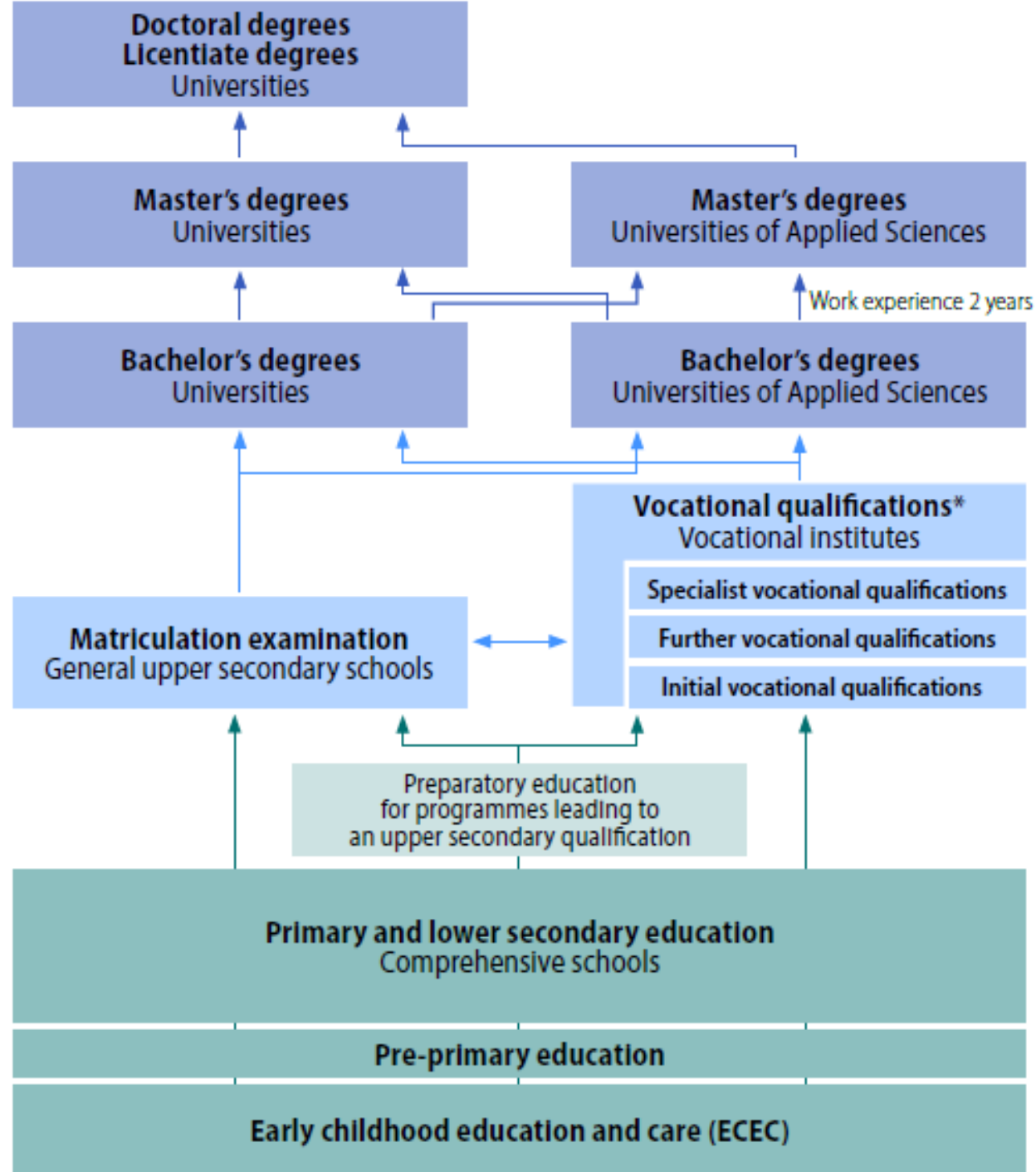


Structure

- **Early Childhood Education** (ages 0-6)
 - voluntary, but widely used; every child's subjective right
- **Pre-primary Education** (all 6-year-olds)
- **Basic Education** (ages 7-16; grades 1-9)
- **Upper Secondary Education** (ages 16-19, mandatory until 18)
 - General Upper Secondary (academic, leads to matriculation exam)
 - Vocational Education (practical skills, can lead to higher education)
- **Higher Education:** Universities and universities of applied sciences



Education system in Finland



Central steering



Ministry of Education & Finnish National Agency for Education

- National core curricula
- Education policy & legislation
- State funding
- Support for reform and development

Local decisions



Schools and municipalities

- Local curricula
- Class sizes
- Recruitment of teachers
- Teacher evaluation
- Monitoring quality

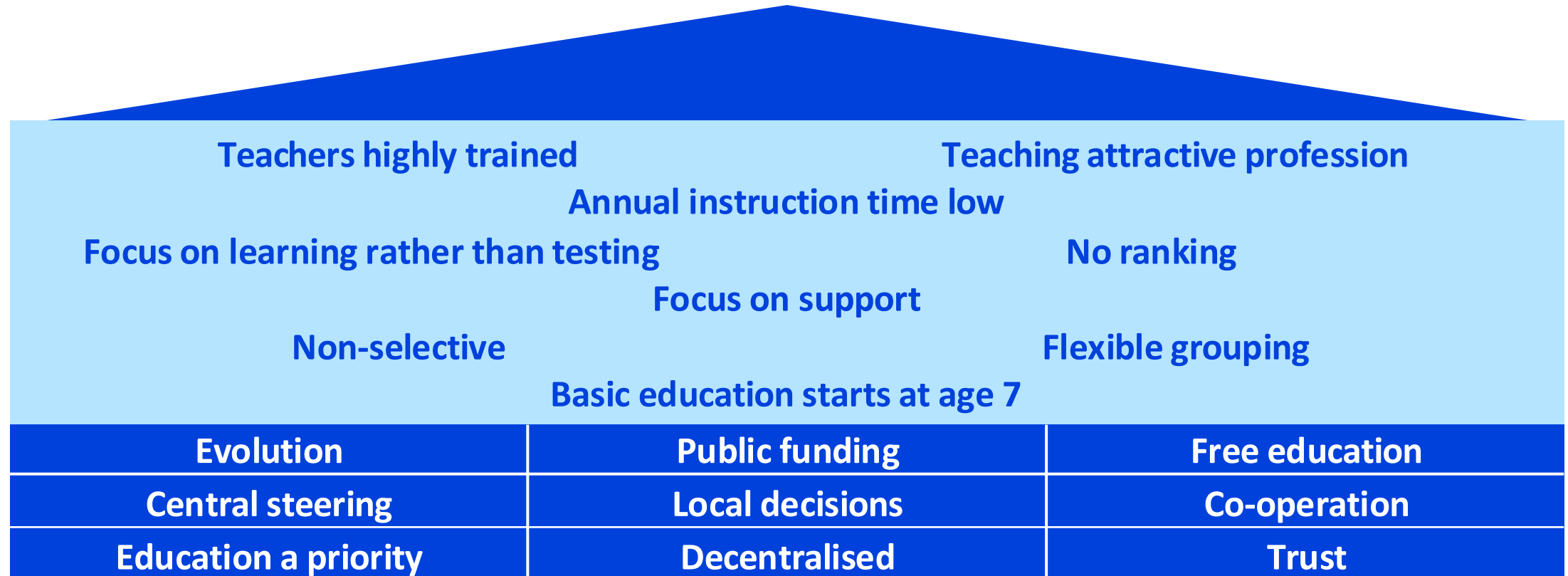
Expenditure on education

- 5.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on education
 - more than the OECD average of 4.9%
 - less than other Scandinavian countries
- **Operative costs per student/year on average (data from 2021):**
 - Pre-primary education 6 713€
 - Comprehensive school 9 975€
 - General upper secondary 8 535€
 - Vocational education 10 665€

Source: Finnish national agency for education



Specificities of the Finnish education system



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**

Student-centered approach

- Students' critical thinking and creativity emphasized
- Reduced pressure
 - school days are relatively short
 - little homework; very little standardized testing
 - developing skills through play, social interaction, and hobbies
- Teacher as a guide
 - teachers support and guide students, rather than deliver one-way lectures
 - the teacher-student relationship is informal in comparison to many countries
- Individualized learning
 - each student is different and develops at their own pace
 - teachers adjust lessons and use formative assessment methods to provide personalized support and feedback
 - support is offered to everyone who needs it; inclusion



Conception of learning

Learner's active role

- Sets targets
- Reflects & analyses
- Solves problems

Interaction

- Learns with others and in different environments
- Understands consequences

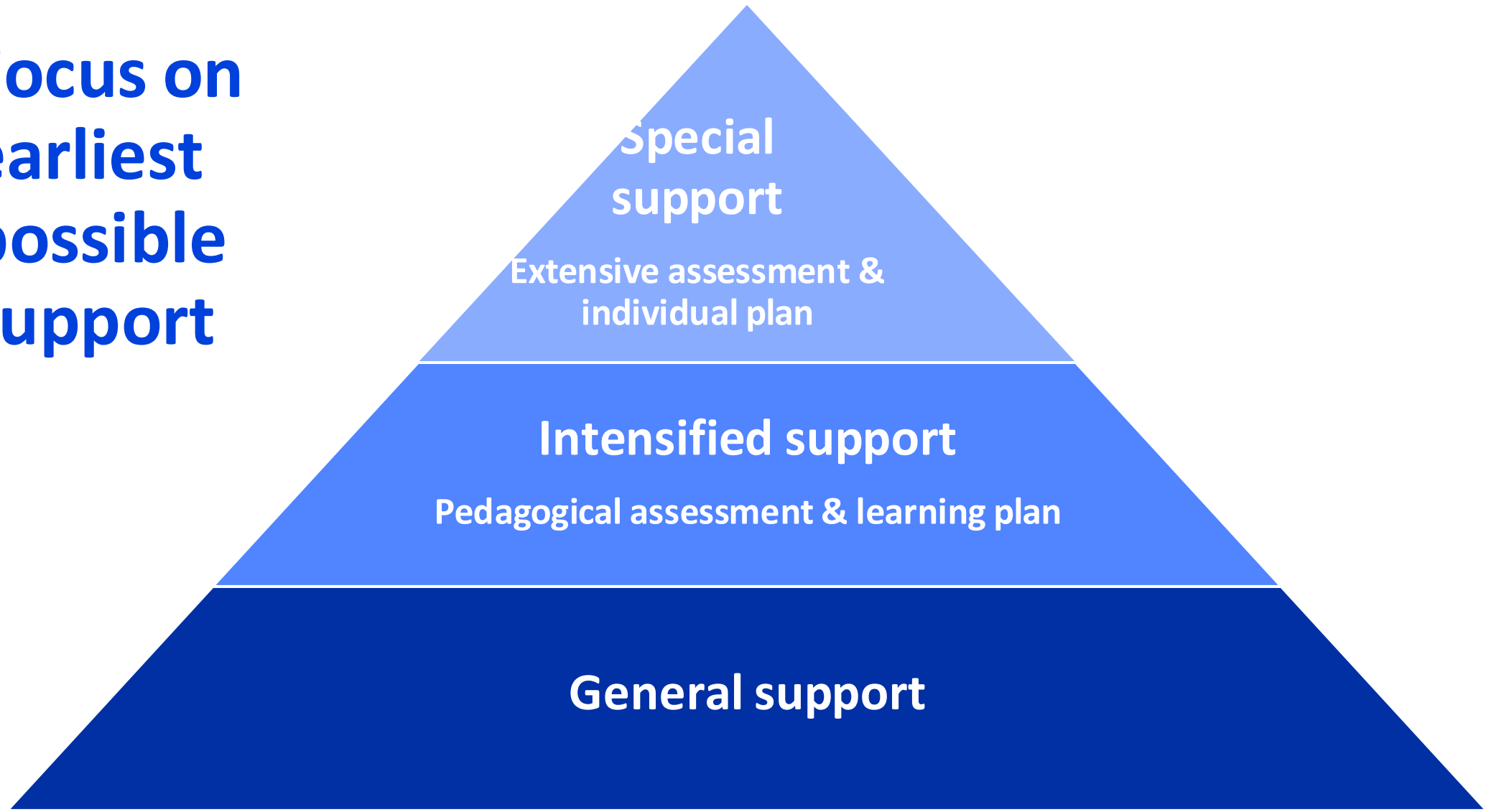
Learning to learn

- Recognises own way of learning
- Applies this to promote learning

Self-conception and confidence

- Helps setting targets
- Receives feedback

**Focus on
earliest
possible
support**



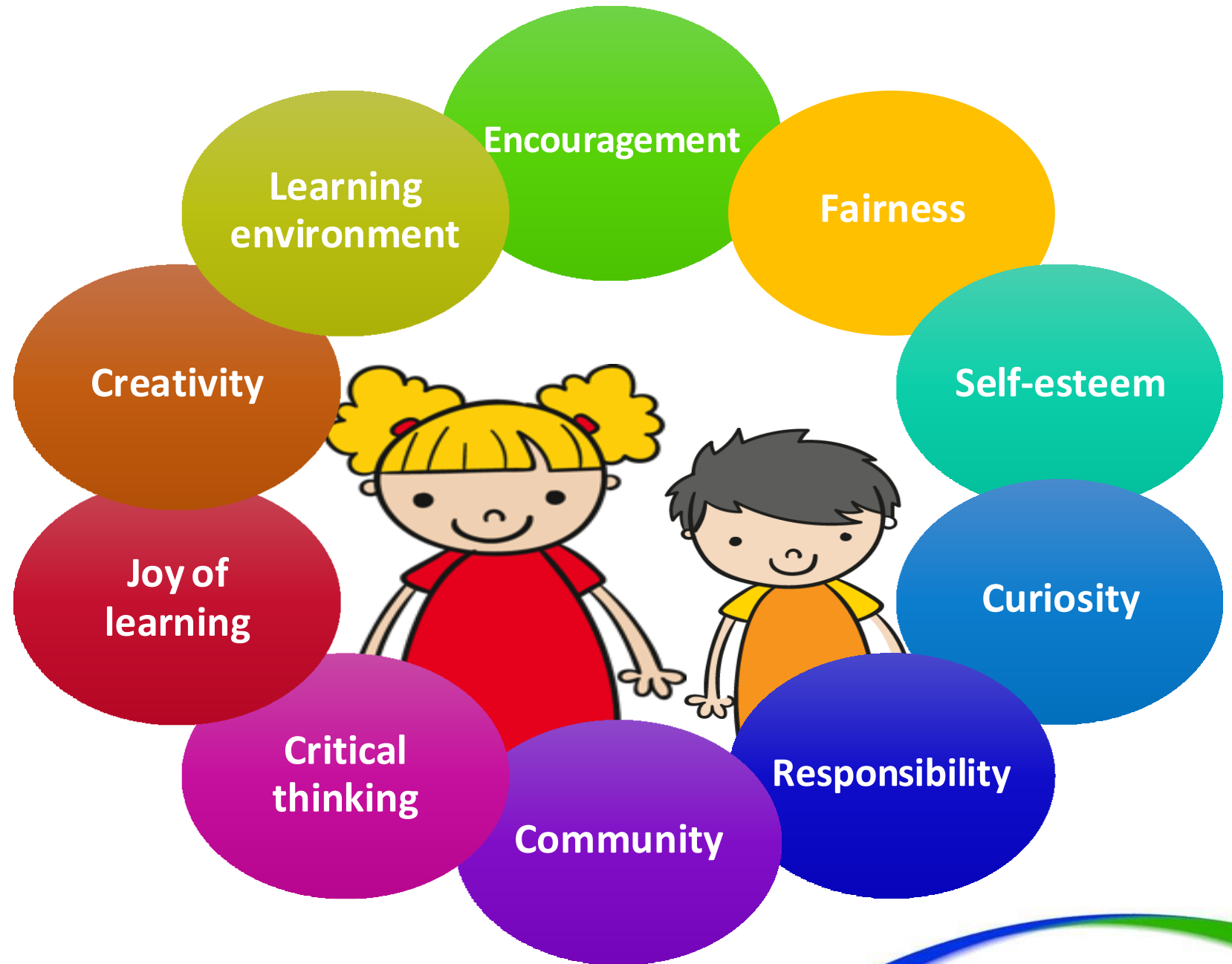
Focus on well-being

- Well-being promotes learning
- School culture and school community are important factors in e.g. reducing loneliness and drop-outs
- In schools, students have access to health care, a school social worker, a psychologist, a special needs teacher, etc.
- Each school has a team focused on the well-being of all students
- Warm meal every day – for free
- Clubs, activities, field trips, excursions all build a stronger community and happier kids
- Collaborating with families when needed



**Maximising
potential:**

**every
child is
unique**



Teachers are trusted professionals

- teachers are highly educated (master's degree or higher)
- principals guide and support teachers – trust over control!
- high level of autonomy in classrooms
 - materials, methods, etc.
 - no need to submit lesson plans
- Teaching is seen as an attractive career choice and universities have been able to select the top students
 - this has been in slight decline lately but no dramatic change



Teacher training institutions can select heavily

Intake into teacher education 2022 (% of those who applied)

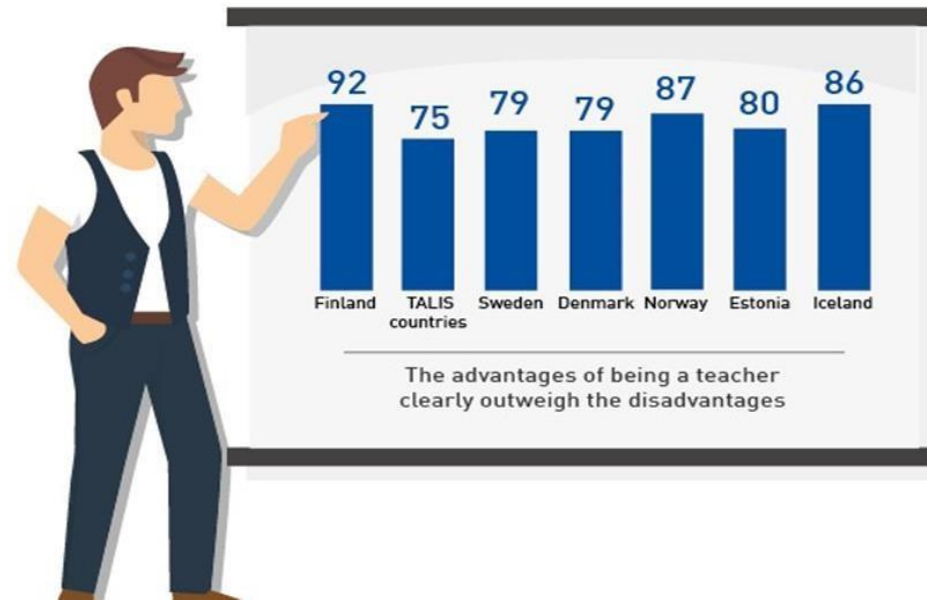
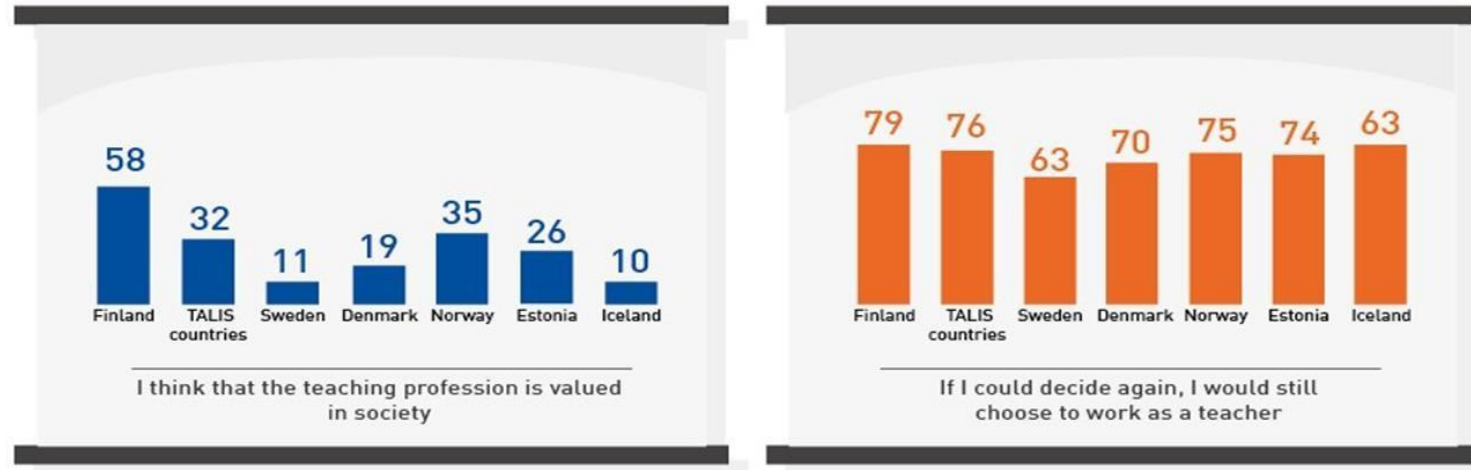
Class teacher education	below 20%
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Subject teacher education	10 – 50%
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Vocational teacher education	below 40%
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Finnish lower secondary (ISCED 2) teachers are satisfied with their career choice

Percentage of teachers (%) who "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statements



Teacher and principal salaries in Finland, 2022

Annual average salaries (including bonuses and allowances) of 25-64-year-old teachers and school heads in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for private consumption

• pre-primary teacher (ISCED 02)	38 309 USD
• class teacher, primary	50 697 USD
• subject teacher, lower secondary	56 135 USD
• subject teacher, general upper secondary	63 188 USD
• VET teachers (teachers of common studies and vocational studies teachers combined)	59 278 USD
• principal, primary	71 130 USD
• principal, lower secondary	82 812 USD
• principal, general upper secondary	85 871 USD

Current issues as listed by the Finnish National Agency for Education

- decreasing learning outcomes
- mobile phone use at school
- differences between girls and boys in learning outcomes
- paying more attention to learners with immigrant background
- admission to higher education
- raising educational level among young adults



To sum up

- The foundation of world-class education is not in more exams or longer school days, but in **trust, freedom, and well-being**.
- A student who is rested, supported, and emotionally secure is more likely to learn successfully and stay motivated.
- A system of trust enables schools and teachers to work freely and cater to the needs of the students.



Sources

- Finnish National Agency for Education

