

Eduardo Andere M.

Teachers' Perspectives on Finnish School Education

Creating Learning Environments

 Springer

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Dedication

*To teachers, principals, professionals,
students and experts in Finland who kindly
opened up Suomi for me*

Preface

After the release of the results of PISA in 2001, the world suddenly noticed the amazing success of Finland, which topped the international charts in reading, mathematics, and science. The world then wanted to know what accounted for the improvement in education in this small European nation. Until now, one book, Pasi Sahlberg's *Finnish Lessons*, told the story of the historical and political transformation of the Finnish school system.

However, we now have Eduardo Andere's insightful account of what was happening inside Finnish classrooms. Andere has spent the past decade traveling the world in search of the best school system, what he has called "the Shangri-la" of education. He visited 18 high-performing nations and studied what they were doing. After careful review, he chose Finland as the best example of schooling for the twenty-first century. Finland has not only high test scores on PISA but is also one of the world's most equitable school systems. It has aimed to make every school a good school and to avoid the extremes of affluence and poverty that are so often reflected in schools.

Andere spent time in schools and classrooms, trying to understand and report the perspectives of principals and teachers. He is not as interested in describing the formal system and policies as he is in understanding what makes it tick, as seen and experienced by practitioners. This gives his book a unique value.

Like Sahlberg, Andere recognizes that a key feature of education in Finland can be summed up in three words: Trust in teachers. This means that highly trained and qualified teachers are the decision makers in their schools. There is no bureaucratic monitoring, no need for standardized tests to assess students or to hold teachers "accountable." Teachers are responsible, and the government does not need to use external testing to measure their quality.

This feature—trust in teachers—creates a teachers' culture. One teacher said to Andere, "We have a good attitude, respect our teaching work and take it seriously. We are passionate about teaching." In other words, teacher professionalism and teacher autonomy go together, not just as words, but as reality.

The Finnish government has determined to make all schools good schools. Parents can choose the school their child attends knowing that it will be a good school. The Finnish government has also dedicated itself to making their schools beautiful.

Some of the best architects have designed schools, and Finns are proud of their beautiful schools. Schools are often recognized as the most prominent buildings in villages, towns, and cities. This reflects the high cultural priority that Finns attach to schooling their children well.

Learning is student-centered. Children in the early years are not prepared to take tests; play is emphasized in preschool and in the earliest grades, not academic learning. Cooperative learning is emphasized even in high school.

Also notable is what Finland does not have, in contrast to the USA and some other nations: There are no vouchers, Virtually no publicly-funded private schools, and no “Teach for Finland.” There is no competition among schools for test scores because students do not take standardized tests.

As one often finds in every nation, the schools reflect the cultural values of the society. In Finland, according to principals and teachers, school and home together emphasize sociability, honesty, trust, and kindness. Finnish schools want their students to feel secure as learners and not to feel the artificial stress induced by standardized testing.

As Eduardo Andere reports in this book, they seem to have reached their goals. Their students perform well on international tests, where there are no stakes attached, even though they never encounter such tests in their daily school life. Finland indeed offers an attractive model for the world of the twenty-first century: Not dog-eat-dog competition and survival of the fittest, but a school system where the needs of developing children are recognized and addressed by well-prepared teachers and principals.

September 2013
New York, NY

Diane Ravitch

Preface and Acknowledgements: What I Learned and Whom I Learned It from

Jouni Välijärvi, prestigious professor and researcher at the University of Jyväskylä, is the person who opened the doors of Finland for the first time back in March 2004. Jouni responded to my requests for support in order to locate high performing schools all around Finland. Now I know that trust is a great value of the Finnish culture, and Jouni, after reading my first proposal, trusted me. In addition, Jouni organized detailed agendas for my frequent visits to schools. With Jouni, I learned about the dichotomy of life for Finnish people where on weekdays they live in modern houses or apartment buildings and on weekends or vacation they travel to their bucolic Summer cottages with minimum modern facilities and both lots of forests and lakes and nature around them. Finnish people have a very poetic and respectful relationship with nature and the environment.

Maarit Rossi, not only opened the doors of her school and the secrets of the Finnish school education but also invited me, on different occasions, to her dream house on the shores of a calm sea in Southern Finland. Maarit and her husband Jukka Rossi, have been my hosts and today, are close friends. With them, in numerous times, we have shared stories of education and life. At the shore by her house, we fished, walked on a frozen sea, and were witnesses to the magnificent sunsets of Finland. Maarit Rossi is co-author of a nine-book series for teaching and learning mathematics at the lower secondary level. When I saw her work several years ago, I told her “this is a PISA-like approach”. She then decided to take their work to the Web under the name of Paths to Math.

Irmeli Halinen, an official at the National Education Council of Finland, and despite her busy work schedule, has awarded several interviews and has also facilitated me access to schools and readings about education policy and success. Irmeli, as it happened with Jouni and Maarit, clarified constant doubts and answered many questions. With Irmeli, I learned that Finnish authorities have a big respect for autonomy of municipalities, principals, and teachers in the daily life of schools. I also learned about the philosophy behind the famous Finnish curriculums and their most recent reforms and additions.

Hannele Niemi, distinguished professor and researcher of the University of Helsinki also has been a guide and mentor in my constant inquiries on education in Finland. With her, I sustained several interviews in Helsinki and exchanged comments on the school education of her beautiful country. Her husband Seppo Niemi and

former school rehtori, kindly read and commented on a much earlier Spanish written manuscript of school education in Finland; my gratitude to Seppo for his time and suggestions. With Hannele and Seppo, I learned that there is not only social integration in schools, but also in neighborhoods. On her beautiful home surroundings Hannele and Seppo pointed out that many people from different professional or work backgrounds, live on the same block, most of them built by hand from scratch by the owners. Hannele and Seppo built their homey house with their own hands. Here, I learned the importance of a comprehensive school education where children from a very early age take wood and metal workshop classes in the school and are surrounded by a family learning environment where parents and older siblings are frequently building houses, rooms, and furniture or fixing electricity and water installations.

Elisa Heimovaara of the University of Jyväskylä awarded me two long interviews and provided me with lots of reading materials, both statistical and bibliographic, that allowed me to get a deeper understanding of education in Finland, and more specifically about the famous process for the selection and training of teachers. Elisa also elaborated some agendas of visits with various experts, principals, and teachers linked with the prestigious University of Jyväskylä. I learned with Elisa about the transition towards a certification and compatibility in higher education studies in Europe, the so-called “Bologna Process”. In essence the initial training of teachers remained the same but the program is now clearly divided in two sections: undergraduate and graduate. Teachers-to-be are carefully selected on a very demanding admission process and then are highly trained in theory and practice for nearly 5 years of full-time university studies.

My gratitude also goes to Paula Alatalo, a young and energetic principal of a comprehensive school and chief of the municipal education services, at the time, in the municipality of Enontekiö. She opened up her school for a full day of meetings, observations, and interviews. Since my visit, she has remained in communication with me to clarify doubts and improve my knowledge of education in northern Finland and Lapland. From Paula Alatalo and her family, I learned that Finnish people stay working for many years after retirement. Her father-in-law, a 75-year-old man, and former teacher, is not only a luthier of exquisite violins and cellos, but also a proud owner of a huge forest where he can cut four or five pine trees in less than one hour, carry them on a snow motorcycle, and pile them as logs to use at home or sell in the market. Both he and his son, a luthier too, have built their own house. Here, I also learned, as with many other Finnish friends, that the sauna tradition is a cultural habit in their daily life.

Martti Hellström, director and educational and pedagogical leader, has met with me on three occasions in three different full-day visits to his famous Aurora Koulu. From Martti Hellström, I learned the total commitment and motivation of Finnish teachers and principals who make of their education career a life project. Martti has facilitated materials and concepts to deepen my understanding of creative learning and school and classroom learning environments, as a means to nurture the students’ cognitive and emotional skills. With their special school curriculum and timetabling, Aurora taught me the meaning of school and teacher autonomy in Finland.

Leena Sipponen is the rehtori of a wonderful and very modern school. She, her assistant principal Pirjo Holm, and many teachers, have given me access to the school at three different times, for observation, interviews, and picture taking, including of course, lunch, as happened with most of the schools I have visited in Finland. Aurinkolahti is an impressive school. It is for students with a special interest in technology. Here, I learned how teachers work in professional learning communities for a variety of school projects. They merge technology, art, and design in very innovate ways. The school is nestled by a community park and a complex of apartment buildings that blend the school and the neighborhood into a single compound.

Arja Alaraudanjoki gave me access to the Finnish school farthest to the north beyond the arctic circle and very near to the Barents Sea and Arctic Ocean. Until early 2013, we kept in touch for clarifications and explanations of deep Sami-culture schooling. Sadly, she died with her husband on a snow-motorcycle accident early this year. She was not only the principal of her school and of other nearby schools, but also chief of education services in the municipality of Utsjoki. She frequently updated me with news about the beautiful landscape of this remote part of Suomi. Here, I learned the concept of equality of education in Finland. No matter how far one is from the large metropolitan cities, how rural, small or isolated the school is, the high quality of the teachers and principals and the education services and facilities is very homogeneous. The Finnish have a very solid ground with high standards of educational services and a supportive local community. This creates, besides the school-learning environment, an encompassing sociocultural learning environment.

Asko Peuraniemi, director of a school hospital in Rovaniemi, was key along with Maarit for the organization of several agendas of visits to schools in northern Finland. Driving north from Ivalo and Inari, Asko and I shared a spectacular view of the Finnish Tundra. Asko introduced me to Arja from Utsjoki. Back in Rovaniemi where Asko's hospital school is, I learned how the Finnish education system runs a web of school hospitals to cover all areas of the country. I was able to take over a small class of around eight students most of them under a special hospital's or physician's care. Again, education services and quality, similar to any other school in Finland, is provided for all children including the ones under medical attention.

Kirsti Savikko, director of a charming elementary school in Turku, not only organized an agenda of visits to several schools in the city, but also showed me a leadership style where decisions are shared and taken with the school teachers. She managed to get the permission from the local education authorities for me to stay in an apartment for visiting teachers in the compounds of an upper secondary school during my 2009 visit to this beautiful and historic city, the former capital of Finland.

Mika Tuononen is a kind and knowledgeable expert in the Office of Statistics of Finland. Mika not only granted me two extensive interviews in two different visits, but guided me and helped me to get statistical information of diverse nature on education, schools and teachers. I learned about the best ways to get information about Finnish education on the Office's site and through Internet. With his introduction, I was able to talk to two more experts who shared important time series datasets about schools and the economic wellbeing of Finland from the early 1900s.

Thanks also to Tanja Talvensalo, a teacher and preschool and primary education expert who shared with me knowledge of preschool class connection between pupils and their teachers. I was impressed by her point of view of teaching as learning, and the way Finnish preschool teachers understand the value of early education, more in terms of developing social and emotional skills than on the acquisition of formal cognitive knowledge as many schools or education systems around the world insist on doing.

Thanks to Marjut Tenkanen, the principal and Tilly Kajestski a special education teacher and teacher of English who opened me the doors of their magnificent, beautiful and recently built school Hösmärinpuisto Koulu. This is a school for initial, preschool and first and second grades of primary education children. It is an education palace for very young pupils. I have not seen such a beautiful school and display of facilities for the education of such young children in all my visits to schools for young children around the world. Here, I learned the value that Finnish adults place on the education of Finnish small children. Everything, from the teachers' teachings to the premises, the architectural design, the furniture, the open spaces, the naturally lighted hallways and classrooms, and the huge interior patio, are all thought for the little ones, creating a wonderful learning environment or learning cocoon.

Tuomo Lähdeniemi is a business consultant with a special interest in educational authorities and schools. He has a deep knowledge of culture, business, and schools. He knows everyone and knows how to connect the tools of information technology to the daily work of teachers and principals. Kirsty, Tuomo, and Maarit have done an appreciable circle of friendship that has helped me to know the secrets of the beautiful Finnish culture. My gratitude also to Jaana Puranen, Ulla Muraja, and her husband Asko Muralla, who got me interviews in their schools and welcomed me to their wonderful households in Kuusamo and Hetta.

Ms. Ulla Väistö and Ms. Anne Lammila, former and current ambassadors of Finland in Mexico have been very supportive of my research, not only by helping me with contacts, and a prologue written by the former ambassador to a previous publication, but also by promoting my work in Mexico and other Spanish speaking countries.

My thanks also to all directors and teachers, experts, and education professionals in Finland who have participated in interviews or responded to my constant doubts about their schools and education system. Among them, my gratitude to Riitta Parviainen, Pekka Kupari, Jukka Kuittinen, Ismo Falck, Raili Pajari, Jannu Kononen, Harry Reinikainen, Raimo Poutiainen, Jukka Tanska, Anja-Liisa Alanko, Kari Pitkänen, Lasse Keisalo, Jorma Kauppinen, Raimo Vuorinen, Pirjo Linnakylä, Heidi Kohi, Jorma Lempinen, Tiina Nevanpää, Jukka Alava, Ari Huovinen, Reijo Laukkanen, Raimo Nurminen, Olli Savela, Heikki K. Lyytinen, Hannu Simola, Helena Rasku-Puttonen, Taina Lehtonen, Pekka Luoma, Ilkka Roininen, Ulla Hynönen, Sari Keinonen, Jukka Husu, Bertel Wahlström, Hannele Mustonen, Eeva Huittinen, Esa Pasma, Pekka Luoma, Päivi Ristolainen-Husu, Leena Tuuri, Hely Parkkinen, Risto Väyrynen, Meri Numio, Ritta-Maija, Liisa Pöykkö, Jyri Piironen, Pia Aaltonen, Kuösti Kurtakko, Pasi Sahlberg, Pentti Moilanen, Ilpo Tervonen, Irja-Kaisa

Lakkala, Jari Ikola, Jyrki Huusko, Päivi Hakala, Pirkaa Aalto, Tarmo Laithen, Vesa Valkila, Taina Kravik, Hannu Naumanen, Marjut Vaattovaara, Juha Kantola, Seija Nykänen, Rantsu Juha, Sirpa Valén, and Ari Pokka.

I have not included all the teachers, principals, students, or experts I have interviewed in my seven visits to Finland; if I did the list would be much longer. However, that is why I have dedicated this book to all the people I interviewed and met. My deep apologies if I missed a specific mention to persons that I should have named. My apologies in advance for involuntary misspellings of personal names and places.

My deep appreciation also go to Walter and Anita Roggeman from Flandes Belgium, who have sheltered me on my way to or from Finland to answer comparative questions between Flanders and Finland, with very different systems of education and teachers training programs and yet high students' performance in both countries. Walter, an experienced principal and education, has patiently answered numerous questions about education in Flanders.

I want to thank Dr. Mary Brabeck, Dean of the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development of the University of New York, who has opened the doors of her institution on several occasions, as a visitor researcher, to facilitate my research and drafting of two long manuscripts and articles. Professor Diane Ravitch from the same university has been an intellectual mentor in the search of answers in the field of education and comparative education.

A very special and crucial person and friend in this endeavor is Isobel S. McGregor, a retired Scottish inspector from the former HM Inspectorate of Education, today Education Scotland. She is now a consultant for the OECD, the Scottish government, and many others governments around the world. Isobel S. McGregor read the entire manuscript and helped me to clarify ideas and concepts in a comparative framework. From Isobel, and Scotland, I learned the policy shift from a pedagogy of teaching to a pedagogy of learning and the importance of formative and qualitative evaluation in the improvement of students' performance and teachers' work.

Elisa Guerra and Ms. Jana Schroeder helped me with translations and copy editing of previous versions of the final manuscript. Last but not least, I want to thank, of course, Springer and more specifically my editor Bernadette Ohmer, and the peer reviewers for their comments and analysis of my work.

Prologue

Teachers perspectives on Finnish school education
The joy of discovery!

Visitors' questions tell you most about the special characteristics of schools in your own country." Eduardo Andere's first visit to Finland in March-April 2004 further confirmed this empirical notion I had adopted through numerous previous visitors. Coming from outside, Eduardo perceived things that people grown into the Finnish system can no longer see or would not regard as anything special. It was also typical of him that after the school visits and interviews he soon had twice as many new questions.

Since that first meeting, we have had several opportunities to deepen our mutual understanding of Finnish schools and schools in other parts of the world. Our many discussions while admiring the lakefront scenery at my family's summer place, at the kitchen table with good food, during car trips to schools, and amidst the chaos in my office have offered me best possible lessons about the characteristics of different education systems and the unique features of Finnish schools. Eduardo has always been characterized by his openness and frankness to see and experience the daily life in schools just as it is, without prejudice and strong personal preconceptions, which have guided the perceptions and conclusions of many other visitors. This frankness and realism of his is also bound to get across to the readers of this book.

It is not easy to genuinely accompany with teachers and students in their daily life at school and at the same time monitor it as an unbiased external observer. It is possible, but requires from the researcher a lot of practice and experience, and also well-developed social competencies and advanced interaction skills. The author of this book has got all these. The advantage of the book is that as an outsider, the author is not carrying with him all that personal and historical experience that often prevents a native author to recognize the particular and critical features of his or her own system. On the other hand, because of his outstanding and long research work in schools, he is experienced enough to deeply understand and analyze the pedagogical culture and practices of the Finnish schools as an insider.

There are hardly many educational researchers in the world who have visited and obtained data from as many schools, or familiarized themselves personally with as many education systems as Eduardo Andere has done. His observations and con-

clusions have therefore a particularly sound and reliable basis when it comes to comparison of the functioning of different schools and cultural differences across education systems. Yet, he is not snowed under with his extensive data nor makes the mistake of drawing overly generalized conclusions from the data. Every school, teacher, and student is unique, but also communicates something relevant about their operation environment and the cultural background of their school system.

I am fascinated with Eduardo Andere's approach and efforts to develop a description of Finnish education, founding it on authentic comments. On the other hand, he applies numeric data diversely in order to place the Finnish education system within an international frame. In doing so, he succeeds in analyzing a national system simultaneously as an external observer and as an empathetic companion setting himself into teachers' daily life. The comments by students, teachers, administrators, and researchers are authentic and leave interpretations mainly for the reader to make. On the other hand, the author Eduardo Andere has carefully selected from his data such comments that reflect the most essential features of Finnish education.

The author does not underline the special characteristics of Finnish schools, but the selected texts indicate the particular focus of his attention. In fact, his choices are very revealing. They give the reader a strong personal view on factors that explain the good results of Finnish schools, even if the text is not pointing at them expressly. This type of presenting research results is very demanding. It was enabled only owing to the author's extensive personal familiarization with different countries and their school activities. His description of Finnish schools is credible and generalizable to the whole school system even when the discussion is taking place at the level of individual schools and the views of their teachers'.

For a nonnative speaker, Eduardo Andere's text is captivating due to its fluency and readability. Although being easy to read, the book does call for the reader to concentrate and take genuine interest so as to gain a deeper understanding about the functioning of Finnish schools. The author carefully avoids giving too ready answers to questions, which involve complex backgrounds and are bound to Finnish societal structures, history, and relationship to nature. This leaves the joy of discovery to the reader and offers an experience of gaining a deeper understanding. School can be developed into a better place for children and youth, but succeeding in this calls for a clear vision of the purpose of schooling, plenty of hard work, and above all, striving for genuine interaction with the students for their own good and for their better future.

February 2013
Jyväskylä

Jouni Välijärvi

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Setting the Stage

Finland is a remarkable country! And it has become the benchmark for good quality in school education in the twenty-first century. For some years now, prestigious professors and researchers from around the world have consistently used Finland as an example of high quality, high equity, and high efficiency in basic education. Diane Ravitch, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Andy Hargreaves from the USA have visited and praised Finland as an example of quality education. Hannele Niemi, Pasi Salhberg, and Jouni Valijärvi, among many others from Finland, have produced papers and books that testify to this success story and explain some of the reasons behind it. Organizations such McKinsey & Company and Pearson have produced school reports that highlight the high performance and high efficiency of Finland as a strong model for school education in the twenty-first century. Numberless op-ed columns as well as investigative newspaper reports from around the world also point to Finland as a success story.

In late 2001 when results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000 test were published, Finland surprised the world with what Professor Andy Hargreaves from Boston College described as an unexpected success. Little known to the outside world prior to that time, Finland's education system had shown its muscle in all three of the main areas tested: reading, mathematics, and science.

In 2003, 2006, and 2009, Finland continued to achieve very high results in the PISA tests, topping the list of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries and wrestling a tie with or even surpassing Asian tigers such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, and, later on, Singapore, which has shown consistently high results in international tests both in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and now in PISA. Not only is it the case that Finland's 15–16-year-olds perform at a high and at equal levels but this also appears to happen with apparently little student effort (in terms of time spent in studying as perceived by students), only moderate expenditures, and one less year of formal schooling than in most other countries around the world.

Schools in Finland are inviting, attractive, well organized, very tidy, unassuming, and unpretentious from the viewpoint of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and other facilities such as fancy laboratories' highly technical scientific equipment like electron microscope or astronomical observatories that one may find in schools in Singapore, South Korea, or England, for instance. For decades, the main teaching device used by teachers has been—and continues to be—an overhead projector, although a more modern and versatile version is now a digital camera device attached to a light-emitting diode (LED) projector or white board system. Furthermore, teachers' salaries in Finland are not higher than those in other countries. Teachers and principals in countries like South Korea, Luxembourg, and Switzerland receive much higher salaries.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Finland has attracted a lot of attention. Hundreds and even thousands of visitors flock to Finnish schools and the modern offices of the Finnish National Board of Education Opetushallitus (OPH) in search of answers to explain the high outcomes with only modest inputs. Finland is also exporting school education services to the world. Other countries trying to mimic this amazing success story have borrowed teachers, curriculum, books, and materials. And even other schools around the world portray in their brochures, displays, or promotion materials the use of an educational Finnish model.

And interest in Finland keeps growing, as countries from around the world are turning to school education and education policies to overcome the perceived challenges of a perceived unstoppable globalization and to service the needs for a different kind of citizenship: more knowledge based, ecologically driven, and multi-culturally aware.

A Bit of History

In 1870, Finland's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was equivalent to a third of the UK's per capita GDP,¹ two-thirds of Sweden's, and less than half of this sum for the USA. In 1970, these proportions had increased to 85, 75, and 63 %, and in 2005, 94, 96 and 74 %, respectively.²

Finland was not exactly a very poor country a century ago, although there are accounts of severe poverty crises during the seventeenth century and three historic famines in the 1690s, 1830s, and 1860s (Kirby 2006, pp. 42, 47–49, 112).

¹ Which countries in the twenty-first century have a per capita GDP similar to a third of the UK's? The UK's GDP in 2005 was US\$ 32,690, using the purchasing power parity method (World Bank Development Indicators 2007, pp. 14–16). Countries in 2005 with a third of that can illustrate Finland's relative situation to the UK in 1870. Some of these are Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Mexico, the Russian Federation, and Uruguay. None of these countries are exactly very poor if we compare them to the world's poorest countries. And indeed Finland was not very poor in 1870.

² Statistics Finland 2008. Historical series of national accounts, based on: Riitta Hjerpe, *The Finnish Economy 1860–1985, Growth and Structural Change*. Bank of Finland Publications, Studies on Finland's Economic Growth XIII, Helsinki, 1989.

Interviewing a group of four people, one principal (a historian himself) and three assistant principals, in a training school for teachers (please refer to section “Jyväskylä’s Schools” in Chap. 5), I asked them: “How poor was Finland in reality?” Their answer:

We have never been really very poor. We were poor about 80 or 90 years ago. But we were no longer poor by the 1960s and 1970s, although the process was very gradual given the heavy economic load imposed by war debts with the Russians after WWII. It was a heavy load paid in kind with metal, cellulose and forest products. If we remember correctly, the debt would have amounted to 300 million dollars in gold.

Finland has not always been egalitarian, nor has it been the welfare society we know today. In the centuries and decades prior to its independence in 1917, society was divided. On one side, there were elitist Swedish families and high-society Finnish families close to the circles of those governing the country, some of whom were Swedish and others Russian. And on the other side, rural families dealt with harsh blows caused by corruption and poverty (Kirby 2006, pp. 51, 113).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Finland was—as many countries find themselves today—a developing country. It is often said that Finland entered the industrialization process late. Until very recently, it could be characterized as a primarily rural society (Aho et al. 2006, p. 26) and a “country dominated by agriculture” (Simola 2002, p. 209). Thus, Finland appears to fall under the category of “late industrialization” (OECD 1982, p. 12). When it did become industrialized, Finland accelerated its development through foreign loans. Its growth contrasts dramatically with the Latin American version of “late industrialization,” with development in poor, neocolonized countries in the periphery limited by their dependent relationships with wealthy, imperialist, and powerful countries in the center.

In any case, prior to the Industrial Revolution, there were countless episodes of poverty, suffering, and profound crisis for many countries around the world. Finland was not an exception. There were times when it escaped human tragedies and other times when it was harshly impacted. In the medieval times, Finland “seems to have been less affected by the great demographic and agricultural crises of much of the rest of Europe” (Kirby 2006, p. 24), and somehow, it escaped the Black Death (Kirby 2006, p. 24) that “killed one-quarter of Europe’s population between 1346 and 1352” (Diamond 1999, p. 202). However, Finland suffered a devastating famine that killed a fourth of its population between 1695 and 1697 (Kirby 2006, pp. 42, 47) and then two more famines in the mid-nineteenth century (Kirby 2006, pp. 47, 112).

Whether it was poverty, epidemics, famine, invasions, or suffering that placed Finland at an initial disadvantage in relation to other more developed countries of the time, it has overcome all these challenges. Today, Finland stands out in the world as a strong and egalitarian welfare society, with high standards of living and a transparent good government; besides that, it is a competitive, highly educated country. In short, Finland is viewed as a success story (Hargreaves 2008; Hargreaves et al. 2007; Julin 2006, p. 1).

Now then, why is Finland’s success epitomized in its education? In reality, there are many reasons, with no single factor prevailing (Pehkonen 2008, p. 54).

A number of researchers have suggested different factors associated with the high performance of Finnish students, and they can be clustered in four categories: culture, equity, education system, and teachers. A fifth possibility might be the eclectic approach, based on a complex web of factors (Linnakylä et al. 2010) that work in an interdependent and sometimes mysterious way for the benefit of learning and education. This is quite probably the best explanation. Nevertheless, we will look at each of the four categories.

Culture

Relevant expressions of culture in Finland begin with a positive attitude toward education, which has been viewed as an important resource for this small country throughout its entire history (Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen 2006, p. 7). Education and teaching are highly valued by society (Ministry of Education 2002, p. 6; Välijäri 2008, p. 1), and there is strong political consensus on education policy (Ministry of Education 2008, p. 2). All of this culminates in society's appreciation (Kansanen 2003, p. 87) and trust (Aho et al. 2006, p. 132) in teachers and the teaching profession.

Based on these impressions, a likely hypothesis would be that the high social value placed on it is behind the success of Finnish education. However, Finland is not the only country with this high appreciation of education. In fact, it would be very difficult to find a nation that does not value education, at least at the rhetorical level, with the same or an even higher level of appreciation. We need only remember the famous speech by Tony Blair: "education, education, education."³ Furthermore, cultural support or awareness is difficult to measure.

If we look at the hard numbers, such as expenditures, literacy results, and enrollment rates, we find Finland to be more or less on a par with other countries. Finland is not the nation with the highest educational expenditure per student as a share of the GDP or of total government spending.

And it would be impossible to argue that an education culture is more deeply rooted in Finland's history than in the history of other countries such as Russia, Sweden, France, Italy, England, and Spain.

However, without a doubt, culture is an important factor. Over the course of my interviews from 2004 to 2012, I found that students, teachers, principals, and experts frequently mentioned "culture" as the reason for Finland's education success: "People have been very interested in education since long ago"; "our parents saw education as the only way out of poverty"; "teachers are very respected in society"; "teachers, who were leaders in small villages and towns, had great influence in our history"; "even poor people had small bookshelves with books in their humble homes"; and "being able to read the Bible was a requirement for religious confirmation and marriage ceremonies as far back as the seventeenth century."

³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6564933.stm> (July 26, 2012).

Finland's history seems to support all these claims, but only up to a certain point. For example, there are stories of Finnish schools in the fourteenth century and of students who traveled abroad (particularly to Germany) to visit universities (Kirby 2006, p. 25), but "the Finnish periphery could not compete with richer areas of Europe in the output of verse or chronicles, not even with the Swedish heartland, where a vernacular literature was being created. 'Where Sweden was poor, Finland was poorer,' concludes Eric Christiansen, 'in educated men, in books, churches, in towns, in arts, in school'; and this disparity was to endure, colouring the relationship of the two halves of the kingdom and leaving a complex legacy of snobbish superiority on the one side, and resentful feelings of inferiority on the other" (Kirby 2006, p. 25).

If there was a strong impulse toward education in Finland, it seems to have been even stronger in Sweden and Germany, and cities like Rome, Paris, and Prague (Kirby 2006, pp. 25–26), with societies more culturally oriented and better educated than the Finnish society.

Education in Finland, in comparison with other nations, began late in its history. It started with the first alphabet, written as a book by Mikael Agricola in 1543, followed 100 years later by Catechism, promoted by Bishop Johan Gezelius, "the Elder" (Kirby 2006, p. 40):

Visitation records show disappointingly low levels of literacy, even in southwest Finland, and priests in charge of confirmation classes continued to rely on learning by heart rather than from the book. Slow, dogged persistence, aided by the stipulation of the 1686 Church Law that confirmation classes be held regularly at suitable locations around the parish, began to yield results, as parishes gradually got rid of their illiterate clerks and even began building special school rooms in which the clerk could teach the basics of reading and writing to the local children. (Kirby 2006, pp. 40–41)

Genuine transformation of education in Finland would not take place for centuries. The first school revolution occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, with the first elementary school (Simola 2002, p. 209) and the first Finnish-speaking secondary schools. The second half of the nineteenth century could be characterized as the "Enlightenment" of Finnish education, under the influence of two great thinkers and visionaries: Johan Vilhelm Snellman, philosopher, senator, and school principal (Kirby 2006, pp. 100 and 102), and the famous Reverend Uno Cygnaeus, frequently referred to as the father of compulsory education in Finland.⁴

The ideas and actions of the Finnish founding fathers, plus a reduction in the Church's power between 1865 and 1869, in both politics and education (Kirby 2006, p. 115), propelled a nationalist movement called "Fennomani" in favor of everything "Finnish" with a *rally* for education.

Four important events for education took place between 1850 and 1870, and all of them in a small village in the center of Finland: Jyväskylä. There, in 1858,⁵ the first Finnish-language lower secondary school was established. Also, the first

⁴ Professor Hannu Simola identifies Cygnaeus as the "founding father" (2002, p. 209).

⁵ <http://www.peda.net/veraja/jklukiokoulutus/lyseonlukio/esittely/english> (July 30, 2012).

secondary school for girls was established.⁶ In this village, Cygnaeus wrote both the first plan for the development of Finnish elementary education and an outline of teacher education at a normal school or teacher education college.

Cygnaeus visited education systems in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, and these visits served as inspiration for his education plan and ideas.⁷

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were scattered and isolated efforts to establish primary schools that would serve the population living in poverty in Finland (Ikonen 2004, p. 4), but these attempts were never implemented thoroughly. Formal efforts were conducted under the auspices of the Church, and on some occasions, more informally under parents' supervision (Ikonen 2004, p. 6). Results were meager (Ikonen 2004, p. 4), and this is why it is hard to determine when and where the first Finnish-speaking elementary school was established.

There are even stories of rural people opposing their children's education (Simola 2002, p. 209). Schools and compulsory education in Finland came late (Simola 2002, p. 29), and when they did appear, there is evidence that Finland borrowed the pedagogical principles developed by other education systems with more history and institutional experience (Kansanen 2003, p. 86). Thus, parallel to its "late industrialization," we can say that Finland also experienced "late school education."

Based on the above, the hypothesis that proposes a culture in favor of education as the factor behind Finland's education success is difficult to sustain as the only, key or main factor.

There is, however, an aspect of culture and the market conditions of the time that deserves more attention from researchers. This factor is suggested by a review of education policy conducted by the OECD in 1982 and summarized here:

Some OECD countries seem to have difficulty in attracting teachers to remote and sparsely populated regions. This is not the case in Finland where many teachers choose to be employed in small schools... School officials in Helsinki informed us that the high cost of housing in the metropolis coupled with disciplinary problems in some inner-city schools could also persuade teachers to prefer small schools in rural and depopulated areas. From our perspective, we were impressed by the argument that many teachers prefer, simply, the quality of life in the countryside rather than cities. (OECD 1982, p. 31)

This familiarity with rural culture and this love of life in the countryside, plus an early, active equalization of education and social policy through regional development, with emphasis on less-developed regions (OECD 1982, p. 19), together with the "popular momentum" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to improve education for disadvantaged social classes (Ikonen 2004, p. 3), all help to explain Finland's education development and the small variance in results among its schools. Both the municipal and national government have worked together for many years not only to secure a balance in goal and processes but also in tandem to secure quality and equality. How? Local authorities provide high-quality education,

⁶ Jyväskylä University Museum, Uno Cygnaeus, <http://www.jyu.fi/tdk/museo/unoe.html> (July 30, 2012).

⁷ Jyväskylä University Museum, Uno Cygnaeus, <http://www.jyu.fi/tdk/museo/unoe.html> (July 30, 2012).

and the national government balances any disadvantages in financial resources with a policy of positive discrimination through legislation, curriculum, funding, and teacher education.⁸

Equity

Equity in education and in Finnish society is often regarded as the factor behind school success. I agree that it is certainly a relevant factor. However, equity must be considered together with other factors.

Despite the importance of the public policy mix in favor of equity in Finland, there are other countries (e.g., the other Nordic countries) that have maintained goals, policies, and habits amicable to equity for many years. Furthermore, countries like Australia, New Zealand, Flanders, England, Scotland, South Korea, Singapore, and Canada have fairly equal societies and also have the least designed and implemented educational policies for equity. Countries such as the USA, Chile, and Mexico have designed and implemented equality policies but rest on unequal or very unequal societies. Performance of the former is higher than the latter, but not as high and consistent as in Finland. Performance between the latter and Finland is even broader. Therefore, it appears to be that equity in a society is more related to performance than public policies targeting inequality. The conclusion seems to be that equity must be accompanied by other factors in order to trigger quality. At the same time, seeking quality without first ensuring equity is probably pointless.

Finland has demonstrated high and equitable educational performance outcomes across four rounds of PISA, specifically 2000–2002, 2003, 2006, and 2009–2010. However, according to PISA, other countries also have high levels of education equity, namely Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, South Korea, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey (see, for instance, OECD 2007b, pp. 96, 98–99, 100, 102–104, 106–107). And although Finland does not always exhibit the highest levels of equity (defined as the lowest total variance in student performance as a percentage of the OECD's mean variance performance), it is the only country that remains consistently below the 90% mark in science, mathematics, and reading. Still, this argument certainly stops short of granting Finland a monopoly on equity, since other countries often show variance levels that are similar to or lower than those for Finland.

Equity is accomplished in Nordic countries through an aggressive policy for supporting children and their parents. One of these policies is maternity leave. In Finland, mothers may enjoy up to 43 weeks of maternity leave (Halinen 2008, p 3), while receiving approximately two-thirds of their salary. This leave may be combined with vacation time and, in practice, may extend to a full year. Theoretically, mothers have the right to extend their leave from work for two additional years. This rarely happens, however, since the monthly salary reductions are substantially

⁸ Professor Jouni Välijärvi comments about the balance of equity and quality of education despite initial financial disadvantages among municipalities.

higher than those for the first year of leave. Moreover, maternity leave may be shared with the father with paternity leave.

There is another aspect of educational equity within the framework of opportunities to learn that adds to the equal society of Finland, i.e., teachers' training and teachers' quality in the classroom. Everywhere in Finland, the high quality of teachers is very homogeneous. However, education in other countries, such as England, Germany, France, and New Zealand, with a very strong available teachers' force does not show the same consistence as Finland in high performance and low variance. Therefore, it also seems to be that the high quality and availability of teachers everywhere in an education system has to be coupled with other factors to have a more precise and complete story of success.

But what does the literature say about the influence of these equity and family support policies with regard to education? In a study of the influence of these policies on children's educational performance, Jun Xu (2008) provides further evidence to reinforce the findings of decades of educational research, specifically a strong correlation between family background and educational performance. However, the negative effects of a poor family status within a social democratic welfare state—which acts as a social equalizer—are less drastic. According to Jun Xu's study, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden can be described as social democracies with strong social welfare and social security systems. Therefore, it appears to be that social welfare in Finland, although relevant to the study of associated factors, cannot be offered as the key element of a successful school education.

Education System

Numerous factors may be clustered under this category: a comprehensive school education system, centralization, decentralization, educational planning, leadership, devolution of power and power sharing, curriculum (backed by learning theories and pedagogies), age of school entry, spending, innovation policies, ICTs, and education policies, to mention some of them. Many of the same experts who argue in favor of culture and equity also highlight Finland's education system as a key factor in its success.

If the list of factors related to a country's education system is seemingly endless, how can we define the specific reason that makes students "smart" or "successful" in education? Could it be the age of school entry? Or is it the curriculum? Is it the scheme to support children falling behind or with special needs? Is it the absence of national census-based assessments, or is it the matriculation exam for high school students? Could it be the institutional and education agencies? Could it be the free, but not mandatory, 1 year of preschool education? Or is it the linking of educational and social services for initial education and child care for children under the age of six? Is it the curriculum and Freinet-inspired education philosophies and collaborative constructivism? Could it be the devolution of decision making and financial

power to municipal authorities and/or the coordination or collaboration between local and national authorities? Or is it the decision that major changes in education policy be implemented from the periphery and into the metropolitan areas? In the end, we will perhaps never be able to establish the one and only factor or the one and only mix of system factors that explain consistent and equitable success.

To make matters worse, not everything named the same way, such as autonomy, decentralization, curriculum, or devolution of power, has the same meaning as we travel from one system to another or from one context to another. Education systems may be similar in the names, slogans, or labels used, but not in the essence or meaning of their education policies (Andere 2008); without the proper policy translation, comparing system factors across countries can be more misleading than helpful. Therefore, proposing that the “education system” is the key variable to explaining variance in school performance is tantamount to saying that many factors are behind school performance. And that brings us back to the hypothesis that a complex, interdependent network of factors working in a fine-tuned but indefinable manner is the best explanation for educational success. We might call this an ecological theory of school performance.

Teachers

When policy makers and observers debate the importance of teachers, the circularity of the arguments used is always surprising. Of course, we want good teachers, good schools, and good education systems. Thus, stating “the quality of teachers is crucial” is the same as claiming “good teachers are better than bad teachers.” We do not need exhaustive studies or detailed educational models to conclude that the students of any education system will be better off with good teachers than with bad teachers. Logic and ethics are sufficient. But, what makes a good teacher? That is the question!

In Chap. 7 (Exhibit 1), I offer a Finnish taxonomy of good teachers and good teaching. There we see how complicated this can be.

Consider some examples. A good teacher might be someone with a strong academic background based on theoretical and research tools, as in the Finnish case; but a good teacher might also be a person with strong practical skills, as in the case of teachers in Flanders. A good teacher might be someone with skills in maintaining a disciplined class, like the Asian or Mexican models; or with techniques or skills for changing teaching methods every 10 min, as in the Finnish model; or with skills for a flexible, stress-free education, as in the Norwegian model. Then again, a good teacher might be someone who knows how to motivate and challenge his/her students; or someone who knows his/her subject area and knows how to engage his/her students; or someone who communicates and connects with his/her pupils while maintaining cordial relationships with colleagues and parents. The list is endless.

We simply do not precisely know what factor or set of factors is the most important or what kind of academic training is the most useful.⁹

In the end, the best teacher education program or the most appropriate set of skills depends on many factors, sometimes beyond the reach of education policies and teacher training. The best teacher and the best training will depend on the ever-changing interaction with students, other teachers, and parents, with school leadership and with the social or national goals of education in each nation or system.

Some students arrive at school with enough intrinsic motivation, and a challenging teacher may be the best option in this case. However, for a different class, the best teacher is the one that makes use of learning strategies to spark motivation, effort, and interest, i.e., emotional or no cognitive abilities. Furthermore, if students exhibit behavior problems, a good teacher may be someone with experience in special education and with a social support network that includes colleagues, counselors, psychologists, and experts both within and beyond the school. Under other circumstances, a good teacher may be someone who can handle discipline challenges.

This same line of thinking could be applied to education systems. What is a good education system? Is more centralization better than decentralization? Is more autonomy for schools, principals, and teachers better than less autonomy? Again, there is no valid, ubiquitous response for all cases. And there is no purely centralized or decentralized education system or purely autonomous or dependent school. Most of the systems of education show multifaceted aspects of centralization and decentralization policies, or autonomy or dependent schools, at the same time.

There are centralized systems that work well and with high efficiency, such as those in Singapore and Ireland, while others are too centralized, like the French system, with lower results, and the Mexican system, with even lower performance. Some decentralized systems work very well, as in Canada, Australia, and Switzerland. However, the results from decentralized systems are not as high, for example, in Germany, and there are other decentralized systems with average or very low results, as in the USA and Chile, respectively. If we look at the education systems in different countries, we find that the systems in Finland, South Korea, and Hong Kong have nothing in common, but their performance is very high. New Zealand has centralized and decentralized features simultaneously, and its performance is very high. Therefore, it seems clear that the system per se is not the answer either.

We find the same phenomenon when we compare schools. Their success depends on their history, context, their social, cultural, and intellectual capital, power relations, and institutions.

⁹ A recent report on teacher-training programs and different paths to the teaching profession in the USA found that there is no evidence as to “which program elements or accountability mechanisms are most effective [to prepare teachers or produce] effective teachers” (National Research Council 2010, p. 3). According to researchers from this project, much more research is needed to elucidate the best scheme for attracting and educating teachers. The USA provides a good example for comparing alternate routes, because there are hundreds of teacher training programs. This contrasts sharply with the scheme in Finland, where we find practically a single access path for teaching, as discussed in Chap. 3.

Thus, in comparative education, we must be careful when comparing and transferring lessons. We can apply a handy metaphor borrowed from carpentry to all these cases: What technique (for teaching) or tools (for carpentry) does one use? It “depends on the task at hand and the materials one is working with” (Bransford et al. 2000, p. 22).

Where Do We Stand?

We are left with what I would define as an ecological view of education. We do not really understand the intricacies, interdependencies, and interactions that take place in education. If this is difficult to establish at the subnational and national levels, it is even harder in the international arena. In this case, we can also apply a comparison from Scott’s analysis (1998) regarding the attempts by governments at various stages of history to order human relationships or patterns of production under the criterion of efficiency, as he suggests from his study of the state management of forests and other large-scale projects. He maintains that due to the almost religious monitoring of the efficiency and simplification of state projects, the roots of production and productivity are destroyed. Applied to education, what this means is that education authorities, especially at the national level—as they move increasingly toward measurement, standardization, evaluation, and accountability—may hinder the development of what they are trying to achieve, i.e., education quality, creativity, innovation, and, in some cases, empowerment. Some authors have addressed the unintended negative effects of accountability reforms that may even increase educational inequality (Darling-Hammond 2004), contradict authentic learning and assessment (Casas 2003), and jeopardize the quality of curriculum teaching (Craig 2004). These concerns are based on the understanding that the only assessment that improves education is formative assessment (Black and William 1998a, 1998b).

There are no arguments based on sound theory on which to justify efficiency-oriented policies in education. By sheer argumentation and qualitative case analysis, we know that particular contexts and school policies and practices are relevant to achieving quality, but these contexts are directly connected in an intricate manner with values, resources, culture, and experiences, as well as the complex and unpredictable relationships, interactions, and expectations of all education and school agents. Thus, context-specific issues are the most relevant for understanding and explaining results. We cannot underestimate the power of contextual complexity in explaining the cognitive and affective outcomes of education and school life.

Therefore, an alternative hypothesis to explain Finland’s success is an ecological proposal, referring to the contextual and learning environments in which school education takes place.

Contexts are a product of their history. In Finland, there were two historic moments when education was given a definitive impulse. The events that took place at those times in history left the seeds for later development. The first impact was from the ideas and efforts of the founding fathers of education around the 1860s,

and, the second, from the vision of the early rulers of independent Finland in the second decade of the twentieth century—who ordered the expansion of schools and the placement of teachers in all towns, regions, and villages.

The Finnish people, like many other Protestant populations, were not illiterate in the days when “modern” schools arrived. Men and women had to prove they were able to read the Bible before marrying—a prevailing situation since the years of the European Reformation. What we can say is that Finland’s unique atmosphere is characterized by a simple lifestyle (Kirby 2006, p. 27), with extensive forests, cold and long winters, with a society rooted in agriculture, with a nobility obedient to the authority of the Swedish Crown (Kirby 2006, pp. 15–16), and with people’s deep love for nature, as evidenced by the rustic, hideaway cottages where modern Finns spend their weekends and holidays—and all of this assured that education developed as envisioned by the father founders of education in the 1860s and 1910s. Thus, the combination of history with a simple, bucolic lifestyle, sometimes archaic, sometimes obedient (Simola 2005), and sometimes based on trust, could be the bedrock of the fertile ground upon which Finnish success in education has developed.¹⁰

Learning environments, as will be explained later, do play an important role in Finnish school education. It is not only what the literature calls powerful learning environments in schools or classrooms for specific topics such as mathematics, technology, science, or reading. Social and cultural learning environments, much more difficult to measure and control, are the bedrock of a society with shared habits and values prone to education and more learning. This seems to be an important, yet less studied, area behind the Finnish school education success.

Contents

In the spring of 2012, I began a new project. It is, in a way, a spin-off from a 2010 book I published in Spanish. I decided to undertake this new version with updated and rewritten parts of the original Spanish version following the advice of a close friend and prestigious US professor of education and education history, Diane Ravitch, whose already well-established reputation skyrocketed with the publication of her latest books *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, and *The Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America’s Public Schools*, and the huge success of her education blog.

One of the elements I have added to this English version is the importance of cultural and school learning environments as I mentioned before. What I particularly want to emphasize is that no single factor can be identified as the key to education success, no matter how well written or well researched the argument appears to

¹⁰ This may merit further inquiry in an emerging field of research known as “ecopsychology,” which studies the relationship between nature and human well-being, including brain, mind, and learning <http://www.liebertpub.com/products/manuscript.aspx?pid=300> (May 12, 2010).

be. Success in education is determined through a cocktail of ingredients: history, culture, teachers, and policies, with a sprinkling of powerful learning environments. As with the real drinking cocktails, once the ingredients are mixed it is impossible to separate them.

Although I had already traveled as far north as you can go in Finland and Europe in search of good education and best school practices, I began my 2012 visit by returning to northern Finland, mimicking the successful school education reform of the 1970s—which began in the north and traveled south until reaching Helsinki several years later.

So, for the seventh time in 8 years, I traveled to Finland to meet Finnish *opettajat* (teachers) and *rehtorit* (headmasters), students and parents, experts, professionals, and authorities. My goal in this book is to present school education in Finland through the minds and thoughts of these stakeholders. In this sense, this book is different from others that are mainly devoted to the policies and the workings of the system of education. Of course, there are many references to the most important policies and institutions, but they are blended with the views and explanations of teachers, principals, and experts.

Chapter 2 deals with Finland's success. It contains a bouquet of stories and theories behind education success. The chapter details the school education story of Finland; it uses outcomes mainly from PISA to set Finland as the world's top school performer. In the narrowest hallways of research with all their scientific pretensions, it is important to mention that not even the Finnish agree on the reasons for their success, but many factors can be cited as influential for success. The chapter then describes very briefly the education system, since many publications have done that before. Instead of going to the more academic review of the literature about Finnish success as was done in Chap. 1, this chapter delves into more specific and often-cited reasons behind success, mainly from the point of view of governmental experts and some principals. Among those topics, the chapter describes the following: curriculum, age of entrance to schools, comprehensive education, open school opportunities, reading and libraries, free school lunch, educational and pedagogical leadership, and welfare state and fairness. This chapter closes with a vision of society and education in light of economic, political, and social changes in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Chapter 3 deals with teachers considered by many as one or the main factor of success in school education: Attraction to the teaching profession, training and characteristics of teachers' colleges, their special role in Finnish history, and the profession's popularity, salaries, motivation, and collaboration are some of the factors studied in relation to the high and homogeneous student performance. Finland has a remarkable teachers' force. But even here comparative analysis brings more factors into the equation for the students' impressive success albeit moderate inputs. The Finnish teacher-training program is then compared to other teacher-training programs from other countries.

Chapter 4 addresses mainly the issue of education assessment and evaluation. In a world swayed by a frenzied trend toward measurements, assessments, and accountability, the Finnish have maintained their distance from national, census-based