



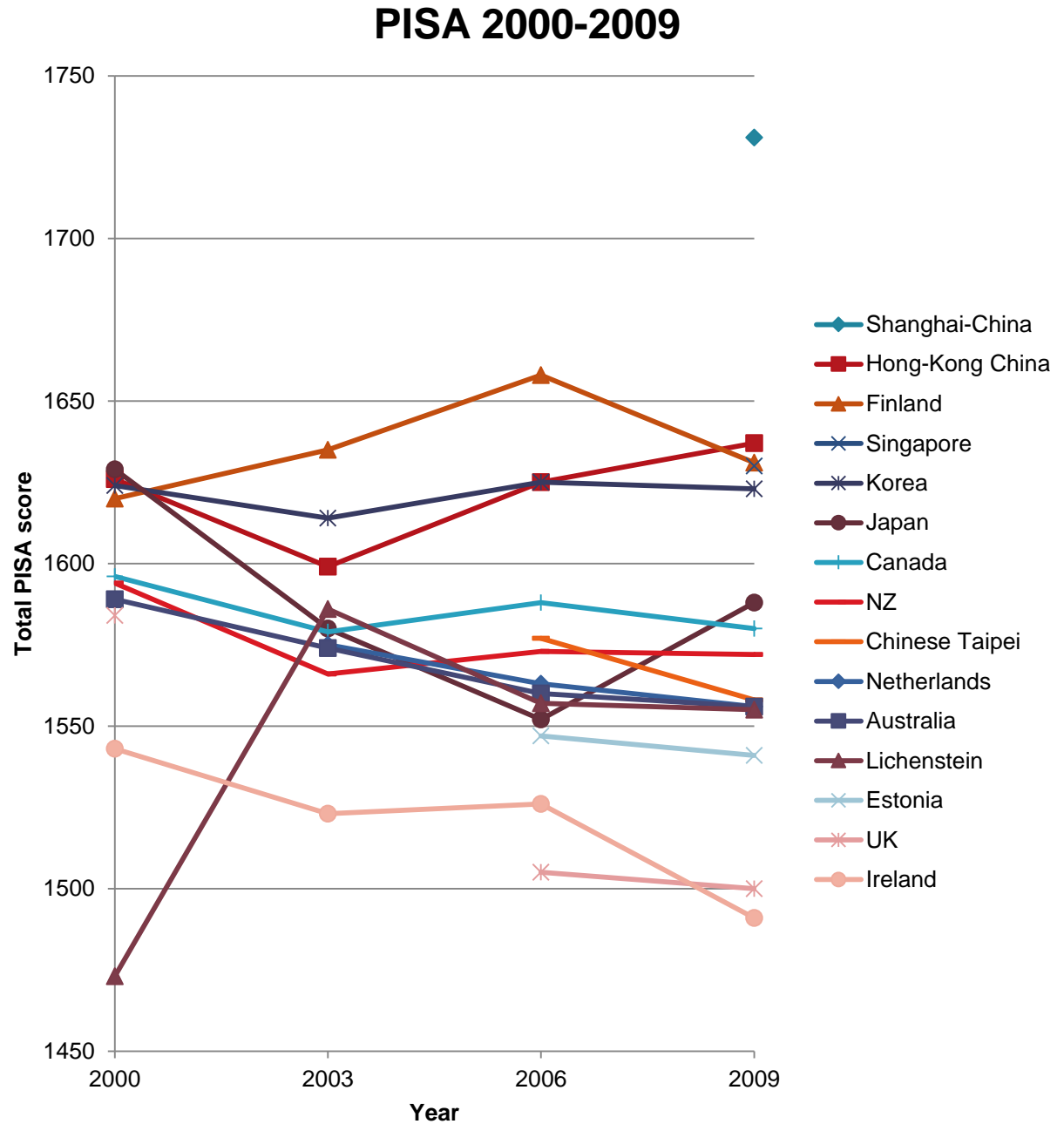
International Education Comparisons - Finland

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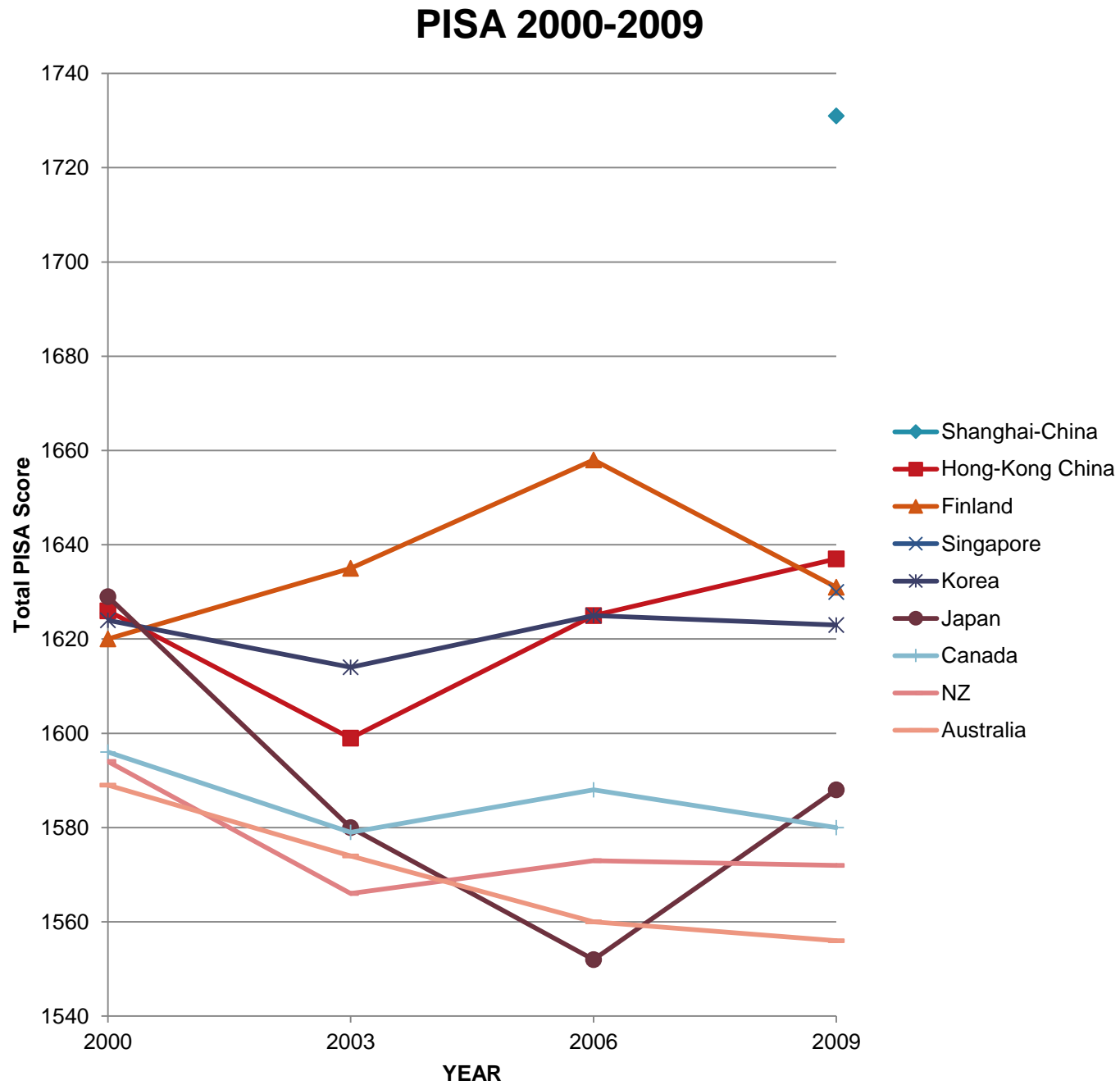
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PISA Results 2000-2009



PISA Results 2000- 2009



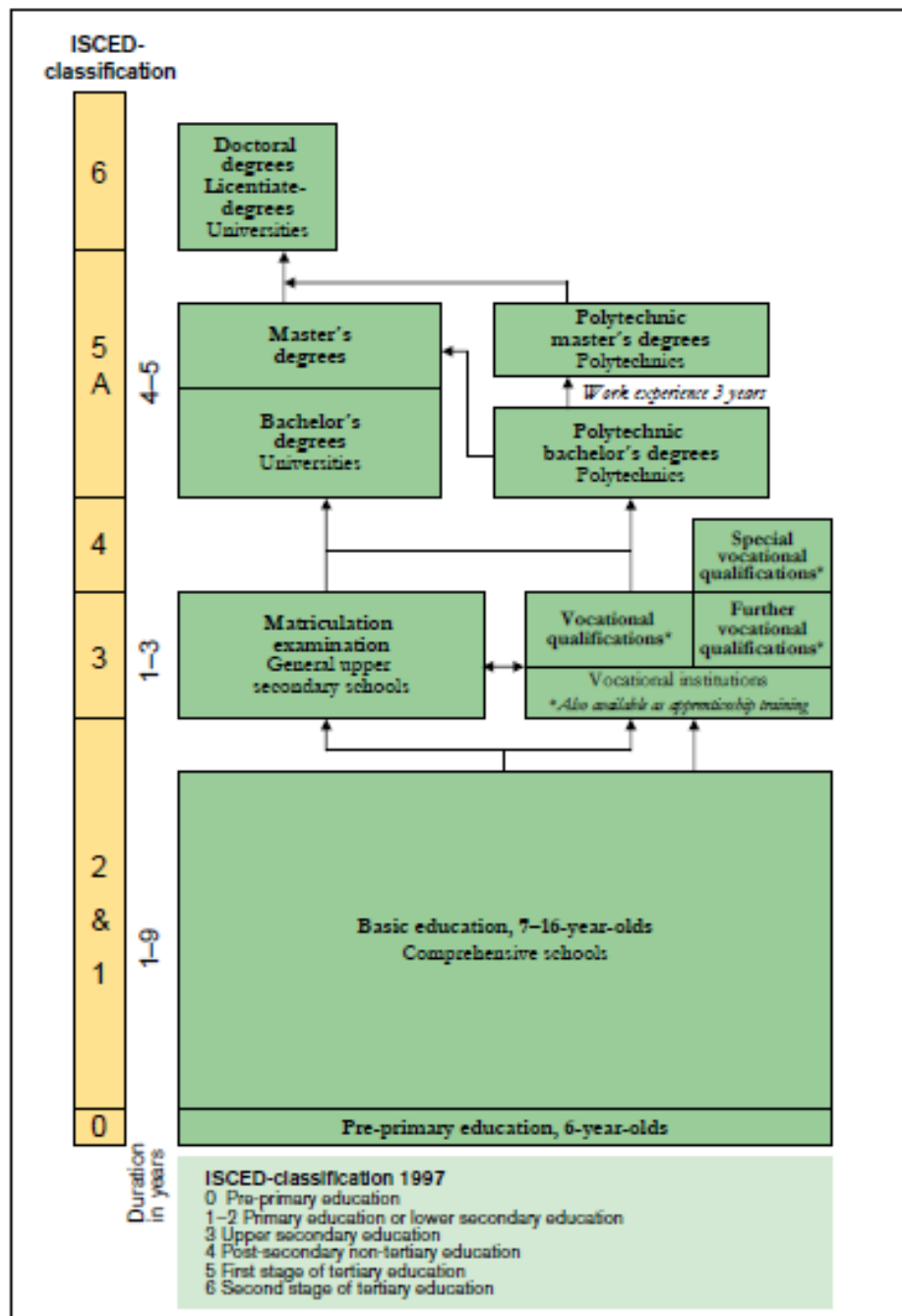
Why Finland?

- One of the consistently highest scoring PISA countries
- Western culture – likely easier transfer of educational practices to Western countries than from Asian cultures

Why Finland? #2

- High performance with average investment
- High results with minimal instructional time
- Small class sizes
- Teachers' salaries close to/below OECD averages

Education Structure



Curriculum

- **Studies in mother tongues and the second national language**
- **Mother tongue and literature**
- **Second national language**
- **Foreign languages**
- **Mathematics**
- **Environmental and natural sciences**
- **Biology and geography**
- **Physics and chemistry**
- **Health education**
- **Religion**
- **Ethics**
- **History**
- **Social studies**
- **Music**
- **Visual arts**
- **Crafts**
- **Physical education**
- **Home economics**
- **Optional subjects**

Why is Finland doing so well?

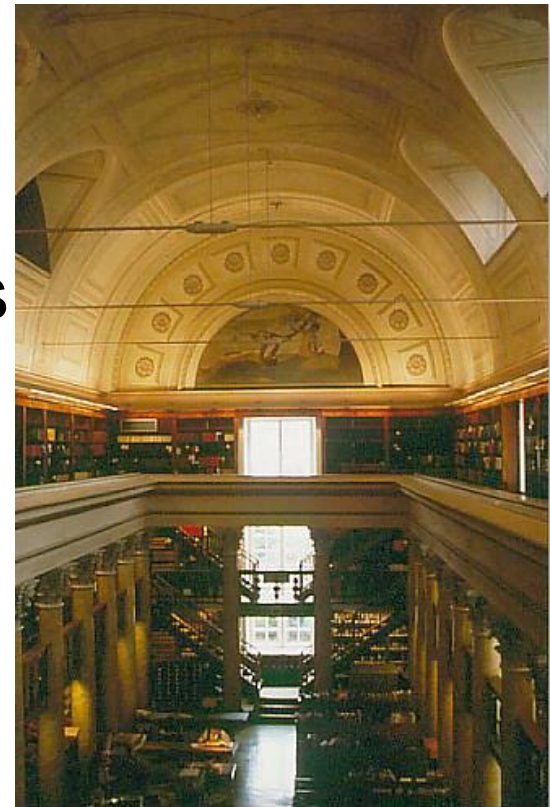
- Single factor vs multiple factor hypothesis?

Single factor: Mr. Jari Koivisto, Finnish National Board of Education (2007) “If you want expert teachers who are trusted and respected, make them do a masters degree before they enter the classroom.” He also said: “It will help a lot to improve the learning in the system if all the teachers have a masters degree.”



Teacher education #1

- 10% - 15% of teacher education course applicants accepted into University
- Multiple methods of selection:
 - Matriculation marks
 - profiles from psychological tests
 - interviews
 - school recommendations



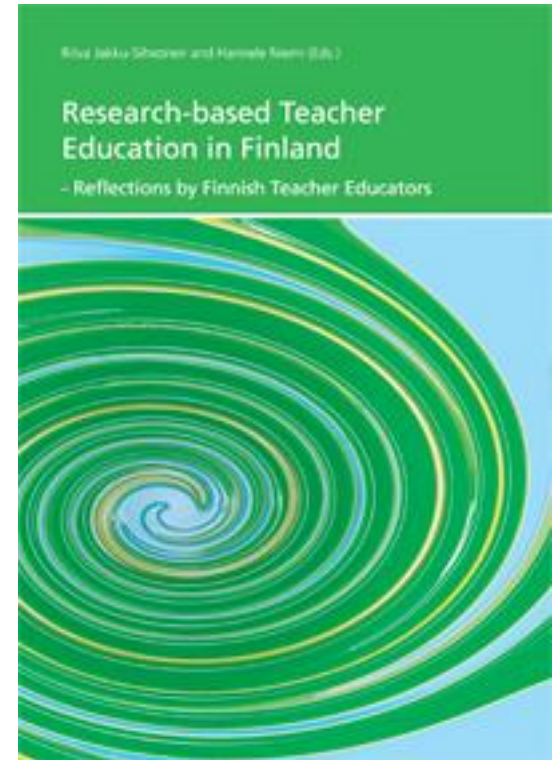
Well prepared teachers #2

- Finnish teacher education system - **5-year program:**
 - 3 years basic degree
 - 2 years to complete a Masters degree before being entitled to a permanent teaching position



Well prepared teachers #3

- Finnish teacher education system - **research-based**:
 - education program is based on educational research
 - required courses include research component in the Masters degrees (theses at UG and PG levels)



Well prepared teachers #4

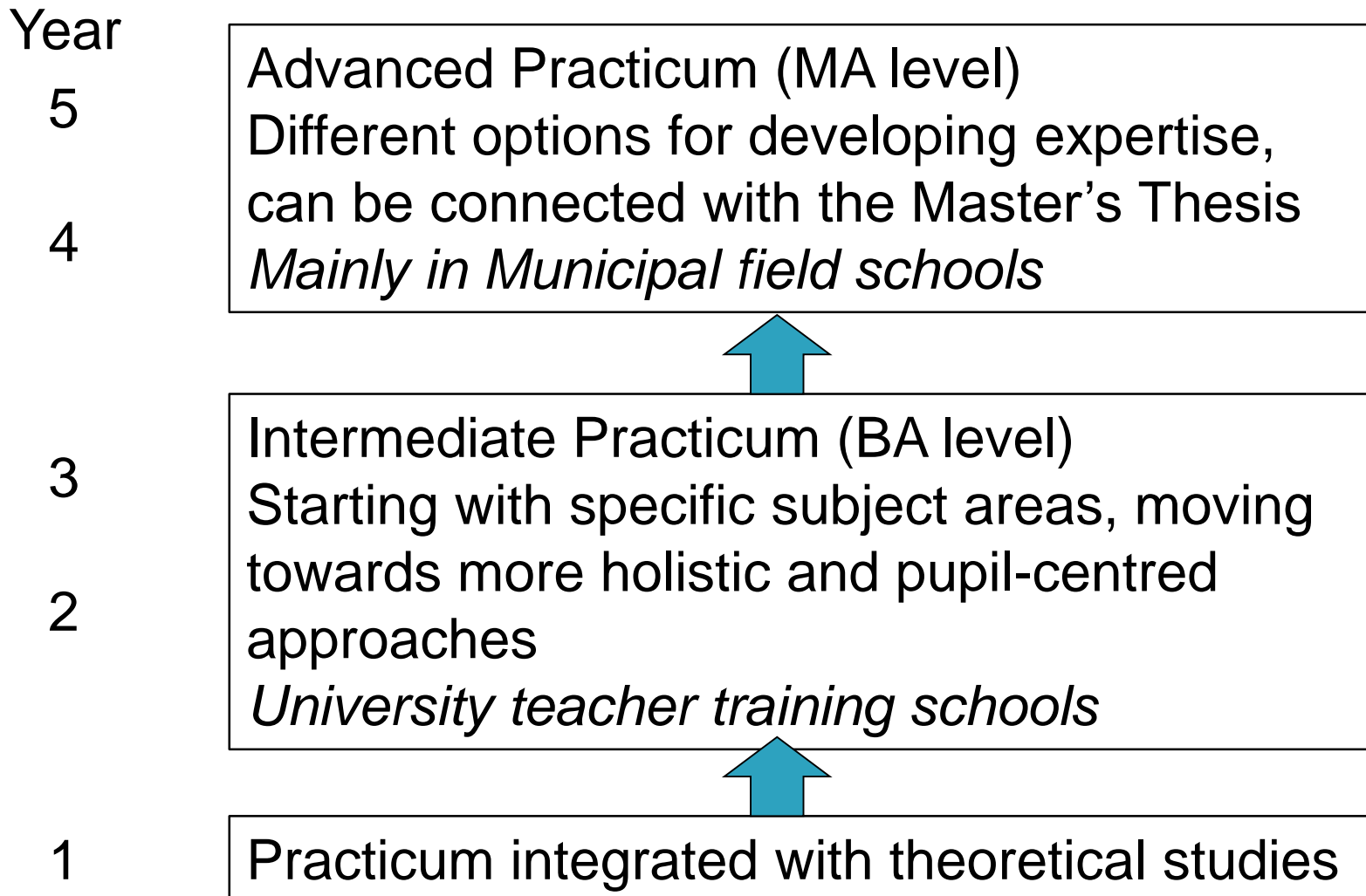
- Finnish teacher education system - **teachers prepared for broad range of tasks:**
 - teachers expected to operate at a broad level of school management, curriculum design & interpretation, resource materials selection, etc
 - during teacher preparation period they undertake studies in these areas



Well prepared teachers #5

- **University teacher training schools:**
 - Universities have their own teacher training schools, staffed by university staff (solves the teacher-placement problem for practicums, and ensures the training received in the schools is synchronised with the university education)
 - They also use schools from the general education system for further training

Study Year Practice Teaching in Finland



Single-factor hypothesis?

- Good teacher preparation - is this enough?
- I suggest: Other factors are also important



Multiple-factor hypothesis

- Community
- School
- Teacher
- Student



Community Factors #1

- High community value of education
 - Old & young
 - Means & end
- Good public libraries
- Consistent support for education*
- Cross-politics support for education

Community Factors #2

- Cultural homogeneity?
- Cooperative and open governance
- Authoritarian, obedient and collectivist mentality



School Factors #1

- Even school provision throughout the country based on equity
- Broad general education
- Extra help for learning difficulties
- Focus on academic learning

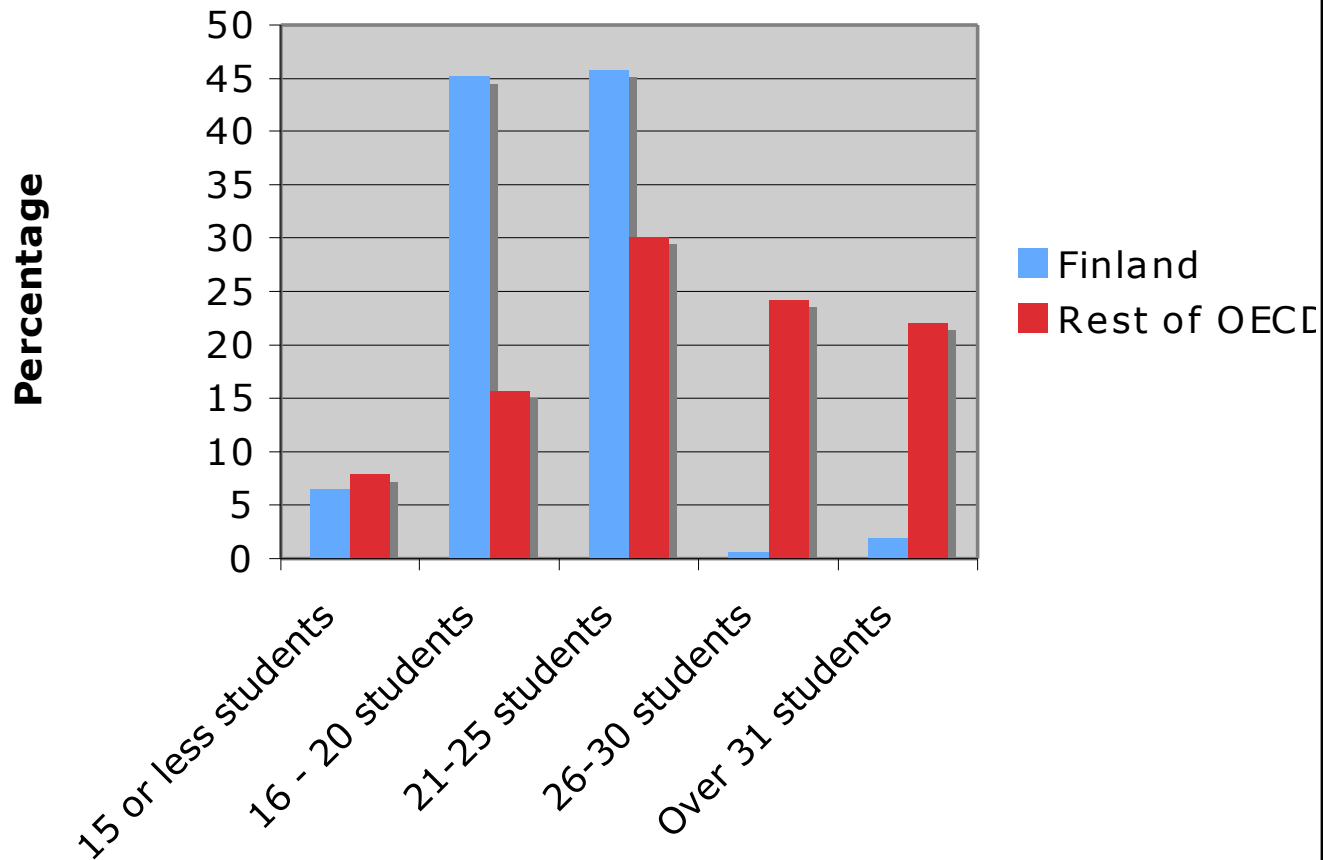
School Factors #2

- Well-resourced schools except libraries
- Curriculum fit of PISA tests
- LUMA program
- Curricular and p



Small class sizes

Class Sizes: Finland vs. Rest of OECD



School Factors #3

- School meals, dental and health care (well coordinated and meticulous)



Teacher factors

- Excellent teacher selection & preparation
- Availability of well-qualified teachers
- Special education "specialists" difficult to find
- teacher preparation
- High teacher status
- Conservative teaching
- Focus on teacher



Student factors #1

- Acceptance of authority and obedience at school
- Interest and engagement in reading
- Cultural artifacts & home library
- Reading and technology
- Cultural communication
- Self-concept in reading



Student factors #2

- Gender issues in reading
- Gender equity and differences in science and mathematics
- Attitude and study factors in mathematics
- Science success factors
- Learning strategies in reading

Myths #1 - #2

- Finland is a small country
 - But what about similar sized countries - Norway, Denmark, Ireland and Luxemburg?
- Finland is culturally homogenous
 - Finnish 91% Swedish 5.5 % Sami 0.03 % Russian 0.85 %
 - But what about similar countries - Denmark, Norway, Hungary and Poland?

Myths #3 - #4

- PISA tests fit the Finns
 - Every tested country has to accept the PISA tests before they are used, i.e. tests must fit their curricula
- Finland is a cold and remote country
 - Finnish children spend less time on homework than in many other countries
 - Climate is similar to other Nordic countries, USA & Canada

The problems

- Gender gap in reading literacy
- Effectiveness of classroom instruction to meet the needs of gifted?
- School and social outcomes?
- Girls' lower interest in mathematics



The problems #2

- Only 95% of comprehensive school (year 9) students continue to upper secondary school (years 10+)
- What next for Finnish Education system? No clear vision for future.

Teacher

Conclusion

School

- The excellence of the Finnish system is based on multiple factors - related to: community, teacher, school & student aspects
- A number of concerns in the Finnish system are openly acknowledged & actively being addressed

Community

Student

Further Reading

- Niemi, H., Toom, A., & Kallioniemi, A. (2012) *Miracle of Education*. Sense.
- Tuovinen, J. E. (2011) *Comparison of the National Curricula of Australia and Finland. How well does Australia stack up against a world-leading curriculum?* Sydney: ACSA.
- <http://www.pasisahlberg.com/>
- http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/koulutusj_aerjestelmae/?lang=en

Thank you! **Kiitos!**

If you wish to join in further discussion of Finland's education, please talk with me.

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