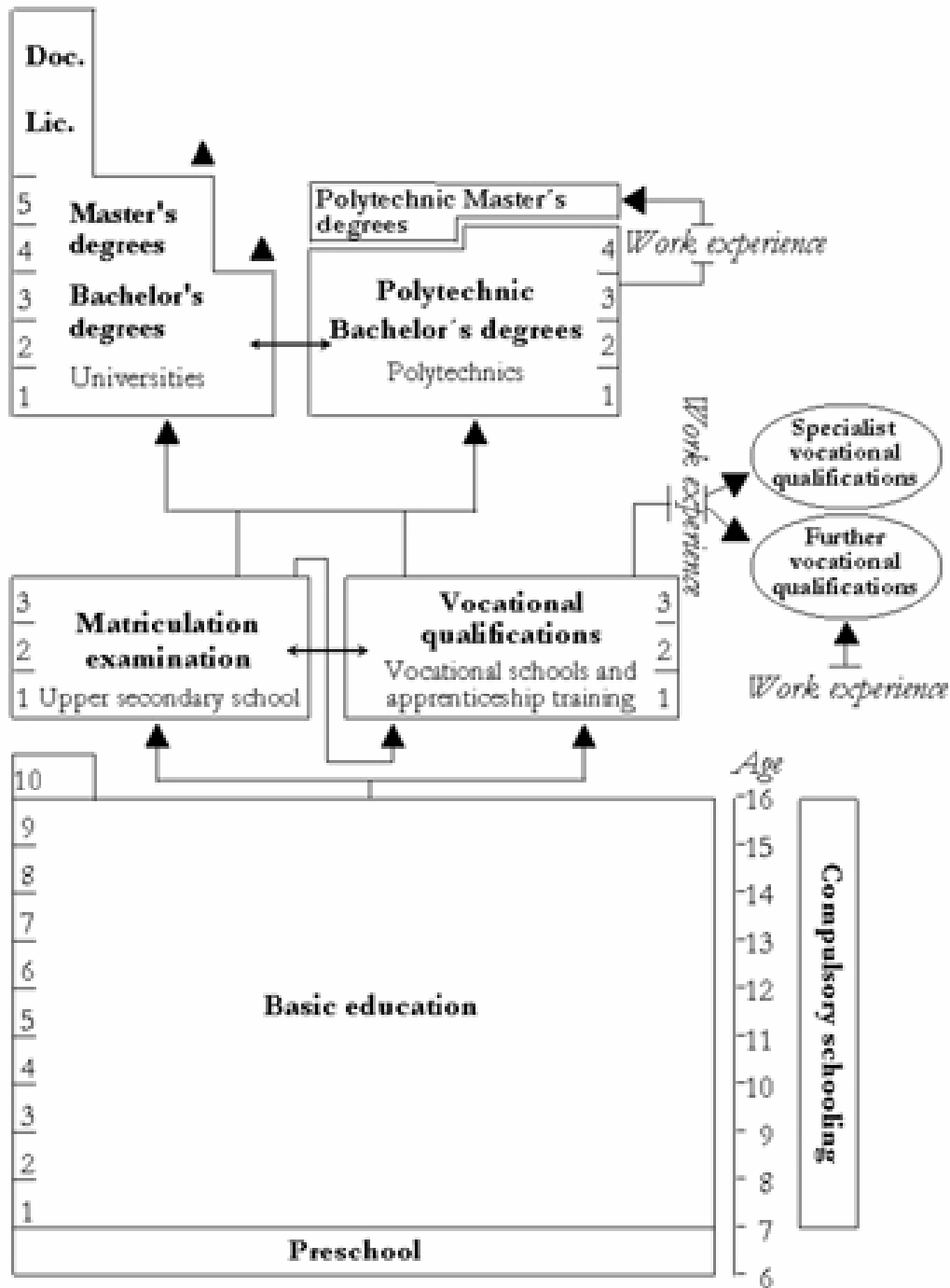


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TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN FINLAND

The Finnish school system



[More detailed description of School system](#)

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Teacher training

Age	School	Teacher
0-6	Kindergarten	Pre-school teachers
6	Optional pre-school	Pre-school teachers or classroom teachers
7-15	Comprehensive school, 9 years	Classroom teachers and subject teachers
16-	Upper secondary school, 3 years	Subject teachers
16-	Vocational schools	Vocational school teachers
19-	Higher education	Teachers with higher academic degree

Regardless of the age of students and the size of teaching groups, all teaching has objectives with respect to both education and teaching. The work of teachers has shifted from the distribution of knowledge towards the guidance of learning. In addition to teaching, teachers plan and develop teaching and work in cooperation with other teachers, students, their parents and the surrounding society in general. The work of Finnish teachers is very independent

In Finland, the training of subject teachers has always been conducted at the university level. The training of class teachers was transferred over to be carried out by universities in the early 1970s. The training of kindergarten teachers in universities began in 1995.

As a result of the Bologna process, the degree structure of universities was reformed in 2005. Students first pass the lower academic degree (Bachelor's Degree), followed by the higher academic degree (Master's Degree). The studies are now measured using ECTS credits.

The lower academic degree consists of 180 credits, with an optimum study time of three years. The extent of the higher academic degree is 120 credits, with an optimum study time of two years.

Depending on the field, the extent of polytechnic (universities of applied sciences) degrees is between 180 and 240 credits.

Teachers of vocational schools and polytechnic colleges do their pedagogical studies at vocational teacher colleges (School of Vocational Teacher Education) that operate as part of polytechnic colleges. The vocational teacher colleges also provide training for vocational school student counsellors and special education teachers.

Teacher training studies for all teachers encompass 60 credits, consisting of studies providing vocational or pedagogical competences or studies promoting expertise in a particular subject.

Pre-school teachers get a bachelor's degree in educational science, the extent of which is 180 credits (ETCS). This degree qualifies to serve as a kindergarten teacher and as a pre-school teacher.

Classroom teachers get a master's degree in educational science (ETCS 300 cr). This degree qualifies to serve as a classroom teacher and as a pre-school teacher. The compulsory education in Finland lasts nine years, from the age of 7 to the age of 16.

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Subject teachers get a Master's degree, the extent of which is 300 credits (ETCS). There are two possibilities to get in to the subject teacher education. The more common way is to start studying the subject at the university first and then later the pedagogical studies. After these pedagogical studies one is qualified to teach the subject in question. The other way is to apply directly to the subject teacher education. This direct selection to teacher education is getting more common, but so far it is only possible in few subjects.

Special-education teachers get a Master's degree in educational science (ETCS 300 cr). This degree qualifies to serve as a special-education teacher in comprehensive schools, and as a classroom teacher.

Vocational school teachers as a rule get a degree at a university or at a vocational institute of higher education, then they work for a few years, and after that they do the pedagogical studies at a vocational institute of higher education to qualify to serve as teachers.

Vocational teacher education in Finland

In order to become a teacher in Finland, you need to fulfill qualification requirements as set out in legislation. All teachers at VET institutions and universities of applied sciences have pedagogical education worth a scope of 60 ECTS credit points, which corresponds to one year full-time study.

Education for core subject teachers, such as teachers of mathematics or languages is the same as for general education. Core subject teachers have a Master's degree with a scope of 300 ECTS including 60 ECTS of pedagogical studies. The average study time for a Master's degree in Finland is six years. It varies, however, as university students enjoy a high level of freedom in terms of what they study and when.

Teachers of vocational subjects are required to have an appropriate Master's degree or a polytechnic degree or, if the field does not allow for this, the highest possible qualification in their own occupational field. In addition, they must complete pedagogical studies with a scope of 60 ECTS and have at least three years of work experience in the field.

Lecturers at universities of applied sciences are required to have a Master's degree and three years of relevant work experience and senior lecturers need to have a licentiate or doctorate and the same work experience. They are also obliged to complete the pedagogical studies for teachers within three years after taking up their post.

Vocational teacher education builds on two basic requirements: a degree and work experience. When applying for teacher education, students are already professionals with personal experience of a career in a certain field. Student teachers are thus professionals in their own fields and can therefore never be studying for their first qualification.

Special needs teachers and guidance counselors are required either an initial education as core subject teachers or as vocational studies teachers in addition to specialization in special needs education or guidance counseling.

The programme is financed by the Ministry of Education

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Almost half of the current qualified vocational teachers are over 50 years old. Within the next few years about 20,000 teachers will retire. Also many teachers working in vocational schools and polytechnics are not qualified teachers, about one in four teachers was unqualified in the late 1990s and the beginning of this century. Special education teachers are in great demand and this need will further increase in time.

The annual amount of applicants is approx. 5,000, out of that, 4,500 apply to teacher training, 200-300 to special education teacher training and the rest to study guidance counsellor –training. The amount of applicants varies on each study fields. As the study places for teacher training are allocated per study field, it is vital to predict the demand for qualified teachers in each study field. For example in the field of technology and transportation many teachers will retire in the next few years and furthermore majority of teachers teaching IT are unqualified teachers, even though they have degrees in IT and work experience.

In developing vocational teacher training, emphasis has been given to provide better tools and ways in teaching for example special needs students and immigrants. Also the role of media- and communication technology in teaching has been emphasised.

Education Program

[Teacher Education Curriculum at Haaga-Helia in English](#)

The aim of the vocational teacher education is to offer the student teachers 1) basic knowledge and skills in general educational science or in adult educational science, 2) knowledge and skills in vocational pedagogy and disciplinary didactics, 3) teaching practice and 4) optional studies.

The purpose of the education is to increase the ability of the student teachers to guide and organise the learning and teaching of different students and groups as well as to develop, in co-operation with working life representatives, the future teachers' core skills. The purpose is also to remind the student teachers to keep their own vocational mastery up-to-date to make it serve teaching.

Since teachers are also developers of society, they must endeavour to understand their actions in a broader social frame of reference. In addition to pedagogics and didactics, fields of knowledge such as sociology, social psychology and history will gain in significance in teachers' work.

A key role in the process of education is played by teachers who are active in daily practices. Teachers should possess the ability to analyse their own ideas of a teacher's work and the capacity to be aware of the grounds for the decisions they make. Reflective skills constitute a part of a teacher's professional growth, which will start during the teacher education. It is based on good theoretical competence, but also requires putting one's own persona at stake and the ability to question one's own ideas and solutions as well as to evaluate them.

Studies in the Program (60 cp) includes Basic studies in pedagogy, Studies in vocational pedagogy and Teaching practice

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Trends

Classroom teachers, subject teachers, most vocational teachers, and adult education teachers have a common core in their course programme. Moving from one position to another is much easier than before since pedagogical studies are always recognized

Finnish teachers who are holders of a Master's degree have the right to further their studies and to take a PhD examination. The numbers of doctoral students have been reasonable. At national level, graduate schools exist that are funded by the Finnish Academy. The field of education has a graduate school of its own.

The National Board of Education sets the framework of the curriculum, leaving room for communities and individual schools to make their own choices. Today, practically every school has developed its own curriculum with its special alternatives and distinctive features. Writing the curriculum for their own schools is, nevertheless, a challenge for the teachers concerned. In principle, however, teachers have always done this kind of work. Planning one's own teaching is one of the basic skills of a teacher. School-based curriculum planning also requires external co-operation on the part of parents and pupils. Along with independent and autonomous decision-making, other teachers in the school become close partners, and collaboration becomes an everyday practice.